

Modern Interment Options

OUR Lady of Hope MAUSOLEUM — DIOCESE of HAMILTON

Spectacular & Strongly Innovative

— by Joshua P. Lintz

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton in Ontario, Canada has recently made history by introducing one of the most spectacular and innovative mausoleums in North America.

Introducing the new Our Lady of Hope Mausoleum, it was designed by Young + Wright / IBI Group Architects and built by **Carrier Mausoleums Construction, Inc.** (CMC). The building is located at Resurrection Catholic Cemetery in the former Town of Ancaster, now part of the City of Hamilton. Hamilton is located an hour's drive southwest of Toronto at the western end of Lake Ontario and less than an hour from Niagara Falls.

The master planned cluster of three buildings will ultimately house over 3,800 crypts. Phase 1 of the development was completed in mid-2012, and contains 1,300 mausoleum crypts and 1,600 glass-front and stone-front cremation niches.

The architectural design of the building was inspired by the theology of light. "Light and visual elements were definitely an architectural priority," said John J. O'Brien, CCCE, director of Cemeteries Diocese of Hamilton. "If you look at the Catholic faith, and belief in the Resurrection, it is about light. Light is symbolic of understanding and truth, so having the design of the building let in as much light as possible was very important."

The design challenge was to create a beautiful and inspirational interplay between the organic light, the physical structure, and the relationship between the human experience and the divine. The sacred character of the space pays homage to the Rite of Committal, the prayers commending the soul of the deceased to God. This innovation in design created a relationship between the building and the environment that you rarely see in mausoleums.



"It is absolutely breathtaking, an architectural gem," said O'Brien. "It is unlike any mausoleum structure that exists anywhere. Everyone who sees it is quite astonished at its presence at the cemetery."

Designed by Andrew Baczynski, an Associate at Young + Wright / IBI Group Architects, this 17,500 square-foot building is highlighted by a cantilevered concrete canopy raised and outstretched on both ends as a dramatic welcoming gesture. As you enter through the cantilevered entrance, overhead is a large arterial skylight that bisects the building into two diverging segments, each gently curving outward.

Once inside, the visual dynamics are astounding. There is a visual dynamic that merges heaven and earth through a brilliant interplay of the softness of the sky, the richness of the landscape, and the soft color palette and smooth textures of the details found within the building. The moment you step into the building your eyes are drawn to an expansive one-and-a-half story south-facing window overlooking a central water feature and surrounding garden. This dramatic soaring wall of glass and arterial skylight floods the mausoleum with a soft diffused daylight highlighting the sacredness of this space.

The footprint of the mausoleum is symmetrical with curved segments. One of the challenges, according to Luc Vallee, vice president, Architecture and Estimation for

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External view of Our Lady of Hope Mausoleum, a unique aeronautical design showing a spectacular relationship between the building and the environment.

Carrier Mausoleums Construction, Inc. (CMC), was making sure the building, with all its angles, curves and shapes, would fit together perfectly. “One of the most interesting aspects of the project is that the building was basically built in two different pieces and joined together by the translucent glass skylight,” Vallee noted. The translucent glass, he explained, was inserted into a precisely engineered aluminum structure that is tied to a steel structure that links the two parts of the building.”

Vallee added, “Since over 90 percent of the walls are curved, installation required precision engineering and careful craftsmanship. Individual pieces had to be carefully laid out onsite prior to installation to test fit and guaranty precision.”

The structure of the building is entirely cast in place concrete with some areas of exposed concrete including the front porch; exterior and interior round columns and the canopy along the south walls. The exterior cladding includes Arriscraft stone, Indiana limestone, and various exotic marbles.

The plans for this mausoleum were on the drawing table for about 18 months. The construction process took roughly 16 months. John O’Brien added: “CMC’s teamwork approach brought out the best of all

talents, from professionals, to tradespersons, to CMC office personnel; every one worked diligently and passionately to see the job through to fruition.”

O’Brien also points to the front of the building, which is reminiscent of a modern airport and pays homage to aeronautical design, as another design element that sets the Our Lady of Hope Mausoleum apart. “There are many elements of the design that remind you of aviation,” O’Brien said. “The design is unlike any other mausoleum building in North America.”

Richard Verrier, vice president of Construction, Central and Western

Canada for CMC, said he has never seen a more complex mausoleum construction project. “The intricacy of the way the reinforced steel was tied together was quite a feat of engineering.” CMC performed 3D modeling of the steel frame to make sure everything would come together with precision. “We wanted to look at it from every angle as there were a number of challenging components with no room for error.”

Our Lady of Hope Mausoleum, Verrier said, was a “chance of a lifetime” construction project. “This is a sensational building. The CMC team worked together to create this magnificent architectural marvel,” he said.

The building is designed to be energy efficient and embody the principles of sustainability. A geothermal heating unit was installed as well as LED lighting throughout. “Our objective is not only to offer our families a beautiful final resting place, but also find a way to reduce operating costs and environmental impact,” O’Brien noted.

“Our goal was to create a place of reverence that was warm, inviting and respectful,” O’Brien said. “We think we have.”

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A evening shot features the importance of lighting in the building’s design.



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