



*The Precious Blood high altar at Saint Anne Church, 2018  
(Jean-Claude Grant).*



*The Precious Blood Monastery chapel, McKay Street, 1898.  
(Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood).*

*Excerpt adapted from "Faithful in all Generations,"  
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## THE ALTARS OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Just as the Ark of the Old Testament followed the Israelites during their desert wanderings, the altars upon which today the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered at Saint Anne Church



*Canon Georges Bouillon,  
1841–1932 (Roman Catholic  
Archdiocese of Ottawa).*

have accompanied the people of Saint Clement since the very beginning. Their design was conceived in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Canadian church architect and decorator Canon Georges Bouillon (1841–1932), and executed by one of his close collaborators, Joseph-Flavien Rochon (c. 1824–1902), for installation in 1898 in the chapel of the second monastery of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood.<sup>78</sup> Canon Bouillon, the Sisters' chaplain between 1896 and 1899, already had to his credit the interior design of Notre Dame Cathedral and the chapel of the convent boarding school Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur d'Ottawa.<sup>79</sup>



*Flavien Rochon, 1824–1902  
(Chantal Gaudreault Collection).*

Flavien Rochon came to what was then Bytown in the employ of Casavant Frères of Saint Hyacinthe, the company commissioned to build Notre Dame Cathedral's first organ. It was there that his talent with wood attracted the attention of Canon Bouillon, leading to a life-long

association between the two.<sup>80</sup> From an artistic point of view, Rochon's most notable work was undoubtedly produced between 1878 and 1885 when he assisted Philippe Hébert (1850–1917), Canada's renowned sculptor, in carrying out Canon Bouillon's decorative scheme for Notre Dame Cathedral. Rochon's reputation as a "carver of exceptional skill"<sup>81</sup> would result in his talents being sought out as well for civic buildings, including the Library of Parliament.

Solemnly blessed by Ottawa's first archbishop, Joseph-Thomas Duhamel, on November 18, 1898, the creative result of the Bouillon-Rochon partnership was enthusiastically captured in the annals of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood and described as "the splendid new altar radiant under an arch of fifteen electric lamps."<sup>82</sup>

Early photographs indicate that the rear of the high altar was originally fitted with a wooden screen, which was replaced in the 1920s by a Calvary scene. Both of these fittings have disappeared. The dedicatory scroll taken from the Introit for the feast of the Precious Blood carved onto the lower front panel, however, is still there today: *Redemisti nos in sanguine tuo* ("Thou hast redeemed us with Thy blood").

It was in the Sisters' monastery on Echo Drive built in 1923 that Ottawa's traditional Mass community in 1968 first worshipped at Flavian Rochon's altars. In the spring of 1984, the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood were constrained to bring their sanctuary into line with post-conciliar liturgical norms. This meant that their historic altars would be permanently disposed of and replaced by a freestanding altar. In negotiation with the Mother Superior, the Latin Community was able to acquire the three altars, the Communion rail and other sacred items in exchange for a donation of \$2,300 to the Sisters Adorers. On Easter Monday 1984, several Community volunteers removed the three altars before the arrival of wreckers the next morning. In expectation of better times, they were taken for storage to a farm belonging to a member of the congregation.

Saved from certain destruction, the altars are strongly identified with the fervent aspirations of Saint Clement Parish's beginnings and today continue to be at the heart of its liturgical celebrations.

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<sup>78</sup> Monsignor Myrand, Saint Anne's long-serving parish priest and the cloistered community that commissioned the Bouillon-Rochon altars for their second monastery in New Edinburgh were brought together once more in 2012 when the Precious Blood altars were installed in Saint Anne Church. Buried under the west transept in 1949, close by the altars' present location, Msgr. Myrand was ordained in 1892 on the feast of the Precious Blood in the first chapel of the Sisters Adorers then located in the very house on St. Patrick Street where he was born in 1866.

<sup>79</sup> Norman Pagé, *La cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Ottawa*, Ottawa: les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1988, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> Maurice Morisset, *Album-Souvenir de la Basilique Notre-Dame d'Ottawa*, Ottawa, 1934, p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Colin MacDonald, *A Dictionary of Canadian Artists*, Vol. 7, Ottawa, 1990, p. 2226.

<sup>82</sup> Saint Clement Parish Ottawa, parish records, Extract: *Religieuses Adoratrices du Précieux Sang (Saint-Hyacinthe, 2c)*, *Annales*, November 18, 1898, p. 146.