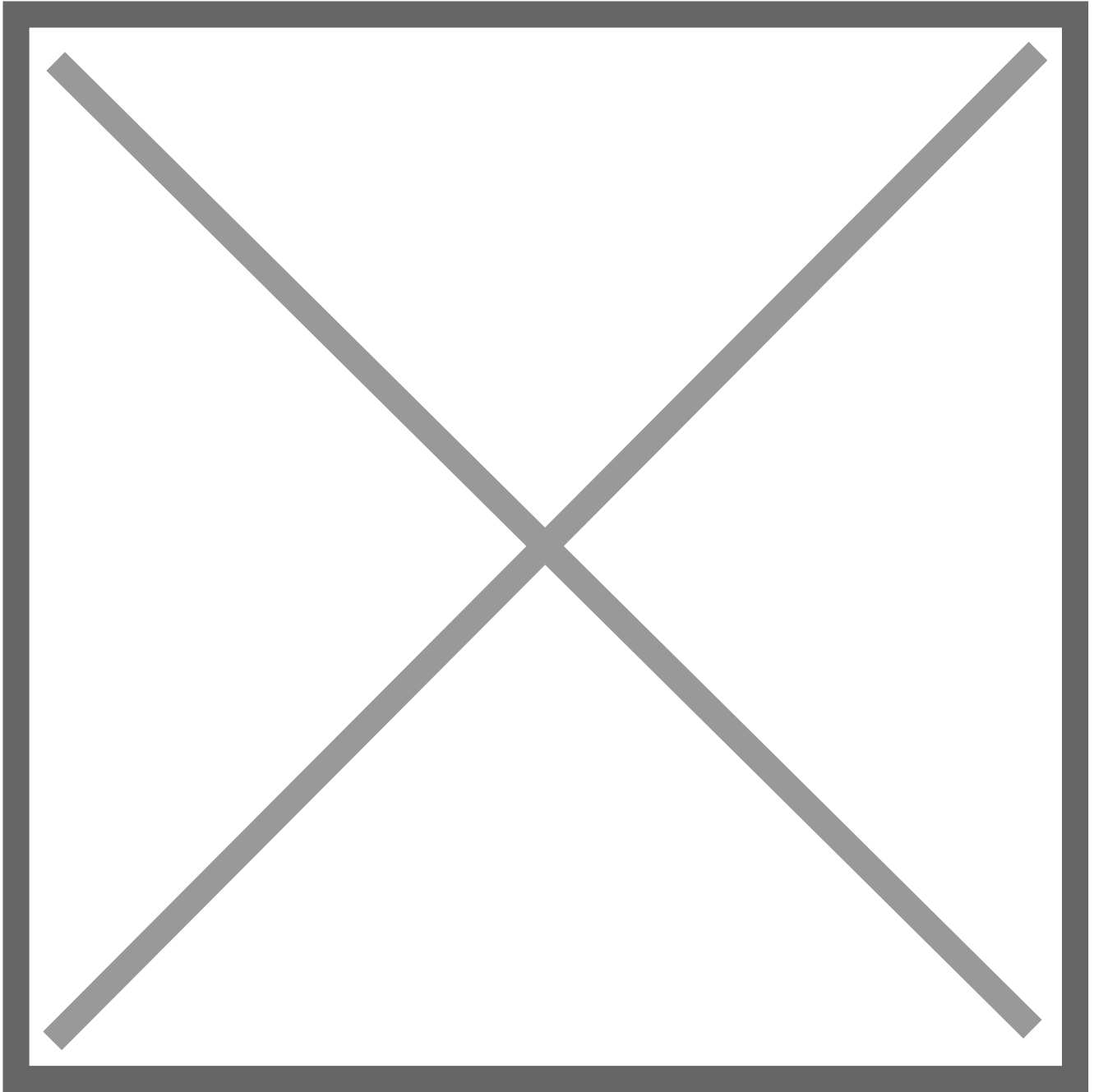


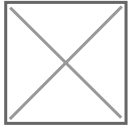
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Professor Pierluca Azzaro, left, executive secretary of the Ratzinger Foundation, and Fr. Roberto Regoli, president of Ratzinger Foundation announce that Notre Dame professor John Cavadini, who served as the director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life, has been selected as the winner of the 2026 Ratzinger Prize at the Holy See Press Office Sept. 22. (OSV News/Courtesy of the Ratzinger Foundation/Sergio Augusto Sannipoli)

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Vatican City — September 22, 2026

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The Vatican announced Sept. 22 that University of Notre Dame professor John Cavadini has been selected as the recipient of the 2026 Ratzinger Prize.

Cavadini specializes in patristic theology with a particular focus on the theology of St. Augustine and also served as the director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life from 2000 to 2026.

Pope Leo XIV will present him with the award in the Vatican's Apostolic Palace on Dec. 19. The pope personally approved Cavadini's selection as the recipient of the award by the Scientific Committee of the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation.

"I have tried to pursue my vocation as a theologian following the pattern of 3rd century theologian Origen of Alexandria who repeatedly declared that as a theologian he wanted to be a *vir ecclesiasticus*, a man of the Church," Cavadini said in a statement released following the announcement.

"At Notre Dame, I have been able to live out my vocation as a man of the Church and, at the same time, as a man of academia. I am particularly grateful for this award because it recognizes these two aspects of my vocation as a theologian."

The Ratzinger Prize has been described as the "Nobel Prize of Theology." It was established by Pope Benedict XVI, known as Joseph Ratzinger before he was elected pope, in 2011.

This year the Ratzinger Foundation has planned a series of initiatives across several continents ahead of the upcoming centenary of Pope Benedict's birth on April 16, 2027. The events include a symposium at St. Mary's University of Minnesota Nov. 2 to 4 and "The New Ressourcement" conference organized by Word on Fire Nov. 4 to 6.

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The Ratzinger Prize is annually awarded to scholars who have distinguished themselves through outstanding achievements in publication and scientific research. Past recipients have come from 18 different countries and from the fields of dogmatic and fundamental theology, sacred Scripture, patrology, philosophy, law and sociology, or in the arts, music, architecture and sculpture.

"Prof. Cavadini is highly regarded for the rigor of his theological publications, his commitment and zeal in university teaching, his academic expertise, his pastoral passion and his lifelong service to the Church," Fr. Roberto Regoli, president of the Ratzinger Foundation, said.

Cavadini has taught at Notre Dame as a faculty member since 1990 with a focus in patristic and early medieval theology, the theology of Augustine, and the history of biblical and patristic exegesis. He is the author and editor of several books, including "Visioning Augustine" (2019), "Explorations in the Theology of Benedict XVI" (2012), and "Roots: Catholic Youth Evangelization in a Post-Pandemic World" (2022).

Benedict appointed Cavadini to a five-year term on the International Theological Commission in 2009 and also named the professor to the Order of the Knights of St. Gregory the Great. Cavadini has also served as a consultant to the USCCB Committee on Doctrine since 2006.

The professor expressed gratitude to all his students, past and present, and to his colleagues at the University of Notre Dame, founded in honor of the Virgin Mary in 1842.

"I hope this award redounds, with gratitude, to the credit of Our Lady, the patroness of our university, under whose protection we have flourished for the last 183 years, and may it be so for the next 183 years," Cavadini said.