

TORONTO ORATORY

50th

ANNIVERSARY
GALA

Thursday · October 2 · 2025

LIBERTY GRAND · 6 PM

DINNER MENU

Appetizer

Tomato, Basil and Cream Cheese Soup,
Garlic Croutons,
Basil Pesto

Main

8 oz New York Style Striploin,
Red Wine Shallot Reduction,
Truffle Pavé

Vegetarian Main

Vegan “Scallops”, King Oyster Mushroom,
Parsnip Mash, Grilled Asparagus,
Toasted Coconut Chips,
Green Pea Sauce

Dessert

Strawberry White Chocolate Tart,
Fresh Strawberries,
Toffee Crunch

PROGRAM

COCKTAIL HOUR

Grace: **Frank Cardinal Leo**

FIRST COURSE

Speaker: **Fr Paul Pearson Cong. Orat.**

VIDEO PRESENTATION

MAIN COURSE

Speaker: **Sr Bernice M.C.**

DESSERT & COFFEE

Speaker: **Fr Ronald Angervil**

Speaker: **frater Athanasius O. Praem**

Closing: **Msgr Michael Palud Cong. Orat.**







Message *from* the Provost

—The Very Reverend Father Paul Pearson Cong. Orat

Not many things in our fast-changing world last for fifty years. We are filled with a spirit of thanksgiving that the Toronto Oratory had arrived at this milestone. It has happened only through many divine graces and gifts and by the support and assistance of many charitable people. We could not celebrate this anniversary properly without gathering together with all of you. Not only are you an important part of the party—you have been part of our life and work. May God bless each one of you and St Philip, Our Oratorian saints St John Henry Newman, St Aloysius Scrosoppi, St Joseph Vaz, and all the Oratorian blessed intercede for you, now and always. To paraphrase one of St Philip's maxims, "Fifty years have finished—but the time to do good is not finished yet."

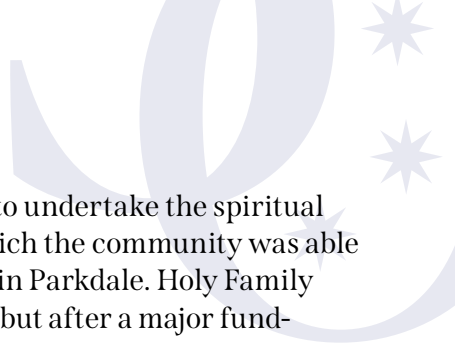
Fr Paul was born of Mennonite and Southern Baptist parents in Illinois, the oldest of many siblings. He studied Intellectual History at Cornell College in Iowa, where he was baptized and received into the Church in his final year, before coming to Toronto for graduate work in Medieval Studies. He has spent most of his life teaching at Saint Philip's Seminary, beginning as a layman at the seminary's inception in 1984. He entered the community in 1985 and was ordained a priest in 1989. He has served as Dean of the Seminary, teaching courses in the Philosophy Division as well as in the Theology Division. His seminar courses in the seminary on Dante's *Divine Comedy* gave rise to a three-volume series of books called *Spiritual Direction from Dante*. Fr Paul was elected Provost (or "The Father") of the Toronto Oratory in June 2020.

History of the Oratory

The Oratory began, not in Parkdale, but in Montreal. Fr Jonathan Robinson had been introduced to Oratorian life through visits to the English Oratories in Birmingham and London and his growing friendships with English Oratorians. As a result he conceived of founding a house dedicated to Saint Philip's way of life here in Canada. This Philipine experiment in community living formally became an Oratory in Montreal on the 1st of November 1975.

After occupying various properties in the city, in 1979 Cardinal Carter invited the community to move to Toronto and Holy Family Parish, where we have been ever since. Among our first apostolic works in Toronto was the establishment of **St Philip's Pantry**, dedicated to distributing nonperishable food to the poor and homeless of Parkdale, in which we were assisted by the arrival of the Missionaries of Charity in 1984. When responsibility for the Pantry was handed on, after some 20 years of Oratorian involvement, it was receiving over 2000 calls per month.





In 1995 Cardinal Ambrozic asked us to undertake the spiritual care of **St Vincent de Paul Parish**, which the community was able to take on while continuing to reside in Parkdale. Holy Family church was destroyed by fire in 1997, but after a major fund-raising campaign a much finer church was constructed and was consecrated in 2001. Over time, both Holy Family and St Vincent have developed vibrant musical traditions centred on Gregorian chant and canonical polyphony.

It was in 1984 that the community began **St Philip's Seminary**, to form its own members in philosophy and theology. Then, in 1986, Cardinal Carter asked that we expand the Seminary to undertake, in addition, the intellectual and spiritual formation of Archdiocesan students. In 1990 the Province of Ontario granted the Seminary the power of conferring degrees, and the student body came to include students from Oratories, dioceses and religious orders around the world. St Philip's has played a crucial role in the Oratory's expansion and maturation, providing a vigorous external apostolate that nonetheless remains intimately connected to Oratorian life and mission. This led to *Renovatio*, our second major fund-raising campaign, begun in 2017 with the primary aim of constructing a new seminary building, which was officially opened in October 2022

The Fathers undertake the spiritual care of many **nursing homes and hospitals** in Parkdale, regularly bringing communion to the sick and celebrating Mass with them. We also regularly visit the public Catholic **schools** in both parishes, as well as the private Catholics schools De La Salle College and Mary Mother of God; at De La Salle we have also recently begun to receive appointments to teach. As the Toronto Oratory continues to expand, so also will the scope of our involvements. We are excited for the future, with its challenges both to preserve and to develop the community's legacy.

TORONTO ORATORY

1975-2025



EARLY
1970s
Fr Jonathan Robinson gathers a small community

1 NOVEMBER
1975
Montreal Oratory established

6 SEPTEMBER
1979
The Oratory moves to Toronto and Holy Family Parish

1984
Start of St Philip's Seminary



1 JULY

1995

The Oratory
receives care of
St Vincent
de Paul Parish

25 FEBRUARY

2001

Dedication
of new
Holy Family
Parish after
the fire in 1997

3 JUNE

2020

Death of
Fr Robinson

1 OCTOBER

2022

Blessing
of new
Seminary
building



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or contact us at
mail@oratory-toronto.org





In Memoriam

The Very Rev. **Jonathan Robinson**, Founder and Superior of the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Toronto, was born in Montreal in 1929 and ordained a Catholic priest in 1962. He was educated in Montreal, Edinburgh, and Rome. For several years after ordination he served as Paul-Emile Cardinal Leger's English language Secretary. During a three-year term as Chairman of the Philosophy Department at McGill University, he felt called to establish an Oratorian house in Canada: the resulting foundation began in Montreal in 1975 and then moved to Toronto in 1979. In addition to being Oratorian Superior Fr Jonathan also served as Rector of St Philip's Seminary, founded in 1984, and at various times as Pastor of both Holy Family and St Vincent de Paul Churches. Besides academic publications, especially concerned with German Idealism, he wrote four influential works of spiritual and liturgical theology: *On the Lord's Appearing: an Essay on Prayer and Tradition* (1998), *Spiritual Combat Revisited* (2003), *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backwards* (2005), and *In No Strange Land: The Embodied Mysticism of St Philip Neri* (2015). He was a Chaplain of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and died June 3, 2020 at the Toronto Oratory, after a brief illness.

Speakers

His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo

Frank Cardinal Leo was born in Montreal in 1971, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1996. Having studied at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy 2006-8, he served in Apostolic Nunciatures around the world between 2008 and 2011. Upon returning to Canada Fr Leo joined the formation team of the Grand Séminaire de Montréal, and served as Secretary General of the CCCB 2015-2021. He was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal on 12 September 2022, and named as Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto on 11 February 2023. On 6 October 2024 Bishop Leo was appointed by Pope Francis to the College of Cardinals, and subsequently to the Dicastery for Legislative Texts and the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.



Sister M. Bernice, *Missionary of Charity*

Sister Bernice grew up in the ghetto of Baltimore MD. As a young woman she was deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement with the late Dr Martin Luther King, and was with him on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 when he delivered his iconic speech *I have a dream*. She has also pursued a range of academic studies in philosophy, theology, psychology and guidance and counselling, attending at various times Johns Hopkins University, the Catholic University of America, Boston University School of Theology and Dayton University (where she studied for a time alongside Frank Cardinal Leo). After running her own psychotherapeutic clinic in Baltimore, in 1982 she joined St Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, and it was during the first of their many meetings that Mother Teresa gave Sister her religious name. As a Missionary of Charity Sr Bernice has been on missions in the USA, Canada, and India. She first came under the spiritual care of the Toronto Oratory in 1988, and has been assigned to the Toronto house in Parkdale periodically ever since, developing close relationships with the Oratorian community, as well as with several generations of seminarians.

SALVE REGINA

Ant.
5.

S

Alve, Re-gí-na, * ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi-ae : Vi-ta,

dulcé-do, et spes nostra, sal-ve. Ad te clamá-mus, éxsu-

les, fi-li-i Hevae. Ad te suspi-rá-mus, geméntes et flentes

in hac lacrimá-rum valle. E-ia ergo, Advo-cá-ta nostra,

il-los tu-os mi-se-ri-córdes ócu-los ad nos convér-te. Et

Je-sum, bene-díctum fructum ventris tu-i, no-bis post hoc

exsí-li-um osténde. O cle-mens : O pi-a : O

dulcis * Virgo Ma-rí-a.

Acknowledgements

The Fathers and Brothers of the Toronto Oratory would like to offer sincere thanks to those who graciously accepted our invitation to speak at this evening's celebration:

His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo,
Msgr Michael Palud Cong Orat, Fr Ronald Angervil,
Sr Bernice MC, frater Athanasius Inman O Praem.

In addition we are very grateful to Tim Egan Esq for introducing our speakers and for so deftly mastering the ceremonies.

And finally we are greatly indebted to those who, behind the scenes, have lent their time and expertise to assisting in planning, designing and producing the entire event: Ms Sinthujaa Maria Anthony, Ms Melissa Campbell, Ms Anika Francis, Mr Jonathan Gagne, Mr Ale and Mrs Caroline Groen, Ms Angela Mary Issac, Mrs Marianna Osko, Mrs Olesja Poljak, Dr Miles Smit, Mr Tom Thienapirak, Mr Richard and Mrs Mary Rose Valenti and Mrs Ivony Vistan.

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