

## WHAT IS THE ORATORY?

While St. Philip Neri is well-known in many parts of the world, and his feast day is included on the universal calendar, the community he founded is not known so well. Since there are so few of us (about 525 men in 86 communities worldwide), most Catholics have never heard of the Oratory, and some may find the terminology confusing. When we use the term “Oratory,” we can be referring to three distinct, yet related, aspects of our life. Exploring these further can be a helpful way to better understand what the Oratory is about.

“Oratory” can refer to the time of common prayer for which the members of the Congregation gather each weekday. The Oratory originated in the daily assemblies where St. Philip gathered people together to pray, so daily communal prayer is essential to our life. Our Congregation in New Brunswick gathers for Oratory each morning at 8:15. This time of prayer includes hymns, a litany, a reading, silent meditation, and Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours. We also gather each evening at 5:00 for Evening Prayer before having dinner together.

“The Oratory” also refers to our residence - the house where the community lives and prays together. From the time of St. Philip, Oratorians have had an attachment to their home and a fondness for their city. Our home in New Brunswick is the rectory at St. Peter’s Church, where we have lived since January 2006.

And, finally, “The Oratory” is the name of our community. In 1575, when Pope Gregory XIII gave St. Philip’s community its official status in the Church, he called it the “Congregation of the Oratory”, referring to the place where they gathered for prayer. For this reason, members of the community are referred to as “Oratorians.”

So, the three uses of the term “Oratory” really are connected: Oratorians are to be men of prayer, whose house is a place of prayer, and for whom it is appropriate that prayer is the identifying characteristic of our name.