

THE ORATORIAN APOSTOLATE

Apostolic work - that is, ministry in and for the Church - is one of the central ways through which Oratorian priests and brothers live out their vocation. St. Philip was involved in active apostolic work from his first days in Rome as a young adult, and he urged those who followed him to be active in ministering to the people of God: "Brothers, when shall we begin to do good?" Apostolic work is also an Oratory's primary means of temporal support. Each house, being independent, must maintain its financial self-sufficiency. While the community receives some income through gifts from benefactors and from fundraising efforts, most of its income derives from the monthly contributions made by the members from the salaries they receive for the apostolic work they do.

Each Oratory's approach to apostolic ministry is shaped by the gifts of its members and the needs and circumstances of the local community. Given its stability of place, an Oratory is able to get to know its city well, develop a care for its needs, and take a long-term approach to addressing them. This approach takes shape in dialogue with the diocesan bishop, discerning together how the gifts of the Oratory can best be used to serve the needs of the local Church.

There is no one specific Oratorian apostolate, as there is for some religious orders which focus on teaching, nursing, or some other particular area. Oratorians bring their own "flavor" to the various apostolic works they undertake. In general, the spiritual formation of the lay faithful and ministry with youth are priorities consistent with St. Philip's way. Oratorians do all sorts of apostolic work, including parish ministry, campus ministry, hospital and prison chaplaincy, high school and college teaching, and giving retreats and parish missions, to name the most common examples.