

# The Co-Cathedral of Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue de Longueuil

## The search for an expressive solidness



Aerial view  
Photo : François Brault

The Church of Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue was built in the heart of Vieux-Longueuil between 1884 and 1887, after plans by the architects Henri-Maurice Perrault and Albert Mesnard. It was constructed near the second parish church, built in accordance with the design by Father Conefroy between 1809 and 1811, and of which the interior was produced by Louis-Amable Quévillon assisted by Paul Rollin.

Perrault, along with his uncle, John Ostell, had won the competition for constructing the building for the Law Courts in Montréal in 1849, and had erected the City Hall between 1872 and 1879. He worked in association with Mesnard from 1880, and some of his most famous buildings include the chapel of the Collège de Montréal, the City Hall and Cathedral of Valleyfield and the churches of Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka de Montréal and Saint-Charles de Lachenaie.

Perrault and Mesnard succeeded the architect Victor Bourgeois as specialists in religious architecture in the region of Montréal. For Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue, they made use of the design of St. Andrew's Cathedral which they had drawn up for Victoria in British Columbia. However, they substituted stone for brick for the exterior.

Flanked by asymmetrical towers, the façade of Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue brings to mind the great French cathedrals such as Notre-Dame d'Amiens with its two towers of unequal height. The doorway with three openings crowned by gables along with the rose window in its monumental arch, the cross-arched openings, the pinnacles and buttresses are all features borrowed from the gothic vocabulary. The influence of Bourgeois is clearly seen in Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue through the structural use of these features rather than a purely decorative use as was the trend at the end of the 19th century.



Façade  
Photo :  
François Brault

The character of the building resides more particularly in its astonishing mass: the main nave is traversed by a transept and at the crossing, a polygonal shaft supports a dome surmounted by a lantern; the octagonal tower is inscribed in a square with pavilion roofs; the nave which lacks upper windows, is flanked with aisles which open on to the transepts, the transepts themselves are provided with porches built in alignment and of a comparable dimension; and a polygonal ambulatory finishes the chevet.

The combination of fine freestone and more rustic stone adds a kind of texture which helps to accentuate the play of light and shade.



Coupole  
Photo : Germain Casavant

Inside, the combination of these massive structures produces a vast space lit by the upper windows of the choir, the cupola and the rose windows of the transept.

There is less lighting in the nave which accentuates the luminosity of the sanctuary. On the sides of the transept, the illusion of windows has been created by using the technique of trompe-l'œil painted in 1930 by the artist Louis Jobin from Montréal.

The arcade of the ambulatory provides a grandiose décor to the high altar produced by Félix Mesnard, the architect's brother. Like the pulpit and side altars, the high altar was designed by the architects Perrault and Mesnard.

The size of the church is impressive: 74 metres long including the sacristy, 41 metres wide at the transept, and almost 81 metres high to the top of the steeple. It was recognised as an historic monument in 1984.



High altar  
Photo : François Brault

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