



The Oratory of Saint Philip Neri



“The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.”

EXODUS 23:19

GOD TAUGHT HIS chosen people to make a special offering to Him of the first fruits of their harvest. This was more than merely a tax to support the priests and the functions of the temple. It was intended as a very practical and concrete reminder that the harvest—and all that we have or will ever have—has come to

us through God’s generosity. The past months have been a vivid reminder of both God’s generous providence and our need to dedicate ourselves to gratitude for all we have been given.

Our Triennial Elections

Every three years, according to the Constitutions of the Oratory, our community holds its elections. The elections give the community a time to reflect upon its life and direction and to dedicate ourselves afresh to the tasks we have been given. There are no *offices*

for life in the Oratory. On June the 5th, Fr Paul Pearson was re-elected for a second term as Provost, with Fr Daniel Utrecht newly elected as the First Deputy and Vicar. The other Deputies (who form the executive council of the Oratory) are Fr Philip Cleevely, Fr Derek Cross, and Fr Alexander Griffiths.

The Provost with the deputies then allocates to the members of the community the numerous duties within the Oratory itself, the two parishes the community serves, and Saint Philip's Seminary. This new triennium was marked by many of the younger members of the community being moved into positions of increased responsibility. It is exciting to see the energy and fresh perspectives they bring to our Oratorian life. After all, an Oratory is not functioning in a healthy and fruitful way if it does not form new generations in the founding spirit of the community.

Renovatio—the New Seminary Building

Last year the new building for Saint Philip's Seminary was filled to overflowing! Counting the seminarians from the Toronto Oratory, we had 31 students living with us in the Seminary residence, 27 in the residence proper and 4 in the Oratorian community's residence. Our numbers for the new academic year beginning in September look quite similar. The truly sacrificial gifts that so many devoted people have made (and continue to make) are bearing important fruit for the Church, precisely at a time when priestly vocations are at a premium. Please continue to pray that bishops and religious superiors will be inspired to entrust the formation of their seminarians to us.

This summer we have had the joy of seeing eleven of our former students ordained to the priesthood. The ordinations took place in the Philippines, India, France, Toronto, Hamilton, and California. The vocational seeds germinated in our Seminary have flowered around the world.



The new facilities were home to our annual Oratory Summer School in Theology. The week dedicated to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* still draws more than twenty people a year—a wonderful reflective introduction to the faith. The topic for the second week, The Life and Thought of Benedict XVI, was a resounding success, drawing more than eighty people. The courses continue to be offered both in person and online, which has provided a welcome flexibility for people who might not otherwise be able to take part.

The new facilities also provided us with the opportunity to host other important activities. Immediately after our Summer School finished, a group of about twenty professors and graduate students who form the *Aquinas Studium* moved into residence, using the main classroom and its impressive technology for a few days of intense discussion of St Thomas on the Incarnation. The participants were very grateful for the experience of being able to live, study, and worship together. They hope to return in the future.

Just as the Thomists were moving out, the choir of

Christ's College, Cambridge was moving in! As part of their North American summer tour, they visited Ontario, and the Oratory's Holy Family Church was the venue for one of their Toronto concerts on the 19th of July. They performed beautifully, taking full advantage of the splendid acoustics. It was a joy to hear them, a special treat also made possible by the new building.

The Oratory Community

On June 13, Fr Derek Cross celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. As an undergraduate he studied liberal arts at St John's College Annapolis (MD); thereafter he was a graduate student in philosophy at The Catholic University of America. A convert to Roman Catholicism, Fr Derek was originally part of a project to start an Oratory in the United States. He came to the Toronto Oratory for three years of study and formation before heading to Michigan, where he was ordained in 1998. A year later, he joined the Toronto Oratory. Fr Derek has

served in a large variety of offices here at the Oratory, and currently runs the Seminary residence as Prefect of Students while teaching a broad assortment of courses in philosophy and theology.

On October 10th, Fr Marco Guillén will also mark his 25th anniversary. Fr Marco was born and raised in San José, Costa Rica. After moving to Canada, he graduated from the University of Toronto with a BAsc and an MEng in Industrial Engineering, subsequently working for two and a half years as a Quality Control Engineer. He entered the Toronto Oratory in 1992. After studying philosophy at St Philip's Seminary, he pursued his theological studies at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, where he obtained an STB and resided for three years at the Roman Oratory. Fr Marco has continued his formal education by obtaining a Licentiate in Bioethics from the Regina Apostolorum Athenaeum in Rome, and a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Santa Croce University in Rome. In his capacity as a canonist he



works as a judge in the Toronto Regional Marriage Tribunal. In 2018 Father Marco was elected by the Oratorian General Congress to be the Delegate of the Holy See and Apostolic Visitor to Oratories worldwide—the highest, and most onerous, office in the Confederation.

May God continue to bless both of them. Please keep them in your prayers.

Renovations—Again

After years of planning and building for the Seminary, we now face the rather problem of needing more rooms for members of the Oratorian community. We have begun the process of redesigning some space for two new rooms, with further plans for the conversion of a whole floor of rooms. May God bless us with solid and sincere vocations. May a shortage of rooms, rather than used space, continue to be our problem!

We are so grateful to God, and to all of you, for the fruits of these last months. The new building is a blessing that we are just beginning to learn to use fully and effectively. The new offices within the Oratory are the fruits of almost fifty years of formation and dedication, sowing seeds for the future of the Oratory and the Church. Thanks be to God for it all. And a deep gratitude for all the help and support we have been given. ♡

