



The Oratory of Saint Philip Neri



40th Anniversary of Saint Philip's Seminary

In 1984, the Toronto Oratory embarked on a project that would transform our community life. Some of us needed to begin studying theology in preparation for ordination. But being sent away to study, especially if you are a new member and when the community is small, is not ideal. Our founder, Father Jonathan Robinson, solved the problem by instituting a program of study to be taught here at the Oratory, in part by Oratorians and in part by friends from the University. And so, in the fall of 1984, in a quiet and private way, Saint Philip's Seminary began. Little did any of us know just how far the ripples of that decision would extend through the Church or how long the "project" would last.

Two years later, Father Robinson and Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter would expand the scope of the Seminary to include providing philosophical

education for seminarians of the Archdiocese of Toronto, particularly those in residence at Serra House, where Father Robinson was serving as Dean of Studies. Therefore, since 1986, Saint Philip's has been offering a complete seminary education, both philosophy and theology. Seminarians in North America are expected to complete both a Bachelor's degree in philosophy and a Master's degree in theology. At the beginning, philosophy was for both Archdiocesan and Oratorian students; theology was for Oratorians alone. Two years later we were encouraged by the Archdiocese to look for students beyond Toronto, and we began to accept seminarians from other dioceses and religious communities around the world. They would need not only instruction but also a place to live. The original seminary residence was produced on King Street in 1988 by renovating and linking together two houses – not *quite* in time for the arrival of our first seminarians from the United



States. Saint Philip's Seminary was now a residential seminary, and we were entrusted not only with the intellectual formation of our seminarians but their personal and spiritual formation as well.

What had started as a way of providing some courses in philosophy and theology was now clearly a post-secondary school, an institution whose students needed recognized degrees as a foundation for their future education. We began to investigate

affiliating with the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. Even though the Lateran and the Sacred Congregation for Education approved of the agreement, Ontario law would not permit us to grant degrees based on that affiliation. If we wanted to grant degrees, we would need to find a local solution. Almost miraculously, through the inspired work of our lawyer, we were able to attain the right to grant degrees. At the end of 1990 (yes, another two years), by an Act of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, and in conjunction with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Saint Philip's Seminary was made a free-standing degree-granting institution. We could confer Bachelor's degrees in philosophical studies and Master's degrees in theology.

In 1994, it became clear that some religious communities were not finding seminary formation in theology that was suited to the needs of religious—seminaries are regularly run by dioceses, for diocesan seminarians. Some of our philosophy students from a religious community

requested that they be able to continue their education with us as theology students. Since then, the theology division of Saint Philip's Seminary has expanded to include not only Oratorians but also Norbertines, members of other religious communities and seminarians from a variety of Eastern rites.

More recently, through the *Renovatio* Campaign, we have been blessed with a beautiful new facility, officially opened in October of 2022. In many ways, the new building is a visible, brick and



stone, expression of the growth of the Seminary over the past forty years. And none of it would have been possible without the faithful and generous support of so many people. Thank you for the past four decades of support.

We will celebrate the 40th anniversary of Saint Philip's Seminary at the **Inaugural Mass of the Academic Year on 14 September 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at Holy Family Church. The Mass will be followed by a reception, to which you are all invited, and a Seminary Open House.** Especially for those of you who were not able to attend the official opening of the new building, this is an opportunity to see the fruit of your generosity first-hand. If you were able to join us for the opening, come back again.

1366 Construction

With the warmer weather, we are preparing to begin the project that was the subject of our November campaign—the renovation of the foundations and basement of 1366 King Street, the provision of fencing



and pathways on King Street, and the replacement of two trees that have died. We are excited to have that work begin.

General Congress

Every six years, Oratories from around the world gather together for a General Congress in Rome to discuss constitutional matters. Oratories are different from religious orders. We do not have provincials or superior generals; each house is independent. But we share a common constitution and, as a result, need to gather to resolve matters regarding how our way of life fits in with the Canon Law of the universal Church. As a large Oratory, we are entitled to three representatives—our provost, and two members chosen by the community. In addition, since Father Daniel Utrecht serves on the Permanent Deputation and Father Marco Guillén is the Apostolic Visitor,



both of them will attend in their own capacities as well. We will be meeting just outside of Rome from 1-9 October. Please keep us, and Oratories throughout the world, in your prayers.

100th Anniversary of St Vincent de Paul Church

On the 16th of September 2023 Saint Vincent de Paul Parish celebrated the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the church, which some of you will know is commemorated in this year's Oratory Calendar. The parish had begun life in the basement of the church, before the church above ground was able to be completed. That basement space, now the parish hall, is being renovated as a way of marking this landmark 100th anniversary.

35th Annual Oratory Summer School

Each year the first week of the Summer School is an Introductory Survey of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The lectures are especially well suited to anyone involved in teaching catechism classes or RCIA, school

teachers, or anyone who wants to come to a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the faith. The specific topics covered are listed on the application form.

The second session addresses something that has become increasingly and painfully obvious: our world is in a mess. So much has happened, and happened so quickly. What does the Church do in response? What do we do? So we will be looking at the topic **Evangelizing the Modern World**. The first session will be 1-5 July and the second session 8-12 July. The cost for each session, which includes lunch for the five days for those attending in person, will be \$200 per person. For those who would like to avoid travelling each day, simple accommodation is available on a limited basis in the Oratory's newly renovated Seminary Residence. We would love to have you with us this summer. For more information, go to our website at <https://oratory-toronto.org/summer-school/>. 🌿