

Dear Friends of the Toronto Oratory:

With the setting up of our website by Father Hilbert the need for these newsletters is less pressing than it used to be. I believe, though, that there is still room for a more personal approach, and furthermore not everyone uses the web. In the light of these considerations I wanted to send you some of our news.

### **The Financial Campaign for Our Seminary**

Last fall we sent out an appeal for help with the cost of renovating our seminary buildings. You responded with great generosity to this cry for help, and we have now about two-fifths of the money we need to develop the buildings in the way we outlined in the pamphlet we sent to you.

In the meantime, there have been difficulties with the City of Toronto about the permits required for the renovations, and it is unlikely that we will be able to do more than minor changes before the students return. This means that it will be May 2008 before the major changes can be undertaken.

From one point of view this is very disappointing, but from another the added time will give us time to try to find funding in other places. With this end in view the Oratory has been incorporated in Washington D.C., and we hope soon to have an American tax number. Once we have our tax number we have plans to approach American donors who might be interested in our work. All this hidden work has taken a good deal of time and planning, and we are grateful to the many professional people who have advised and helped us.

So, please be patient with the apparent lack of progress. I do want you to know how grateful we all are for your continued interest and support.

### **Oratorian Congress**

Although the Oratory is not a Religious Order and each House of the Oratory is a separate and distinct juridical entity, nonetheless there does exist a fraternal unity between different Houses. Furthermore, at the insistence of the Holy See, there exists a small central organization to deal with problems of common interest and to do business with the Roman Curia. Every six years there is a General Congress in which representatives of Oratories from all over the world take part. In September 2006, Frs Martin Hilbert, Daniel Utrecht and Derek Cross attended the General Congress in Rome. Elections were held for the Oratorian Visitor who represents the Holy See to the Oratories, the Procurator General who represents the interests of the different Oratories to the Holy See, and a Postulator General who is charge of Oratorian Causes for Beatification and Canonization.

A solemn Mass was held at St Philip's Church, the Chiesa Nuova, for the opening of the year commemorating the Oratorian Cardinal Cesare Baronius, who was one of St Philip's earliest disciples and the author of the first modern history of the Catholic Church.

### **Vocations to the Oratory**

Brother Michael Eades has been studying in Rome this year, and has been living at the Roman Oratory. It has been a very profitable year for him and he has done well in his studies. He will be returning home this fall to finish his studies with us before his ordination.

Oratory Sponsored Seminarians. This year we instituted a category of students studying in St Philip's Seminary who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood, but have not yet decided whether to apply to the Oratory or to a diocese or religious order. These students pay their own fees and so are free to make up their own minds without obligations to other institutions. This

year we had seven such students and the plan seems to have got off to a very good start.

### **St Philip's Seminary**

In the spring of 2006 we were able to thank God for the 100<sup>th</sup> ordination to the Priesthood of a graduate of St Philip's. For the most part we were responsible only for the philosophical formation of these new Priests, but we think that we made an important contribution in providing them with a solid foundation for their theological studies.

This year has been one of steady progress and the student enrollment reached a new high of thirty-nine. Twenty of these were from different dioceses, and these, as well as the Oratory Sponsored students, lived in residence, while the remaining nineteen came from various religious communities and lived with their own communities.

Six men were recently ordained for the Archdiocese of Toronto. Four of these were graduates from St Philip's. Our first seminarian from the Diocese of Hamilton will be ordained to the Diaconate in June. Since he studied here, the Diocese of Hamilton has sent 15 more seminarians to begin their studies with us.

In March Archbishop Collins, our new Archbishop, paid a visit to the Oratory and spent part of the evening with the seminarians where he won all hearts by his warm and open manner.

The increase in numbers has made it all too plain to us that something has to be done about our physical plant, and we do ask you to keep our needs in your prayers. We have been told that is a nice problem to have nowadays, but it is still a problem!

### **St Philip's Centre**

We explained in an earlier letter how we have begun to operate our food bank in rented premises on King Street. This has had several advantages: We can stay open longer as a service to the poor, and the premises are nearer to Holy Family Church than the ones we used for several years. The down side of this new arrangement is that the former location was given to us for a dollar a year in a low-cost housing building, and now we have to pay \$20,000 a year in rent. In addition to this there are supplementary expenses for special food and some salaries.

We have been fortunate to secure the services of Jennifer McConnell to oversee the work at the food bank. Jennifer is also the secretary for the Oratory, and registrar for the Seminary. So she has her hands full; and we are very grateful for all she has done, and is doing. All the expenses connected with the food bank are carried by the Oratory and not Holy Family Parish.

### **Parish News**

As you know, spring is always a busy time of the year in parishes. Of course, the Paschal Triduum is the high point of the liturgical year, and our celebrations had their usual splendour. The last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May were First Communion days at St. Vincent de Paul and Holy Family, and many of our First Communicants also took part in the Marian Procession on Mothers' Day. After another two weeks came Pentecost, and the Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred in both parishes. A number of volunteer catechists work throughout the school year preparing the children for these sacraments, and we are very grateful for their generosity.

### **Evenings at the Oratory**

The Oratory originated from St Philip's apostolate of four talks every afternoon on prayer, the virtues, Saints, and Church history, interspersed with music. The Evenings at the Oratory is one of the ways that we are trying to perpetuate Philip's original idea. On the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m., we give a talk in the parish hall of Holy Family Church on some topic of interest to Catholics. After the talk there are refreshments and a time to socialize. Then at 9:00 p.m. we go into the church to sing Compline. These events continue to draw large and appreciative crowds.

In the past year, we had talks on Blessed Cardinal von Galen, Intelligent Design, Judgment Day, History of Heresy, Blessed Joseph Vaz, Cardinal Baronius, and two talks on the Biblical account of our Lord's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The last session of the year, in May, was a musical Oratory in honour of St Philip.

The Evening devoted to Cardinal Baronius was our contribution to the celebration of the 400th anniversary of his death. He is well-known for his work as a historian, but now all those who attended know something of his connection to St Philip as well.

The topics for future Evenings are found on our website. All those who are on our electronic distribution list are reminded of the talks as they come up. We would be happy to add your name to our list.

### **Annual Marian Procession**

Once again, the weather was beautiful as we honoured our heavenly Mother on Mothers' Day with a procession through the streets of Parkdale. This year marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our annual procession in honour of the Blessed Mother. Over five hundred persons prayed the Rosary and sang

traditional Marian hymns as we marched behind our Lady's statue. Parish organizations from both our parishes were out in full force – the Knights of Columbus, the Legion of Mary, our Lady's Rosary makers, the altar boys, the confirmation classes etc. The First Communion class looked fine in their white dresses and suits as they made an offering of flowers to Mary, while the local police provided an escort to ensure that everything went smoothly. Pictures of the procession can be seen on our website.

### **Scripture Studies at the Oratory**

For over 20 years now Fr Roche has led a Scripture Class that has attracted many people. Following Saint Philip's tradition of 'speaking on the book' participants read the Scriptures together and then receive commentary and reflection. We average 25-30 faithful students and have covered every book of the Old and New Testaments. Anyone in the Toronto area is more than welcome to attend. Bring a Bible!

### **The New Library**

The new library has provided a helpful workplace for the Fathers to study and write and prepare homilies and talks. The shelves are gradually filling up with new acquisitions. At present there are nearly 8,000 titles in the library catalogue. Our librarian, Fr Juvenal Merriell, continues to add to our collection of Oratorian literature, including our substantial section of books by and on Cardinal Newman. To meet our special needs the library specializes mainly in philosophy, Scripture, theology, Church history, lives of the saints, and spirituality. We have begun to use the stacks in the basement of the new library, but still have room for growth for a number of years.

### **Fr Cross In Slovakia**

This summer, along with such luminaries as Michael Novak, Robert Royal, Russell Hittinger, Hadley Arkes, Jan Simulcik and Ambassador Martin Butora, Fr Derek Cross will give a series of lecture at the *Seventh Annual Slovak Seminar on the Free Society*, held in two Slovak seminaries in Bratislava and Spišska Kapitula. Students from Slovakia, Hungary, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States will attend.

### **Father Robinson At Oxford, Rome And Chicago**

My book *The Mass and Modernity* was published two years ago and has aroused a certain amount of interest. It has been widely reviewed. I was interviewed by Zenit and there have been discussions about it on the web. I am told that French and German translations are in the works, but I will believe it when I see it.

In November 2005 I was asked to attend a two-day event at Oxford concerned with Liturgy and my book served as the basis of a study day, at Merton College, before a series of public talks the next day at Blackfriars. In October 2006 I was invited to give a talk in Rome to the General Meeting of CIEL – the French acronym for the International Centre for Research in Liturgy. I gave a paper in French, and the whole trip was a happy return to a city I learned to love when I was a student for the Priesthood. This past April there was a seminar on my book sponsored by Lumen Christi, a liturgical institute of which Cardinal George is the moderator. I gave a public lecture at the University of Chicago to which John Rist, Robert Wilken and William Mahrt responded.

The next days there were three intensive sessions on some of the questions discussed in *The Mass and Modernity*. There were about 20

participants who were there by invitation. In addition to the names mentioned above, I was able to suggest that Professor Keith Cassidy, who has been such a tower of strength for us all, and Fr Robert Pelton of Madonna House, who has been a close friend for over 40 years, should be amongst those asked to take part. Cardinal George, in spite of ill-health and a painful fall during Holy Week, took part in one of the sessions and gave a response to a paper by Kenneth Schmitz.

### **Fr Merriell: Our Connection With Ignatius Press Expands**

For some time now, Ignatius Press has been publishing good Catholic books. They began publishing Cardinal Ratzinger in English long before anyone had a clear sense that he would become Pope. But their range of interest is wide, from popular Saints' lives to more scholarly books. This year, Ignatius Press published *History and Spirit: The understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, by Henri de Lubac. The book was translated from the French by Anne Nash, who helped my own contributions to Ignatius Press to see the light of day. But she left the translation of the Latin and Greek sections to the expertise of Father Merriell, who generously devoted much time to make the texts both accurate and readable.

### **Pilgrimages**

Fr David Roche led a very successful and inspiring pilgrimage to shrines in Eastern Europe in 2006. Pilgrims went to the Shrine of the Infant of Prague, Our Lady of Czestochowa, Divine Mercy Shrine, Mariazell, the Vienna Oratory, St. Stephen's Church in Budapest, and one of the newest shrines in Poland, Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II.

As you read this, Fr Roche will be leading 45 pilgrims on a tour of Turkey and Greece, focussing on the seven churches in Asia Minor

mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and visiting some of the major cities where St Paul evangelized.

Plans are being made for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2008. Check our website to get more information or let us know by ordinary mail and we will keep you posted.

Several young people from our youth group expressed interest in walking across the north of Spain to Santiago de Compostela. Fr Martin Hilbert is a little skeptical of their walking ability so he is organizing a walking pilgrimage to Martyrs' Shrine from August 6 to 11 of this year. The pilgrimage will begin in St James (Santiago) in Colgan, which cuts down the distance to 100 km. If the youth can prove that they can walk, he will consider taking them to Spain in the future. If any youth (grades 8 through high school) would like to join this pilgrimage, please give us a call or send us an e-mail.

Again this year, Fr Marco Guillén joined Mary Mother of God School in its 'Pilgrimage to the Seven Churches'. The school adopted this devotion so dear to St Philip a number of years ago to honour the Saint and in preparation for his feastday. The pilgrimage begins with Mass at the first church (Our Lady of Lebanon), then there are hymns and devotions at each of the seven churches: Our Lady of Lebanon, St Casimir, St Vincent de Paul, St Helen, Nativity of Our Lady, Santa Cruz, and Holy Family. There is a pause for a picnic lunch and a little playtime. The pilgrimage usually concludes with Benediction. Teachers, students, grades 5-8 (about 40), and their chaplain – Fr Guillén – participated this year.

### **Men In Black**

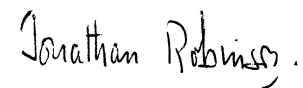
Last November we had a fund-raising concert for the Oratory Children's Choir. Men in Black was the title we chose, but several people

have mentioned that it might have been subtitled 'From the Music Hall to the Beer Hall' to describe the variety of the music. Two samples of the music have become popular attractions on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (search for 'Oratorian'). Several of the Fathers are already practicing for next year.

This letter has turned out to be a bit longer than usual, which comes as no surprise since it has been nearly two years since I last wrote. My main intention for writing at this time is to thank all of our generous benefactors and to let them know that the money they contributed to the Seminary Building Project will eventually get translated into bricks and mortar. We are immensely grateful for your donations and are as anxious to see the buildings go up as you are – and perhaps more so.

I hope that we will see many of you at the Oratory in the not too distant future. Pray that our house be a faithful reflection of Saint Philip's apostolate.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr Jonathan Robinson