

# SEMINARY ADVENTURES

The Life of a Second-Year Theologian at the Pontifical North American College  
By Patrick Agustin

Two years of  
theology  
studies down...



...two more  
to go!

NAC seminarians who were involved with FOCUS

Ciao amici! Welcome to the next issue of *Seminary Adventures*! I am very excited to be sending you all this issue from the good ol' US of A! What a gift it is to be back in the states this summer after being away for almost two years. I arrived on June 7 and after a few quick days at my parents' home, I jumped into my parish assignment at Saint Raphael's in Rockville, MD. But before I get too carried away sharing what's been going on since coming home (gotta leave something for the next newsletter, right?), let's take a look back at the semester that was. A lot has happened this past spring – getting instituted as an Acolyte, experiencing Lent and Easter in Rome, teaching fourth graders about the sacraments – I could keep going! It was another great semester of new experiences and adventures, and I'm grateful to God for taking me on this journey. I'm also thankful to you all for joining me on this ride and for praying for me.



Mosaic ceiling at Santa Prassede

I think it's time we get into this issue. *Andiamo...*

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## Spring 2018 Semester

With the conclusion of the spring semester, I am two-thirds of the way finished with the STB degree (Bachelor of Sacred Theology). This semester was probably one of my favorites overall because of great content matched with engaging and intelligent professors. Here is a rundown of my classes (based on the course descriptions):

- **Prophetic Books of the Old Testament:** The aim of this course is to become acquainted with the Prophets and Prophetic literature of the Old Testament. By the end of this course, the student will appreciate all the more that the prophetic books have much to tell us about God and His relationship with man – which is still relevant today. This course is divided into two parts: Part One: The phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East; prophecy, the prophetic movements, and the role of the prophets in biblical Israel. Part Two: Introduction to individual prophetic books; study of their main contents and of their relation to history; study of the main theological themes that received major attention in the New Testament.
- **Pneumatology:** This course will study the Spirit's divinity, His procession from the Father and the Son, His invisible and visible missions, His seven gifts and the charisms. Theological issues raised by the charismatic renewal and the Pentecostal movement will also be considered.
- **Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance:** After an introductory examination of the historical foundations of the doctrine of the cardinal virtues, the virtues of prudence, fortitude, and temperance are studied: 1) individually; 2) in the context of their relationship to other virtues; and 3) in their practical bearing on the Christian life.
- **Salvation of Non-Christians in St. Thomas Aquinas' Corpus:** In this seminar we will cover themes from the nature of Faith and the necessity of Baptism to that of invincible ignorance. Since St. Thomas did not address this theme frequently in his texts, we will see a number of other key themes in his theology which will open the way to help answer these questions.
- **History of the Medieval Church:** A survey of the major events in the Church's history from the turn of the ninth century through the middle of the fifteenth century: crowning of the "pope's emperor," Investiture Controversy, Great Schism between West and East, birth of Christendom in the West, launch of the Crusades, rise of the Inquisition, birth of universities, new forms of religious life, Avignon Papacy, Western Schism signaling the end of Christendom in the West and the collapse of Byzantium in the East.
- **Epistles of St. Paul:** The course has three parts: Part One is an appreciation of Pauline personality and letters: Paul, the man, the Jew, the Christian, the Missionary, the Letter writer and the Theologian. Part Two is an exegetical analysis of Pauline letters: 1) Early letters (1 & 2 Thessalonians); 2) Great letters (Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans). 3) Captivity Letters (Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians). 4) Pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus). Part Three is an appraisal of Pauline theology: 1) Pauline anthropology; 2) human integration in Christ and aspects of salvation; 3) being an authentic Christian: faith-baptism; 4) Pauline spirituality: challenges & limitations.
- **Introduction to Canon Law:** History of Canon Law; structure of the Latin Code of Canon Law; sources and features of ecclesiastical law; General Decrees and Instructions; Singular Administrative acts; physical persons versus juridic persons; juridic acts; power of governance; ecclesiastical offices; people of God; clerics; supreme authority of the Church.



*The cortile (courtyard) at the Angelicum*



## Institution of Acolytes

On Sunday, February 25, my brother seminarians in Second-Year and I were instituted to the ministry of Acolyte by Archbishop Augustine DiNoia, O.P., Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As acolytes, it is our responsibility to assist priests and deacons in carrying out their ministries and to give Holy Communion to the faithful at the liturgy and to the sick. As you may recall, about a year ago, we were instituted to the ministry of Lector, which was an important step towards priesthood and allowed us to proclaim the readings at Holy Mass.

As compared to being a lector, there is a more outward sign of being an acolyte, in the form of the vestments we wear when we serve at Mass. There are three articles of clothing that an acolyte (as well as deacons and priests) can put on for Mass. These are called the amice, alb, and cincture. Here's a little background on these articles we put on, borrowed from [catholicstraightanswers.com](http://catholicstraightanswers.com) (because they explain it way better than I can):



*Being instituted an Acolyte*



*My brother seminarians and I following the institution world. The spiritual purpose reminds the man of his baptism, when he was clothed in white to signify his freedom from sin, purity of new life, and Christian dignity. Moreover, the Book of Revelation describes the saints who stand around the altar of the Lamb in Heaven as "the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). In the same way, the priest must offer the Mass with purity of body and soul and with the dignity befitting Christ's priesthood. The vesting prayer we pray as we put on the alb is, "Purify me, O Lord, and make my heart clean, so that washed by the Blood of the Lamb, I may delight in eternal joy."*

*The amice is a rectangular piece of white linen with two long cloth ribbons. The priest places it around his neck, covering the clerical collar, and then ties it by crisscrossing the ribbons in his front, bringing them around the back, around the waist and tying them in a bow. The practical purpose of the amice is to conceal the normal clerical clothing of a priest, and to absorb any perspiration from the head and neck. In the Graeco-Roman world, the amice was a head covering; often times worn underneath the helmets of the Roman soldiers to absorb sweat, thereby preventing it from flowing into their eyes. The spiritual purpose is to remind us of St. Paul's admonition: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The vesting prayer we pray as we put on the amice is, "Set upon my head, O Lord, the helm of salvation, to repel the attacks of the Enemy."*

*The alb (from the Latin albus, which means "white") is a long, white garment, which flows from the shoulders to the ankles and has long sleeves extending to the wrists. The alb was a common outer garment worn in the Graeco-Roman world. The spiritual purpose of the alb is to remind the man of his baptism, when he was clothed in white to signify his freedom from sin, purity of new life, and Christian dignity. Moreover, the Book of Revelation describes the saints who stand around the altar of the Lamb in Heaven as "the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). In the same way, the priest must offer the Mass with purity of body and soul and with the dignity befitting Christ's priesthood. The vesting prayer we pray as we put on the alb is, "Purify me, O Lord, and make my heart clean, so that washed by the Blood of the Lamb, I may delight in eternal joy."*

*The cincture is a long, thick cord with tassels at the ends which secures the alb around the waist. It may be white or may be the same liturgical color as the other vestments. In the Graeco-Roman world, the cincture was like a belt. Spiritually, the cincture reminds the man of the admonition of St. Peter: "So gird the loins of your understanding; live soberly; set all your hope on the gift to be conferred on you when Jesus Christ appears. As obedient sons, do not yield to the desires that once shaped you in your ignorance. Rather, become holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, after the likeness of the holy One who called you" (1 Peter 1:13-15). The vesting prayer we pray is, "Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, and extinguish in my heart the concupiscence of lust, so that there may abide in me the virtues of continence and chastity."*

I hope you enjoyed a little bit of that background information. The Catholic Church is so rich in tradition and symbolism, and the vestments are just the tip of the iceberg.



*Newly instituted Acolytes from DC*

Just a quick word on the first time I served as acolyte - it was a bit surreal being on the "other side" of the altar; that is, in the sanctuary rather than sitting in the pews. While I have been an altar server practically my whole life, being an instituted acolyte is a bit different. There are more responsibilities that come with this ministry, but it's another concrete step towards priesthood. One of the priests at the seminary told us that since we're now acolytes, it's time to start paying closer attention to what the deacons do during Mass since that will be the next and final step before priesthood. To be physically closer to the altar, to proclaim the Gospel and to preach a homily, to be able to hold the chalice alongside the priest as he holds the Body of Our Lord at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer... wow, what a gift from the Lord!

## A Roman Snow Day

On Monday, February 26, the seminarians woke up to something they never expected to see in Rome... SNOW! The weather forecast was calling for a chance of it a week prior, but we were pretty skeptical.

I woke up at 5:30am, rubbed my eyes, and got out of bed. I walked over to my window expecting to see maybe a dusting, but *whoa*, there was snow... and a LOT of it! The ground was completely covered, and the storm didn't look like it would be letting up anytime soon. I walked out of my room, and the guys in the hall were acting like school children yelling, "IT'S SNOWING! IT'S SNOWING!" I cracked up. For some, it was their first time ever seeing the white stuff.

We went about our morning with Community Morning Prayer and Mass, but we waited with baited breath to see if we had to go to school (even in seminary, a snow day is a welcome gift). Finally, during breakfast, our Vice-Rector stepped up to the mic and said, "We haven't heard from the universities about whether or not they will be open, but unless you really have to be at school for anything, you should stay here." There was a roar of applause and cheers in the refectory!

Since we had permission to miss classes that day (believe it or not, my university actually remained open), a number of us (along with our Rector and Vice-Rector) headed to St. Peter's Square to enjoy the snow. Since we were all already in our clerics, we just changed into some boots and threw on the thickest coats we had. Once in the square, snowball fights among the seminarians immediately commenced. Some seminarians even built "snow pope"- miter and all. "Snow pope" became quite a star... a lot of Romans wanted a photo with him!

After throwing snowballs at each other, we caught wind that seminarians from the Venerable English College were coming. When they arrived, we started yelling, "The British are coming! The British are coming!" We then started throwing snowballs at them, while at the same time, singing our National Anthem. It was a great time. We would have gone much longer if the police didn't stop us! It was definitely one of the most memorable days I have had in Rome.



*Snow pope*



*Snowball fight against the Brits in Piazza San Pietro*



*Enjoying the snow day - the first in 6 years!*



## An Audience with Pope Francis



*Pope Francis greeting the seminarians*



*NAC seminarians singing at the audience*

On Friday, March 16, seminarians from all over the world studying in Rome were invited to a special audience with Pope Francis in the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican. He called all of us to speak about the priesthood. He addressed the need for ongoing human and spiritual formation in the life of the priest, the importance of always being open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit through prayer, and being able to relate to lay people and to brother seminarians and priests. He emphasized these as means for a holy and happy priesthood. It was such a unique gift to be before the Holy Father in an intimate and informal setting and to hear his thoughts on the priesthood.

A group of us from the NAC had a chance to sing a few music selections before the audience with the Pope.

## Lent and Easter in Rome

During Lent, the NAC seminarians continued the ancient Roman tradition of the station churches. Beginning on Ash Wednesday through the Wednesday of Holy Week, many seminarians made a “mini-pilgrimage” to a different church in the city designated for each day of the holy season. Mass was held at each station church at 7am. Some of these churches are only open one day a year, and almost all of them contain relics of saints.

Holy Week and Easter at the NAC had to be one of my most favorite times of this year. It all began with the Palm Sunday liturgy. The schola was lined up on either side of the main corridor singing “Hosanna!” as the procession passed us. The entire seminary community gathered in the Chiostrino where Cardinal William Joseph Levada, the main celebrant, blessed the palms. The choir led the procession into the Immaculate Conception Chapel as the rest of the community followed behind. One of the most moving moments for me during that Mass was when three student priests chanted the entire Gospel (which as you may know for Palm Sunday is very long; the chanted version took 26 minutes). But wow... not only was it sung beautifully, but the chanting allowed the congregation to take in every word of the Gospel and enter more deeply into the mystery of Our Lord’s Passion. One seminarian told me, “In Her Wisdom, Holy Mother Church gives us everything on Palm Sunday so that we can take it with us into Holy Week and meditate on sacrificial love of Jesus.” How true. The schola also sang two beautiful pieces: *Crucifixus* by Antonio Lotti and *O Vos Omnes* by Pablo Casals, which you can listen to here (other surprises on there too):

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WGCEUzyicjsziUu3wO3\\_K3Gq2St\\_vzWe?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WGCEUzyicjsziUu3wO3_K3Gq2St_vzWe?usp=sharing)

We were on holiday from university during Holy Week, which gave us a rare opportunity to slow down from the busyness of school and seminary demands and to really spend this solemn time with the Lord. If you ask any priest, they will tell you that Holy Week and Easter are the busiest times for a parish. As future priests, we won’t have time like this again where we can really receive what God offers us during this week, so it was truly a gift.

The Triduum began with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, where we celebrate the Institution of the Eucharist. Cardinal Edwin O’Brien celebrated the Mass, where he washed the feet of twelve student priests, a beautiful representation of Christ washing the feet of His



*San Giorgio in Velabro, one of the station churches*



*Getting ready for the Palm Sunday Liturgy*



*Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday*



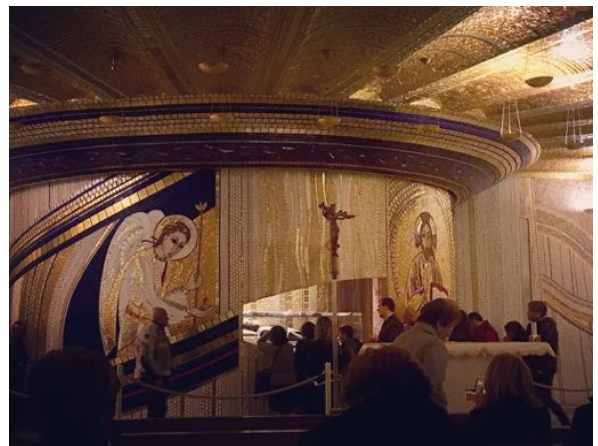
*Celebration of the Lord's Passion (Good Friday)*

followers, just as these men are following Christ by their "yes" to the priesthood. At the end of the liturgy, we processed with Our Lord to the Altar of Repose in the Assumption Chapel, located a floor below our main chapel, where we could pray before Him throughout the evening. After the Mass, a group of the DC seminarians ventured into the city to visit Jesus at the various altars of repose. It was truly special praying with my brothers, religious, and the Roman faithful. We ended the night in quiet prayer before Jesus at our own home.

On Good Friday, the atmosphere in the Immaculate Conception Chapel was markedly different. The sanctuary was stripped of its ornamentation. The crucifix which stands above the tabernacle was covered. The tabernacle itself was empty and the sanctuary lamp was gone. The schola led the community in the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer, yet noticeably absent was the organ (which remained silent until the Easter Vigil). All these details helped to place us in the proper spirit and to remind us of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In the afternoon, we celebrated the Lord's Passion, where, similar to Palm Sunday, the Gospel was chanted, but this time by three deacons. During the liturgy, we approached the cross and venerated it by kissing the hands and feet of Him Who died for us.

Finally, on Saturday, we gathered together for the Easter Vigil to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, Who overcame sin and death. It was raining throughout the evening, but the Lord gave us a break in the storm long enough so that we could begin the liturgy in the Chiostrino with the Easter flame, which would light the Easter candle (little fact I learned: the sanctuary lamp, i.e., the tabernacle candle, at the NAC is lit from the Easter candle and every subsequent sanctuary lamp is lit from the previous lamp so that the flame continues throughout the year). We continued with the Easter Vigil liturgy where the Exsultet (or Easter Proclamation) was sung and the readings detailing God's salvific work in history were proclaimed. It was a beautiful liturgy.

After Easter, we had a week off for a little break. I spent most of it in Rome to explore the many places I still hadn't visited, like the Borghese Gallery and the Capitoline Museum. Toward the end of that week, 2 DC brothers and I jumped into a rental car for a spontaneous trip out to eastern Italy. We stopped by Lanciano, where the first recorded Eucharistic miracle took place in the 8th century. Tradition holds that the bread and wine turned into actual Flesh and Blood when a doubting monk said the words of consecration at Mass. We stopped by the Church of San Francesco where the faithful can still venerate the relics of this miracle. It was incredible! We then made our way to San Giovanni Rotondo, where Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (aka Padre Pio) rests. Before getting to his tomb (where his body remains incorrupt), we had to pass through a winding hallway. On either side of the hallway were mosaics paralleling the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi and Padre Pio (who was a Capuchin Franciscan). I'm a huge fan of the artist, Fr. Marko Rupnik, SJ, who has done similar works all over the world, including at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC. These mosaics were a great way to meditate on the life of Padre Pio and prepare ourselves to meet him. The chapel itself was filled with even more beautiful mosaics that pictures could never do justice. After spending the night in San Giovanni Rotondo, we made our way back to Rome, but not before making one more stop at Monte Sant'Angelo, another pilgrimage site where Saint Michael the Archangel is believed to have appeared three times in the 5th century. It was a beautiful impromptu pilgrimage filled with many graces and joyful fraternity with my DC brothers.



*Above: The Tomb of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina  
Below: Fr. Kilner and Ben in Monte Sant'Angelo*



## Teaching at Saint Francis International School

The spring marked my last semester at my apostolate, Saint Francis International School, where I was the Grade 4 religion teacher for a year and a half. This semester, I was joined by my fellow JPII Seminary brother Dillon from the Diocese of Richmond.

This semester, we jumped into preparing the students for their First Confession and First Holy Communion. Not only was it an exciting time for them, but it was an exciting time for us, their teachers. They would be experiencing God's mercy and love in a new and more tangible way.

As we were going through our weekly lessons, I was tossed a bit of a curve ball. After class one day, a mother of one my students, Jackson, approached me and said that he wasn't baptized yet and that she would like him and his brother to receive that sacrament (Baptism is necessary to receive the rest of the sacraments). I wasn't expecting to get someone ready for Baptism, but I assured her I would do my best to make it happen. The family weren't natives of Italy, so there was a bit of a language barrier between them and the place where they attended Mass (an Italian church which offered an English Mass). I sent a note in Italian to their church, only to find out it is technically not a parish so they could not be baptized there. The church put me in contact with the English-speaking priest who celebrates the English Mass. His name was Fr. Luke, and he happened to be one of the adjunct spiritual directors at the NAC! This was a good sign, so I was hopeful! I contacted Fr. Luke to see if he could help us out. He said he would see what he could do. More on this in a bit...

On Tuesday, April 17, I invited two student priests from the NAC to hear my students' First Confessions. For those unfamiliar with Confession (aka Reconciliation), it is the sacrament where one confesses his or her sins to God through the priest, and the priest, being an instrument of God's mercy, absolves the person of all their sins (cf. John 20:23). Before confessions, Fr. Nick exposed Jesus in the monstrance (a golden instrument in which a Consecrated Host is placed for veneration by the people). We hoped this would leave a visual imprint of His Presence upon them and get them prepared to finally receive Him in Holy Communion a few weeks later. Fr. Nick asked them how they were feeling. Some said "nervous," "scared," "excited," and "happy." He reassured them that these were all natural feelings. He then read the story of the Good Samaritan, showing them that just as the man laying on the side of the road was brought to the inn by the Good Samaritan in order to heal and get better, the Church and confession is where we go for healing, and the priest helps in the process. It was awesome, and the kids really responded his words. One by one, they each had their first confessions heard. As they came out of the confessional, I gave them a thumbs up, and they returned one right back with a huge smile. I even overheard one of my students Luigi tell his classmate, "Mi sento benissimo!" which means, "I feel great!" After all was said and done, I asked them collectively how it went. They were excited to share their sentiments of feeling nervous at first but then that nervousness turning into joy. One of my students, Marco, caught me off guard with his response. He raised his hand, and I called on him. "Go ahead, Marco." He said, "At first I was scared, but then I was happy because it was the first time I really encountered Jesus." I looked at Dillon with my eyes wide open; what a grace-filled moment. That's the Holy Spirit at work! Before we left the church, I told my students, "Guys, you all worked so hard. I'm so proud of you." I actually caught myself choking up as I said that to them, but it's true. They really have come a long way.

With First Confessions finished, we set our sights on First Communion. I thought it would be helpful to explain the different vessels used during Mass so that the students could have a better understanding of what would be going on. I showed them the paten (a metal dish that holds the bread that becomes the Body of Christ), as well as the cruets (two crystal vessels holding wine and water). When I showed them the chalice, I asked if they knew what went inside. They responded, "Wine!" I then asked, "And what will it become?" "The Blood of Christ!" they responded. I then followed up with a tougher question: "Something else will be mixed with the wine. Do you know what it is?" They couldn't get it, so I told them a little bit of water is mixed in with the wine. To push them a bit, I asked if they knew why water was mixed with the wine. They couldn't figure out the answer until one kid, Stefano, raised his hand and said, "Mr. Patrick, is it because when Jesus sacrificed Himself on the Cross for us, a Roman soldier took a sword and put it Jesus' side and then blood and water came out?" I was stunned. "That's EXACTLY why!" I said. I don't know where he got that answer from, but I tell you, these kids have a way of surprising you.

Now back to "Mission: Baptism": It was a week and a half before First Communion, and I still hadn't heard back from Fr. Luke to see if he made any headway on finding a place for Jackson and his brother to get baptized. Because he wasn't baptized yet, Jackson didn't get his first confession heard, but I still had gone through the steps with him for when he is ready. Then on Friday, April 27, I get an email from Fr. Luke saying that he found a place and that the Baptism would occur the next day. I was ecstatic! I told Dillon, and we were able to be present at the baptism. It was a small ceremony - the family, Godparents, a few religious sisters, Fr. Luke, Dillon, and me - but it was really special. Jackson's mom was so happy she cried. I was thankful that God allowed this to happen.



*Last day of class with these ragazzi - they made signs saying "We'll miss you Mr. Patrick and Mr. Dillon"*

On Sunday, May 6, my students, Jackson included, received Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. The church was packed with the kids' families and friends. My students were dressed in their Sunday best. They were so eager for this day. Fr. Nick (from their First Confession) returned to celebrate the Mass. He gave a great homily where he talked about this new friendship that they will now have with Jesus because He will be with them. They are now "churches in cammino" or "walking churches" tasked with being missionaries to bring Jesus to their families, friends, and school. He got the parents' attention when he started addressing them in Italian, asking them to continue to guide their kids in the faith. At the end of the liturgy, one of my students, another Stefano, approached me and asked, "Mr. Patrick, are you proud of us?" Yea, kid.... So proud!

I couldn't be prouder of my students. To see them grow so much in a year - spiritually and in maturity - has been a huge blessing for me. Like I said, they will surprise you! It's easy to think they're not listening, but they are quite attentive and pick up on everything you say, for better or for worse. I hoped to have left a positive impression of the faith upon them and to give them the assurance that God loves them immensely and wants nothing more than to have a relationship with them now and forever.

## Pastoral Council



*Second-Year Fraternity Weekend in Spoleto*

As the 2018-2019 Pastoral Council Representative for my class, it was my responsibility to serve as the liaison between the Second-Year seminarians and the rest of the community. One of my duties was to give a class update at our monthly Pastoral Council Meetings. Additionally, I had to plan our Fraternity Weekend in Spoleto and the Spring Class Dinner.

During the weekend of March 2-4, the Second-Year men hopped on a coach bus for Spoleto, just shy of two hours away from Rome. The weekend gives the class a chance to grow in fraternity in an environment outside of the seminary. The weekend was full of rest, visits to local museums, board games, movies, and delicious Italian food. Mass and prayer was done at the beautiful Duomo (aka cathedral, where I was surprised to learn that a saint close to my heart, Saint Anthony of Padua, was canonized).



*Mexican-themed Spring Class Dinner*

On Friday, May 11, we had a Mexican-themed class dinner prepared by a number of talented cooks from our class. There was TONS of food – cheese quesadillas, chicken flautas, tacos, rice, beans, guacamole... it was quite the feast! Red Room Rejects lead guitarist Max played some tunes on his acoustic. We even had a piñata in the shape of red chili, which the guys got a kick out of. It was a great evening to celebrate the successful completion of two years in Rome and to look ahead with great anticipation of going home.

## Celebrating Corpus Christi in Orvieto & Bolsena



*The Duomo in Orvieto*



*The gang getting ready for Mass at the Duomo in Orvieto*

Every year on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the NAC seminarians are invited to participate in Mass and a Eucharistic Procession in the cities of Orvieto and Bolsena. These cities are very important to this particular day as tradition holds that it was established as a feast day by Pope Urban IV following a Eucharistic miracle. In 1263 in Bolsena a traveling priest who doubted the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist discovered that the host was bleeding and staining the corporal (the altar cloth on which the paten and chalice are placed). This corporal was moved from Bolsena to Orvieto and is kept at the cathedral there.

The Feast of Corpus Christi fell smack dab in the middle of the final exam period, but because I didn't get to go last year, I knew I couldn't miss this opportunity to attend. A group of about 30 of us hopped on a coach bus for the two-hour drive to Orvieto. Once we arrived, we walked through the beautiful medieval streets until we rounded a corner and before us was the beautiful cathedral of Orvieto, Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta. We were a bit early, so we had some time to grab a cappuccino and cornetto before Mass. There were other seminarians from other colleges present at the Mass, and we were all seated in choir just behind the altar and just behind the reliquary displaying the corporal with the Blood stains. It was so awesome to see.



The Mass was beautiful, and afterwards, a grand procession began with banners, people dressed in medieval garb, trumpets blasting, drummers pounding, etc. It was a sight to see. The seminarians followed afterwards, and processing just behind us was the corporal and the Blessed Sacrament beneath a canopy. We walked throughout the city as the faithful watched us pass by. The procession lasted about two hours. Once we made it back to the cathedral, we had Benediction (where the bishop carrying the monstrance with the Consecrated Host blesses the people). After all that walking, we headed to lunch at a local restaurant at the invitation of the bishop.



*The corporal from the Eucharistic Miracle*

The day wasn't over just yet. In the afternoon, we hopped on the bus for the second portion of our pilgrimage. We made our way to Bolsena to a small basilica named Santa Cristina, where the miracle itself took place. In Santa Cristina is a piece of stone stained with the Blood from the miracle. As we vested and took our seats in the tiny church, we waited for Mass to begin.

The organist begins to play the hymn and I see the procession making its way down the altar and into the sanctuary. As the main celebrant approaches the altar, I do a double-take. I ask the seminarian beside me, "Is that Cardinal Sarah?!" It was! Sarah is a cardinal from Guinea and serves as the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He has written many books, including *God or Nothing* and *The Power of Silence* (which I highly recommend). It was a great surprise to attend a Mass celebrated by him.

After the Mass, we participated in another procession through the streets of Bolsena, with Cardinal Sarah carrying the monstrance. One unique tradition in Bolsena is that the streets are filled with beautiful images made almost completely of flower petals. Local artists spent hours upon hours thinking up their designs and executing them. As we made our way through the town, we were careful to walk on either side of the images. However, only the person carrying the monstrance with the Consecrated Host was able to walk on top of the images and scatter the petals. It was really beautiful. Upon returning to Santa Cristina, we all knelt for Benediction. What a gift to be able to spend this day in these beautiful medieval towns to celebrate the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord.



*Beautiful street art in Bolsena made of flower petals*

## Looking Ahead to Next Year

Compared to this year, next year is looking a lot lighter in terms of my responsibilities. My house job next year will be the Head House Cantor, which means I'll be scheduling cantors for all our liturgies on a monthly basis and coaching them as needed. My apostolate for next year will be serving the military and their families at the American naval base in Naples. It's a far cry from teaching Grade 4 catechism to Italian kids, but I'm really looking forward to this apostolate. I really hoped to get this apostolate since I will be ministering to those in the military and their families in the Archdiocese of Washington.

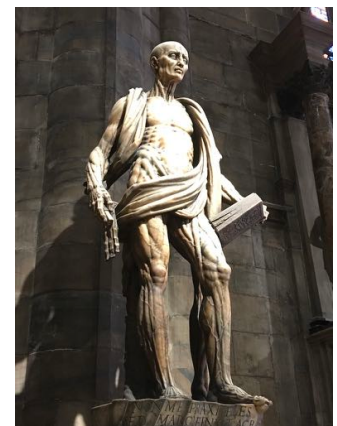
Third-Year will be a big year. As I mentioned, it's my last year before I get the STB degree (Bachelor of Sacred Theology) and before moving on to a two-year STL (Licentiate of Sacred Theology) program. And it's the final year before, God-willing, I will be ordained a deacon. A lot of people told me that theology goes by faster than pre-theology. Boy, they weren't kidding! It's crazy to see how fast time has flown.

### Prayer Intentions

- For all seminarians, especially those from Washington and the NAC, but in a particular way, those being ordained to the priesthood and diaconate this summer
- For the parishioners of Saint Raphael's, who I will be ministering to this summer
- For my sister Ninia and her fiancée Joe, who will be married on September 1
- For the "New Men" who will be entering the NAC in the fall, for a smooth transition for them and their families



*The Duomo in Milan*



*Pretty sick statue of Saint Bartholomew in the Duomo in Milan*

## Finally Going Home

I remember arriving as a “New Man” in August 2016 and thinking to myself, “How am I ever going to last in a foreign country for two years? Will I really go that long without setting foot on American soil?”

And here we are. On Thursday, June 7, after almost two years away and some 12 hours in transit, I was home. I can't tell you how good it feels to be back. Having been on a number of planes these past two years, on the other side of every plane door was another country, another culture to be explored. But as we were making our descent to Dulles International Airport (IAD), I remember thinking to myself, “*This time, home is on the other side.*” Once we touched down, I was so ready to get off the plane and see my folks. I deboarded, saw all the familiar (and understandable!) signs of IAD, and hurried as quickly as I could through customs. I saw my parents and gave them a huge hug. My mom said, “My baby is home!” I guess even when you're a 32-year-old studying to become a priest, you never stop being your mom's “baby.”

DC is a much different place than when I left it two years ago. What used to be the Verizon Center was now the Capital One Arena; there's an MGM Grand Hotel and Casino less than 10 minutes from my house; there are new Maryland license plates; and the Capitals weren't yet the Stanley Cup champions. Also, Trump wasn't president.

Nevertheless, it's still *home*. I was asked to serve the Transitional Diaconate Ordination at the Cathedral of St. Matthew a few days after I arrived. I remember driving to the ordination rehearsal and remember saying two things to myself: (1) “Man I missed driving!” and (2) “I forgot how beautiful DC is!” Seeing all the green in the city, the architecture, the people... I never loved the city more.

The diaconate ordination was a wonderful reunion seeing all my brothers again and meeting the new ones who entered seminary since I had been away. This ordination was extra meaningful for me as this was the class I looked up to when I first entered seminary 4 years ago, and now here they are just a year shy from priesthood. I was the bookbearer, which meant I was kneeling right beside the ordinandi as they were making their promises before God and His Church. Being right there with them brought thoughts of what my own diaconate ordination will be like, and how I look forward to that day.

After a few days at my parents' home, I began my summer parish assignment at Saint Raphael's in Rockville, MD, about 45 minutes away from DC. I'm about three weeks into the assignment, and I'm really enjoying it at the parish, which is a very active one! The people have been incredibly welcoming, kind, and generous since I arrived. I am living at the rectory with the pastor, Fr. Mike, and the parochial vicar, Fr. Dave (who was just a few years ahead of me at the University of Maryland). Some of the things I have done so far include serving, lecturing, and cantoring at Masses, bringing Holy Communion to the sick and home-bound, meeting with the principal, teachers, and students of the school, participating in Pastoral and Finance Council meetings, meeting with the young adult and high school youth groups, and working a bit in the parish office. It has been a great learning experience seeing all the different things that go into running a parish and what happens day-to-day. In the weeks ahead, I will be giving a theology talk to some camp volunteers at the nearby parish, continuing to bring Holy Communion to sick, and giving my vocations story on my last day on August 5. Please pray for me, the priests, and all the people we will minister to here at St. Raphael's.



*The Trinity Dome at the Basilica in Washington, DC*



# More Photos



*DC Fraternity Weekend in Abruzzo*



*Look who came to visit - Federica and Simone from Padua*



*In Siena with my Jesu Caritas Group*



*No school = beach day*



*North American Martyrs*

*NAC won the Clericus Cup for the first time in 5 years!*



*Visiting Elisa and Vittorio in Milan*



*From LA... with Michelle Lilienfeld*



*Singing "Brother" by NEEDYTOBREATHE at this year's Rector's Dinner*

## Closing Words



*Piazza San Pietro at night*

I find that by the time I get to this part of the newsletter, I'm running out of things to say! I was looking at some photos that didn't make it here, stuff of my social media, and even my spiritual journal for some inspiration. A particular entry from my journal caught my eye, and I wanted to share a few thoughts on it before ending this issue.

The entry is from February 13, 2018. One of the things that I pray for is an increase in wisdom (kind of like Solomon in the Bible). Having studied philosophy and theology these past four years, it can definitely be a bit overwhelming at times, especially for a brain like mine that loves numbers. Trying to explain concepts like the Trinity as subsistent relations or understand infused versus acquired knowledge in Christ will make your head spin! But I was praying for wisdom because of a sincere desire to grow in a deeper knowledge of the faith and to be able to articulate it well.

But with this particular intention in the back of my mind, I was praying the Office of Readings for that day (Tuesday, Week II for the Sixth Week of Ordinary Time). It was the Second Reading that really hit home for me. *God's timing really is perfect, and He does give you what you need when you need it!* The entry was from the Discourses against the Arians by Saint Athanasius where he discusses "wisdom." The first line reads, "The only-begotten Son, the Wisdom of God, created the entire universe."

What God was saying to me as I read the line was this: *The Son is the Wisdom of God.* When I had been asking for wisdom previously, it was as if I was desiring and praying for something *apart* from Jesus. But Jesus, the Son of God, is Wisdom Himself. Wisdom isn't separate from Jesus. Essentially God was telling me, "Desire Jesus, because He is the Wisdom that you seek." This is how one will obtain True Wisdom: intimate relationship with Jesus.

Doesn't this ring true for similar intentions like when we ask God for things like "love" or "happiness," as if these things are separate from God Himself? True Love and True Happiness begin with Christ and have their end in Christ. All the rest follows.

And that's the end. I hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter as much as I enjoyed putting it together. "Thank you" never seems to be good enough, but I'll say it again... thank you for your prayers and support on this journey. Please continue to pray for me as I pray for you all. God bless!

Alla prossima,  
Patrick

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