# The Cathedral Sainte-Thérèse d'Avila of Amos
## And the use of reinforced concrete - sign of the coming of modernity

**The use of a new material in religious architecture - reinforced concrete**


Exterior
Photo : CPRQ

The use of new materials for architectural purposes was one of the first signs of modernity. By making good use of their intrinsic qualities architects were given the opportunity to make many innovations in both design and building techniques. Since the beginning of the century, Québec architects have used religious architecture as a pretext for experimenting with the properties of any new materials available to them. Concrete, steel structures and pre-fabricated panels have all contributed to a radical transformation in construction methods.

While still taking their inspiration from traditional styles, some Québec architects of the beginning of the century took advantage of the qualities of reinforced concrete which had been used in France and America since the end of the 19th century. One of the first architects to use this material for church buildings in Québec was Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne from Montréal. He graduated from Montréal polytechnic in 1911 and then became a teacher there. During his years of teaching, he also undertook several important commissions. He utilised the potential of reinforced concrete for one of his first ecclesiastical buildings which was the Church of St. Michael's and St. Anthony's of Montréal, designed in 1914. The church is built in a Romanesque-Byzantine style and is surmounted by a cupola about 200mm thick for a diameter of 23 metres - a very bold choice for its time.

**A church in Abitibi inspired by the Byzantine world!**

A few years after its construction, Beaugrand-Champagne's church inspired Mgr Latulipe when he decided to replace the former church-school in the parish of Sainte-Thérèse of Amos in Abitibi. In fact the plans drawn up by the Montréal architect in 1919 were very similar to those for the Church of St. Michael's and St. Anthony's de Montréal. Reinforced concrete was chosen as the medium for construction for two reasons. The first reason was that due to the size of the building it was necessary to use a material which was particularly strong. The second reason was that in Abitibi at the beginning of the century, there was a risk almost every year of forest fires spreading to nearby towns.


Exterior
Photo : François Brault

The Church of Sainte-Thérèse-d'Avila was built in 1922 and dominates the whole town of Amos. Its concrete dome rests on eight concrete arches placed equidistantly around the circular floor of the nave. The concrete dome varies in thickness from about 150 mm to 250 mm between the base and the crown. The diameter of this cupola overhanging the nave measures about 49 metres whereas its height from floor to ceiling is about 31 metres.

Coupole
Photo : CPRQ

The interior was not completed until 1963, about forty years after the structural work was finished. The stained glass for the church including the three rose-windows was produced at the Maison Rault in Rennes in France at a time when a considerable restoration project was begun in the church. The refashioned pews, the Stations of the Cross in mosaic decorating the interior walls, and several other ornamental features including the stained glass give the interior its own particular character.

During the inauguration of the diocese in 1938, the Church at Amos was elevated to the status of Cathedral. As a symbol of tenacity and commitment on colonial land, it is the pride of its parishioners.

**Katia Tremblay**
Text translated by Rachel Tunnicliffe

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