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c/o 123 E. Thirteenth St.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-7638  
Attn: Fr. Lawrence Juarez



DEDICATED TO:

OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION

# THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI

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REFLECTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS



CINCINNATI, OHIO

2012

# THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI

## REFLECTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

This booklet is a collection of writings concerning the “Oratory of St. Philip Neri”, a clerical society founded by St. Philip Neri in the 16th Century and which continues to this day in self-governing Congregations throughout the Catholic world.

These materials have been compiled by the Oratorian “Community-in-Formation” known as the *Society of St. Philip Neri, Inc.*, a 501(c)(3) corporation which seeks to found an Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Image on front cover:

*Madonna and Child and Saint Philip Neri*

Artist — Guido Reni (1575-1642)

Inside Cover

Image on back cover:

*The Assumption of the Virgin*

Artist — Esteban Murillo (1618-1682)

Back Cover

## CARDINAL BARONIUS' PRAYER TO ST. PHILIP NERI

*Look down from heaven, Holy Father, from the loftiness of that mountain to the lowliness of this valley, from that harbour of quietness and tranquility to this calamitous sea. And now that the darkness of this world hinders no more those benignant eyes of thine from looking clearly into all things, look down and visit, O most diligent keeper, this vineyard which thy right hand planted with so much labour, anxiety, and peril.*



*St. Philip's Vision of the Blessed Virgin*

*To thee then we fly, from thee we seek for aid: to thee we give our whole selves unreservedly. Thee we adopt for our patron and defender: undertake the cause of our salvation, protect thy clients. To thee we appeal as our leader, rule thine army fighting against the assaults of the devil. To thee, kindest of pilots, we give up the rudder of our lives; steer this little ship of thine, and placed as thou art on high, keep us off all the rocks of evil desires, that with thee for our pilot and our guide we may safely come to the port of eternal bliss. Amen.*

Cesare Barono (Baronius, Baronio) (1538-1607) was an early companion of Saint Philip who became superior of the Oratory in 1593,

when Philip stepped down. He was made a Cardinal and prefect of the Vatican Library by Pope Clement VIII to whom he was confessor. He is widely known for his monumental work *Ecclesiastical Annals* which he undertook in obedience to the Saint. He himself is acclaimed as Venerable.

- Taken from Website of the Toronto Oratory (CA)

## INTRODUCTION

### EXCERPTS FROM THE DECREE OF HIS EXCELLENCY, ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

WHEREAS, at the petition of the Reverend Father Lawrence Juarez and other faithful of our Archdiocese for permission to establish a Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in the City of Cincinnati, we have previously approved the beginning of the process towards such a foundation; and

WHEREAS, ... [t]he first stage of the foundation of such a community has now been completed under the supervision of the Very Reverend Eduardo Aldo Cerrato, C.O., Procurator General, and his Delegate, the Reverend Father Mario Alberto Aviles Campos, C.O.; and

WHEREAS by a Letter of 15 January, 2011, the Very Reverend Procurator General has officially recognized the said foundation undertaken by the Reverend Father Lawrence Juarez with our blessing as a Community-in-Formation under the authority of the Confederation of the Oratory

We now decree as follows:

- a) Our consent and permission for the beginning of the second stage of the process of foundation of a Congregation of the Oratory in our Archdiocese of Cincinnati ... are hereby granted.
- b) The incardination of all clerics of our Archdiocese who are members of the Community-in-Formation at the time of its canonical erection by the Holy See as a Congregation of the Oratory of pontifical right shall be transferred to the new .... Oratory of Cincinnati.
- c) The ordination title of the members of the Community-in-Formation who are promoted to sacred orders [preceding] the canonical erection as a Congregation of the Oratory of pontifical right shall be as clerics of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

## THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI

“Well, my brothers, when shall we begin to do good?” - St. Philip Neri

“Tremendous diversity is possible within the basic formula of the Oratory; it gives scope for prayer, study and all manner of external works of charity, so long as they do not disrupt community life. Too much stress on external work can unbalance an Oratory, if it leads to neglect of prayer and preaching and the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.” - *The Excellencies of the Oratory*

The Oratory founded by St. Philip Neri (1515-1595) is a group of secular priests and brothers who live together under a Rule, but without vows. Their bond is voluntary charity alone. Members of the Oratorian community work for the glory of God and the good of their neighbors.

“You may say that this is but a small company of volunteers compared with the disciplined forces of the religious bodies which sustain the Church with so much strength and splendor; and you are right. But, although it may be a small band, it is still a reinforcement, and sometimes a small reinforcement arriving at the critical moment of the battle is worth the whole strength of the army by enabling it to gain a complete victory.” - *The Excellencies of the Oratory*

## PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Almighty Father,

You have created us for some definite purpose. Grant us the grace to know the path You have planned for us in this life and to respond with a generous “Yes.” Make our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts fruitful ground for Your gift of vocations. May our young people respond to Your call with courage and zeal. Stir among our men a desire and the strength to be good and holy priests. Bless us with consecrated religious and those called to a chaste single life, permanent deacons, and faithful husbands and wives, who are a sign of Christ’s love for His Church. We commend our prayer for vocations to You, Father, through the intercession of Mary our Mother, in the Holy Spirit, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

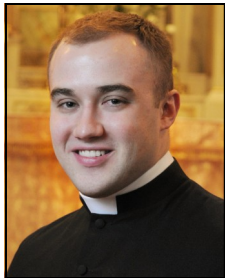
— ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR



*Shrine to Bl. John Henry Newman  
at Oxford Oratory (UK)*

The future apostolate of the Oratory — “God will give us work to do and the grace to do it well. It is safe to say that the soul of our apostolate will be the Eucharistic Lord. Serving as parish priests will be our main work I should think. We will readily provide the Sacraments with a specific focus on restoring the splendor of the liturgy to its proper form.”

### SEMINARIAN ADRIAN HILTON



Adrian Hilton is a First-year Theology seminarian at Cincinnati’s Mt. St. Mary’s Seminary and a founding member of the Community-in-Formation. Adrian is originally from Cincinnati and his home parish is Old St. Mary’s Church.

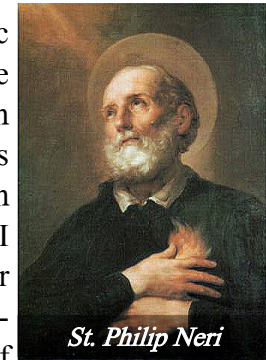
“The Oratory of St. Philip Neri is a unique vocation within the Church. Members of an Oratory live in community together, enabling its members to support and build up the others through constant charity. The life of the Oratorian is rooted in the community’s attachment to the Oratory house (the “pious house”), and it is centered on and fostered by a full liturgical life. The Oratorian life is flexible enough to serve and meet the needs of the particular diocese in which it is established.”

“It is my belief that the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is a perfect location for such a group. The extensive Catholic school system, the opportunity for chaplaincies, and the considerable need for priestly assistance for local parishes are all possible apostolates for a community following the way of St. Philip Neri in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.”

### ABOUT ST. PHILIP NERI

“*amare nesciri* [love to be unknown]” - Maxim of St. Philip Neri

“[St.] Philip lives in especial intercourse with the Saints of the Apostolic ages, with St. Paul, with St. John the Evangelist. Again, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Philip and St. James were his own particular patrons; and St. John the Baptist appeared to him in vision. I do not recollect any Saints of a later date, with whom he was in such intimate communion.” - Sermon of Bl. John Henry Newman



St. Philip Neri was born in Florence, Italy in 1515, but moved to Rome in his early adulthood. His zeal for souls and spiritual energy attracted the youth to him, forming an “oratory” with daily preaching and prayer. His work for the salvation of souls would earn him the name the “Apostle of Rome”.

“An apostle of the heathen, who finds his heathen not in the remote Indies, but he found it in the very heart and hearth of Christendom; the hermit, who looks for solitude in that most desolate of all wildernesses, and he found it in a great city; the reformer of the Church who radiates influence from a cell, instead of passing resolutions in the council chamber of Trent.” - Msgr. Ronald Knox



“He was kept at home, in the very heart of Christendom, not to evangelize, but to recover; and his instrument of conversion was, not Baptism, but Penance. The Confessional was the seat and seal of his peculiar Apostolate. Hence, as St. Francis Xavier baptized his tens of thousands, Philip was, every day and almost every hour, for forty-five years, restoring, teaching, encouraging, and guiding penitents along the narrow way of salvation.” - Sermon of Bl. John Henry Newman on St. Philip

“[St. Philip] acted in a jocular manner to conceal his deep emotion, or to put himself on a level with those around him. Humility was the virtue he strove most of all to practice, but of course he could not conceal his extraordinary gifts or sanctity... He lived in such a state of spiritual exaltation that at times it was with difficulty that he carried on his daily labors.” -

Taken from *Lives of Saints*, Published by John J. Crawley & Co., Inc.

“My children, be devoted to Mary: I know what I am saying! Be devoted to Mary!” - St. Philip Neri

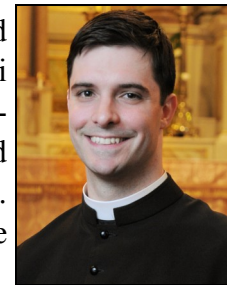


*Altar and relics of St. Philip Neri at Chiesa Nuova, Rome*

On the Oratory of St. Philip — “The world is moving further and further from Christ every day, and the Church needs to be prepared to introduce the world to Christ again. The Oratory, following the method established by St. Philip, is the way that attracts me to help nourish Catholics, evangelize fallen away and non-Catholics, and caring for those who are in need. At the same time there would be support from the members of the community through the common life of the Oratory.”

### SEMINARIAN JOHN GUNTHER

John Gunther is a seminarian and founding member of the Cincinnati Community-in-Formation. He has studied at St. Philip’s Seminary (operated by the Toronto Oratory) since 2008. John is continuing his studies at the North American College in Rome.



On the Oratory — “Stability, community, and the continuous example of St. Philip’s priesthood are the fundamental reasons for my interest in the Oratory. Fraternal charity demands that brother priests look out for and lead one another to God. St. Philip was a model priest, and I want to follow his example. St. Philip’s spirituality is that of the Gospel.”

The Cincinnati Community's Work — "Our apostolate will be one of sanctification of devout souls, both the lay faithful and the Oratorian members. The daily celebration of Holy Mass, spiritual exercises, purification of the soul in Confession and spiritual direction will all be part of the daily work of the Oratory. The Oratory's work, guided by the Archbishop, will for the good of souls entrusted to its care.

Daily prayer, both mental and vocal, are intensified in the context of the Oratory's community life. The Oratory must be constantly and unceasingly in prayer, even in the performance of seemingly mundane work."

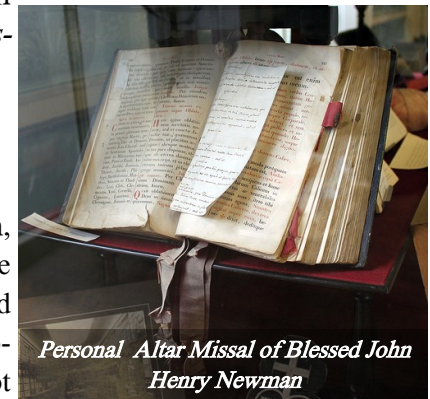
### DEACON JON-PAUL BEVAK



Deacon Jon-Paul Bevak is in his final year of studies at Cincinnati's Mt. St. Mary Seminary. He was ordained a Deacon by Archbishop Dennis Schnurr in 2011. Originally from Youngstown, Ohio, Jon-Paul is one of the founding members of the Cincinnati Oratory Community-in-Formation. He is expected to receive ordination to the priesthood in May, 2012.

On St. Philip Neri — "For several years, St. Philip has attracted me and has become a model for me in how to carry out priestly ministry. St. Philip was a man who spoke clearly to his era, but his message and work continues today in the Oratory he founded."

"He so accommodated himself to the temper of each, as, in the words of the Apostle, to become 'all things to all men, that he might gain all.' And his love of them individually was so tender and ardent, that, even in extreme old age, he was anxious to suffer for their sins; and for this end he inflicted on himself severe disciplines, and he reckoned their misdeeds as his own, and wept for them as such." Blessed John Henry Newman, *The Mission of St. Philip*

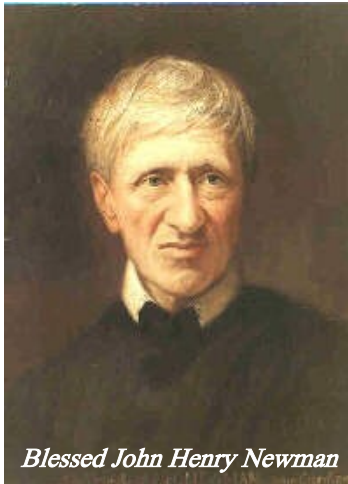


"Philip, my holy Patron, who wast so careful for the souls of thy brethren, and especially of thy own people, when on earth, slack not thy care of them now, when thou art in heaven. Be with us, who are thy children and thy clients; and, with thy greater power with God, and with thy more intimate insight into our needs and our dangers, guide us along the path which leads to God and to thee. Be to us a good father; make our priests blameless and beyond reproach or scandal; make our children obedient, our youth prudent and chaste, our heads of families wise and gentle, our old people cheerful and fervent, and build us up, by thy powerful intercessions, in faith, hope, charity, and all virtues. " Taken from Novena of St. Philip Neri composed by Bl. John Henry Newman

## THE WORK OF THE ORATORY

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“I do not know what end can be found more sublime than the one to which the sons of St. Philip are called; for their vocation consists in three things, the highest and holiest which adorn Holy Church; prayer, the administration of the Sacraments, and feeding the people with the daily Word of God.” - *The Excellencies of the Oratory*



“But I would beg for you this privilege, that the public world might never know you for praise or for blame, that you should do a good deal of hard work in your generation, and prosecute many useful labours, and effect a number of religious purposes, and send many souls to heaven, and take men by surprise, how much you were really doing ... but that by the world you should be over-

looked, that you should not be known out of your place, that you should work for God alone with a pure heart and single eye, without the distractions of human applause, and should make Him your sole hope, and His eternal heaven your sole aim, and have your reward, not partly here, but fully and entirely hereafter.”  
-Blessed John Henry Newman on the Oratory

## PERSONAL TESTIMONIES OF THE COMMUNITY-IN-FORMATION

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Fr. Lawrence Juarez is one of the founders of the Cincinnati Community-in-Formation and currently serves as its superior/moderator. Father Lawrence has served as parochial vicar of Old St. Mary's Church in Cincinnati since 2003.

“Beginning in 2008, a group of the faithful in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, including myself and several seminarians, have been discerning the formation of an Oratory of St. Philip Neri. One of the strongest reasons for my interest in such an Oratory is the long-term stability it would provide for Old St. Mary's Church.”

On the spirituality of St. Philip — “It is his virtue of purity which most particularly attracts me to the spirituality of St. Philip Neri. I believe that it is through community life, as promoted by St. Philip, that one can achieve purity of soul.

The daily living out of the life of a priest can be done only through the supernatural virtue of charity. This is the distinctive mark of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. It is a community of priests and brothers who seek to perfect charity through common life.”



MESSAGE FROM  
REV. FR. MARIO ALBERTO AVÍLES CAMPOS, C.O.,  
DELEGATE OF THE PROCURATOR GENERAL



In the name of the Procurator General of the Confederation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, I would like to congratulate the Community of St. Philip Neri in formation in Cincinnati. As you begin this journey of learning, spiritual growth, and education about the Oratorian way of life, and as you continue to pray to the Lord of the Harvest for an increase in Oratorian and priestly vocations rest assured of the continuous support of the Procura. You count on our support to fulfill the obligations found in the *Modus Procedendi in Praeparandis Congregationibus*, but most importantly we invite you to imbibe yourselves in the Oratorian spirituality and in the common life as these are the only sure foundation on which to build the house of our Holy Father Philip Neri. Finally, I would also like to thank the laity who have so generously, with their time, talent, and treasure, supported the establishment of an Oratorian Community in Cincinnati. Assuring you of my prayers for continued success, I remain,

In Christ and St. Philip Neri,  
Rev. Mario A. Avíles, C.O.  
Delegate of the Procurator General

The Cincinnati Community-in-Formation has now entered the second stage of its foundation. During this time, the Community (presently identified under the title *Society of St. Philip Neri*) will endeavor to live its community life according to the model of St. Philip Neri.

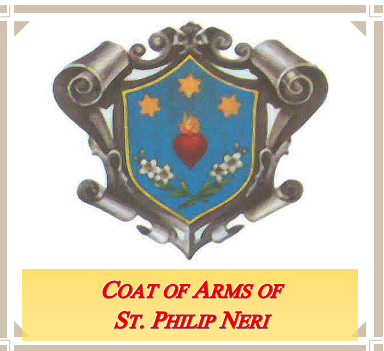
Under the direction of Fr. Lawrence Juarez and the guidance of the Procurator General and the Archbishop of Cincinnati, the Community will also discern its apostolate in Cincinnati.

The ideal of St Philip, after which the members of the Oratory strive, is one of community life and priestly service lived in a spirit of prayer, and where obedience is offered out of fraternal love, and not any external compulsion.

The Oratorian vocation allows for a degree of flexibility in pastoral work, provided that it is not incompatible with the demands of the duties of the Congregation. Internationally, Oratorians are involved in ministries as diverse as school, hospital, prison and university chaplaincies, seminary teaching, and work in Rome, as well as the more traditional parish ministries.

—Taken from Website of Oxford Oratory (UK)

“Only thus can we understand Philip’s Oratory, its usefulness and its beauty. It is not a religious order, but it is bound to aim at the perfection of religious [consecrated life]; it does not change the life of the clergy, but in those who embrace his rule it gives it order and life and perfection, while it holds forth to all the secular clergy an example it were well to follow.” - *Life of St. Philip Neri, Apostle of Rome* by Alfonso Capecehatro



Another aspect of the charism of the Oratory is devotion to reverence and beauty in the sacred liturgy. St. Philip Neri laid great emphasis on rendering due worship to God by using all of the talents at the disposal of men.

“Saint Philip insisted that the church building, the altar, the linens and the vestments be immaculate and as beautiful as possible. He inspired the Renaissance musician, Palestrina, to write polyphonic music for Mass. Saint Philip's priestly spirituality was riveted on the Holy Eucharist. Everything he did, from preaching, catechesis, and his work with youth to confession and spiritual direction, had one end — to lead people to union with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. “ - Fr. Frederick Miller, STD

“As a son of St. Philip I have especially to do with the world, and with people living in the world and trying to be good there, and to sanctify them in ordinary vocations.” -Father F.W. Faber



*London Oratory, London (UK)*

## THE FOUNDATION OF AN ORATORY IN CINCINNATI

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FROM THE LETTER TO ARCHBISHOP SCHNURR  
FROM FR. EDOARDO CERRATO, C.O.,  
PROCURATOR GENERAL OF THE  
CONGREGATION OF THE ORATORY, ROME

JANUARY 15, 2011

“Most Reverend Excellency,

I have received the report of Reverend Father Mario Alberto Aviles Campos, C.O., my delegate for the foundation of the oratorian Community which is emerging in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and I want to thank Your Excellency for the gracious reception given to this project.

I declare ... official recognition of the beginning of the process of foundation [of an Oratory in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati] and express thanks to Your Excellency for whatever you decide to assure the foundation in Your Archdiocese undertaken by Rev. Fr. Lawrence Juarez.

p. Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, C. O.  
Procuratore Generale”

A group of faithful in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, under the direction of Rev. Fr. Lawrence Juarez, have determined to seek the foundation of an Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Cincinnati. This process, begun in 2008, has matured to the point where both the Confederation of the Oratory (under the direct authority of the Vatican) and the Archbishop of Cincinnati have officially recognized this foundation and given their consent and permission.