

**Visit to the Faculty of Theology at Saint Augustine's Seminary,
Toronto: Opening remarks (27 August, 14.30)**

Comments from the Faculty: "we would be delighted if Archbishop Polvani could offer Opening Remarks 5–7 minutes on August 27, which could include words of encouragement and greetings from the [DCE]. There will be approximately 180 persons in attendance: bishops, professors, staff, students, board members and invited ecumenical guests."

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Reverend Fathers,
Civil Authorities, Students,
Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, I am delighted to join you for this celebration of the feast of Saint Augustine and the formal inauguration of the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology at Saint Augustine Seminary. Although Cardinal de Mendonça is not able to be here himself, he extends his greetings to all of you.

I am grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Leo for the invitation to visit Toronto and to meet the community that makes up and supports this new Faculty. It gives me an opportunity to visit the beautiful and cosmopolitan Capital on Lake Ontario. Like Card. Frank Leo, I lived in Montreal and came to know Toronto in the Eighties, when I was a young student in Montréal for a workshop at the University of Toronto. It was a very different Toronto then and it is hard to believe how much it has grown and changed since then.

In particular, I thank His Eminence Card. Thomas Collins for his generous work and initiative in the process to establish this Ecclesiastical Faculty in service to the Archdiocese of Toronto and the entire Church.

I am grateful to Card. Leo for his own generosity in taking up the mantle of Chancellor of the Faculty and for his labours advancing the necessary steps leading up to this formal inauguration. We wish to highlight as well the diligent service of Mons. Anthony Robert Nusca. Few people know St. Augustine's well as him. As the first President of the Faculty, he will bear also the burden of its administration; this task is often invisible, but it is essential for preparing an optimal and engaging environment for teaching, learning, and research.

I am glad to underscore the work of some many dedicated professors that forms the heart of the Faculty. Both inside and outside the classroom, you, professors, will hand on the Church's teaching and form a true community united around the study of theology. I take this opportunity to repeat to you, the words of Pope Leo XIV when he visited the Catholic University of Central Africa: "dear professors, ... by bearing witness to the truth — especially in the face of the illusions of ideology and passing fashions — you will foster an environment in which academic excellence is naturally united with human uprightness."¹

Students, I encourage you to take full advantage of the theological education offered by this new Faculty, to allow yourselves to be formed into people who know God and, from this knowledge, speak the truth and work towards peace, themes that Pope Leo has emphasised in his magisterium. I am sure, you will remember these years at the faculty among the best in your lives. Enjoy every second of these moments and try to make true in your lives a very famous motto: "trassi de l'acqua non sazia la spugna"², "from the water I drew an unsatisfied sponge", an allegory in which the water is knowledge and our mind and hearts are the sponge. It comes from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The Poet reminds us that an unquenchable thirst for knowledge is unquenchable and is actually the best way to fight our egocentrism and egoism.

¹ Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Catholic University of Central Africa, Yaoundé, 17 April 2026.

² I Dante, *Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio, Canto XX

There is no contradiction or opposition actually there is and must be a synergy in wanting to serve the People of God and the desire to know more about the mysteries of God himself. Dear Students, take as an example Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati³; you are indeed called, in his words, “to the heights,” and the light received in your study of theology will illumine the paths to those heights in your own lives and in the lives of those whom you will serve.⁴

The Second Vatican Council reminded us that being part of a Faculty of Theology entails a weighty responsibility. As the declaration on Christian education *Gravissimum educationis* taught: “the Church expects much from the zealous endeavours of the faculties of the sacred sciences. ... It is the role of these very faculties to make more penetrating inquiry into the various aspects of the sacred sciences so that an ever deepening understanding of sacred Revelation is obtained, the legacy of Christian wisdom handed down by our forefathers is more fully developed, the dialogue with our separated brethren and with non-Christians is fostered, and answers are given to questions arising from the development of doctrine.”⁵

Theology offers us a path to God Himself: theology studies sacred Scripture and the tradition of the Church not as interesting historical texts but rather as God’s own revelation of Himself. As our understanding of what He has revealed deepens, He draws us to union with Himself. It is in union with our Creator that we finally discover our own identity in its fullness, and not only our own, but that of the entire people being formed by God. We therefore study theology in dialogue with our fellow members of the Faculty, with our fellow Christians, and indeed with all people of good will. I thank you all for your dedication to these aspects of the Church’s teaching mission, and I assure you of the support of the Dicastery for Culture and Education as you embark on this path.

³ Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati died at 24 from meningitis. He was from a family of the bourgeoisie of Turin and loved the mountains. His call “verso l’alto”, was pronounced a few days before his death when hiking.

⁴ Cf. Pope Leo XIV, Meeting with Students, 30 October 2025,

⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum educationis* 11.

I would also like to highlight a particular closeness to the Holy Father which God's Providence has arranged for you. Of course, every Faculty established by the Holy See enjoys a special relationship with the Bishop of Rome. In your own case, though, I cannot help but notice that this Faculty shares with Pope Leo the patronage of the great Doctor of the Church Saint Augustine. May Saint Augustine intercede for the professors, students, and administrators of this Faculty, and for all those who will come into contact with it in any way, so that the seeds you sow here may bear evangelical fruit in Canada and throughout the world.