

# Portrait

## *Portrait de Joseph-Octave Paré*

<https://collections.pacmusee.qc.ca/en/objects/portrait-2018-001-007/>

Collections / Montreal, a land of welcome / portrait



CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license

The bust portrait painted by William Raphael represents Joseph-Octave Paré. The opening of the frame is oval. The subject is graying, presented in three-quarter view, standing out against a dark brown background. He is dressed in Catholic ecclesiastical garb, wearing a black cape and cassock, buttoned and topped with a Roman collar and pendant priest's cross. Paré's expression is pensive, his bearing serious but benevolent. He wears small, circular gold-rimmed spectacles, an accessory not unlike the one he wore as secretary to the bishop of Montreal for nearly forty years.

---

Accession Number 2018.01.07

Artiste / Auteur Raphael, William

Date 1878 c

Medium and Support oil, canvas

Measurements 76 x 60 cm

---

## Historical context

Joseph-Octave Paré was born in Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu on May 16, 1814, and named in honor of Mgr Joseph-Octave Plessis (1763-1825), Archbishop of Quebec from 1806 to 1825. Paré, a Catholic secular priest, worked as a secretary in the Montreal bishopric from 1838 to 1877. He was canon of the Montreal cathedral from 1841 to 1877, and chaplain to various communities. In 1877, he retired to Sault-au-Récollet (today Ahuntsic-Cartierville), where he died on January 20, 1878. The work is dated circa 1878, which may indicate that it was created shortly before his death at the age of 64, or later, according to a photograph of the canon.

He began his classical studies in 1827 at the seminary of Saint-Hyacinthe, and completed his course with an additional year at the seminary of Québec. He benefited from the help of his brother Hubert Paré, a merchant renowned for his encouragement of education and his charity to the poor. Back at the Saint-Hyacinthe seminary, he continued his theological studies, teaching there from 1834 to 1837. He worked in the bishop's secretariat for Mgr Jean-Jacques Lartigue (1777-1840), consecrated first bishop of Montreal in 1821. In 1822, the bishop

decided to build a new episcopal see in Montreal's eastern faubourg Saint-Laurent (on rue Saint-Denis, near rue Sainte-Catherine), which became the heart of the city's French quarter. Paré was ordained a priest on September 22, 1838, and in 1841 became primicier, a high rank within the chapter of Saint-Jacques Cathedral. That same year, he made his first trip to Europe to accompany the second bishop of Montreal, Mgr Ignace Bourget (1799-1885). Paré suggested he return in 1856 to visit the great European basilicas and choose the one that would serve as a model for the future Montreal cathedral, to replace the old one destroyed by fire in 1852. As early as 1854, Mgr Bourget was planning to rebuild the cathedral in the western part of the city, thus ensuring the expansion of the Catholic Church in Montreal into the Anglo-Protestant milieu of this part of the city. At the end of this trip, the canon expressed the wish that a reduced replica (one-third the scale) be built according to the plans of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He wanted to provide the city with a monument so that those who didn't have the chance to visit Rome could get an idea of its magnificence and of Catholic worship in all its glory. However, he had to raise the funds for its construction, and he did so largely by canvassing the clergy, citizens and communities. From 1845 to 1876, Paré assumed all the duties of the bishop's secretariat, demonstrating unfailing loyalty and devotion to Mgr Bourget. He took an active part in his superior's various projects, and was given wide latitude to advise on chant, liturgy and the plan for the new cathedral. Construction began in 1875. It was consecrated in 1894 as Saint-Jacques Cathedral, elevated to the rank of minor basilica in 1919, and renamed Basilica-Cathedral of Marie-Reine-du Monde and Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur in 1955.

Paré closely studied the sacred ceremonies to ensure that services were celebrated with regularity and great pomp, while paying particular attention to decoration, altar adornment and cult ornaments to ensure

that they captured the imagination and aroused great piety among the faithful. He shared Mgr Bourget's interest in the sacred rites prescribed by the Church, and devoted himself to introducing the Roman liturgy to Canada, with the aim of moving away from the liturgy inherited from Gallican France, a religious and political doctrine that limited the Papacy's interference in its organization. When Mgr Bourget decided to retire to the Saint-Janvier residence in Sault-au-Récollet in 1877, Paré decided to accompany him. It was there that the latter died, assisted by his eminent friend, on January 20, 1878. He was showered with praise, and in a biographical note, Bourget testifies to the important contribution of his auxiliary, not only to the Church of Montreal, but also to the underprivileged. He was buried in the vault of the unfinished Marie-Reine-du-Monde cathedral in 1885.

© Pointe-à-Callière Collection, donation by Micheline Desjardins, 2018.001.007  
Photo by William Raphael