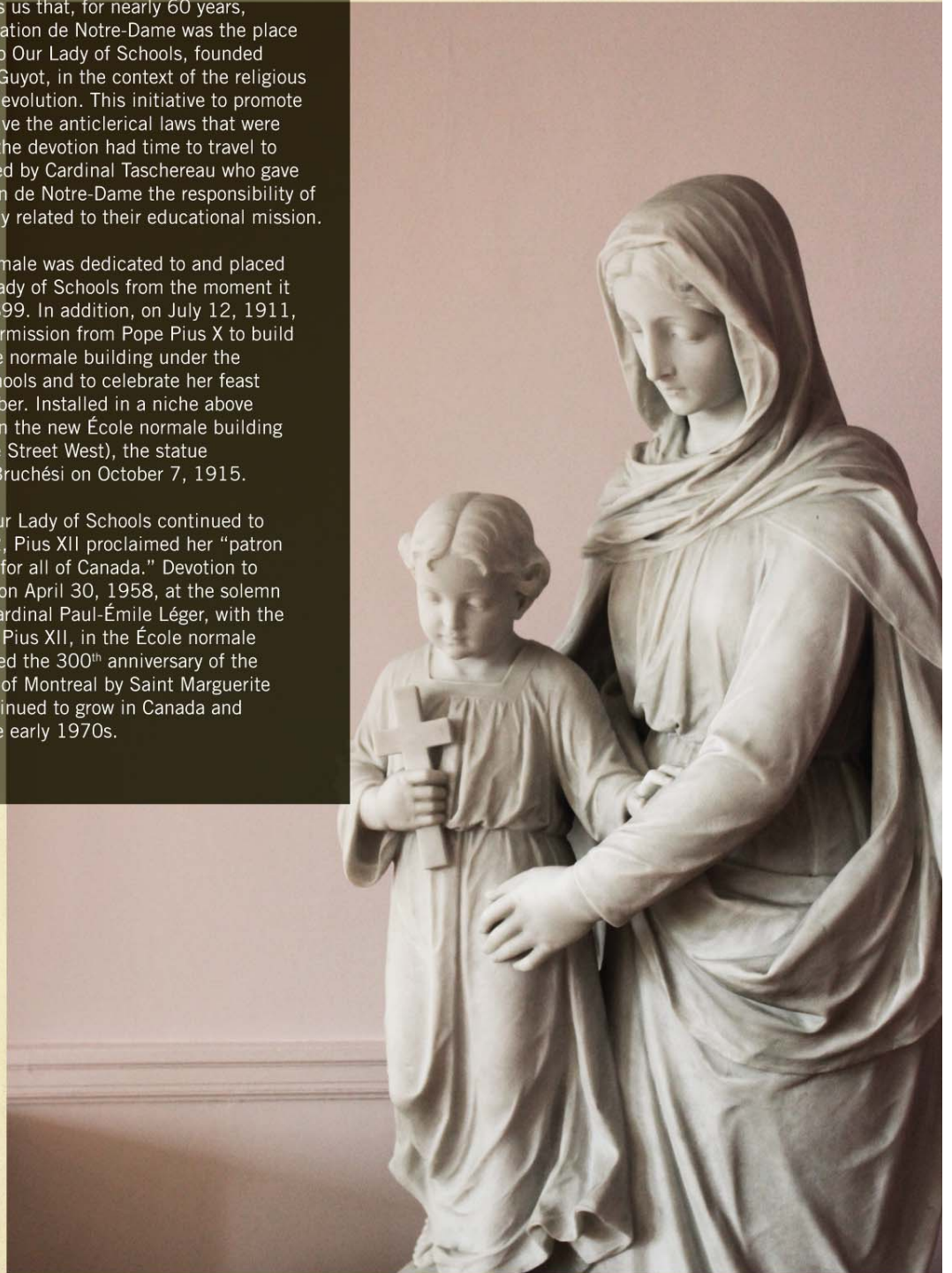


Our Lady of Schools

The gift of Mr. C. Courval, uncle of Sister St-Liguori, this statue of Our Lady of Schools was carved out of white Carrara marble by artists Giacomini and Balducci in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century. It reminds us that, for nearly 60 years, École normale of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame was the place from which spread devotion to Our Lady of Schools, founded in France in 1894 by Father Guyot, in the context of the religious renewal that arose after the Revolution. This initiative to promote religious schools did not survive the anticlerical laws that were soon promulgated. However, the devotion had time to travel to Quebec where it was embraced by Cardinal Taschereau who gave the sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame the responsibility of spreading this devotion closely related to their educational mission.

The Congregation's École normale was dedicated to and placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Schools from the moment it opened in Old Montreal in 1899. In addition, on July 12, 1911, the Congregation obtained permission from Pope Pius X to build the chapel of the future École normale building under the patronage of the Virgin of Schools and to celebrate her feast on the third Saturday of October. Installed in a niche above the main altar of the chapel in the new École normale building (situated at 2330 Sherbrooke Street West), the statue was blessed by Bishop Paul Bruchési on October 7, 1915.

Over the years, devotion to Our Lady of Schools continued to grow: on November 12, 1952, Pius XII proclaimed her "patron of schools and student youth for all of Canada." Devotion to the Virgin of Schools peaked on April 30, 1958, at the solemn coronation of the statue by Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, with the special authorization of Pope Pius XII, in the École normale chapel. This coronation marked the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the first school of Montreal by Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys. The devotion continued to grow in Canada and throughout the world until the early 1970s.



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