

# SEMINARY ADVENTURES

THE LIFE OF A THIRD-YEAR THEOLOGIAN AT THE  
PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE

BY PATRICK AGUSTIN



"Disputation of the Holy Sacrament" by Raphael

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## 2019: A Big Year Ahead

Welcome to this issue of *Seminary Adventures*! Every time I send out a newsletter, it seems like ages since the last one (this time it has been almost 9 months!). A lot has happened since the last update: returning to the US after two years away, my sister got married, new courses at the Angelicum, a new apostolate, and tons of new experiences. I look forward to sharing a few of those graces with you all in this issue.

Looking ahead, 2019 will be a big year. God-willing, I'll be ordained a deacon on Thursday, October 3, at Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. Where did the time go? Please keep my brothers and me in your prayers as we prepare for ordination.

But before I get too ahead of myself, let's get back to the last few months.

*Andiamo...*



## SUMMER IN THE STATES

### Parish Assignment at Saint Raphael's



*With Fr. Dave (parochial vicar) and Fr. Mike (pastor) of Saint Raphael's*



*The altar at Saint Raphael's*

My last newsletter left off with my summer parish assignment at Saint Raphael's in Rockville, MD, a suburb about 45 minutes outside of Washington, DC. For eight weeks, I lived in the rectory (the priests' residence) to get a sense of the day-to-day life at a parish. As you can probably imagine, parish life is much different than seminary life!

Saint Raphael's is quite active, even in the summer when things normally slow down at a parish. There were two daily Masses at 6:30am and 9am, and six Masses on Sundays - 7am, 8:30am, 10am, 11:30am, 1pm (in Spanish), and 6pm. There was Eucharistic Adoration every Tuesday evening; High School Youth Group every Sunday evening; Divine Mercy Young Adult Group every Saturday; five assisted-living homes within the parish bounds where we brought Holy Communion on a weekly basis; a school; and a summer camp for kids that was run with the neighboring parish. Many families were met and meals shared. There were many Baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

I have so many stories and graces from the summer, and I wish I could include them all here, but there is one in particular that I'd like to share. The Villages at Rockville is an assisted-living facility (with both retirement and rehabilitation wings) within the parish boundaries of Saint Raphael's. One Monday, I accompanied an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) on her weekly visit to the Villages to bring Holy Communion to the Catholics living there. As we went from room to room, we arrived at Giovanna's room. She was in her late 80s, and her room was located in the rehab wing, which means that her stay was only supposed to be temporary. Upon arriving at Giovanna's room, we found her occupied with the nurse. We told the nurse that we were from Saint Raphael's and were there to bring her Holy Communion. The nurse asked us to return later; we obliged. We continued our rounds and returned to Giovanna's room before departing. We did not find her there, so we asked the information desk on the floor where she might be. They said they were not sure, but that she might be in the rehab center, so we went there to see if we could find her. If she was not there, we would just return to the parish. We did find her; she was by herself on one of the bike machines.

We approached Giovanna, and since I noticed she had an Italian last name, I asked her if she spoke Italian. She seemed frail and did not speak much, but she answered my question with a gentle nod. I began to speak to her in Italian and asked her if she would like to receive Holy Communion. She again nodded. The EMHC led the prayer and gave her Communion. After a few moments, I asked her if she wanted some water to drink and again, she gave me a nod. Upon finishing, we said our goodbyes and returned to Saint Raphael's.

Two days later, I received an email from the parish secretary with details for a funeral for someone who had just passed away. When I opened the email, I recognized the name immediately: Giovanna. Giovanna had passed away the day after our visit. I was surprised. Though frail, Giovanna did not seem at the point of death, and the fact that she was in the rehab wing meant that she was intending to return home. I told the EMHC whom I "shadowed" what had happened, and she was moved by the news.

The EMHC and I talked about the experience and what a gift it was to have been able to bring Holy Communion to Giovanna before she died. God made it possible for us to find her after missing the opportunity to give her Holy Communion the first two times. We could have easily left.

I was able to serve at her funeral. It was a beautiful gift to have met this woman alive just days before and bringing her Communion to now being at her funeral. Perhaps priests see this often, but for a seminarian, it is not too often that he sees this cycle.

I learned a lot during my time at Saint Raphael's, and I'm so grateful for all the people I met and the experiences I had. I look forward to using what I learned in my future priestly ministry.



## Summer Seminarian Gatherings

Although I spent a majority of the summer at a parish, we were encouraged to set aside time for fraternity with the other seminarians in the area. Having been away from DC for two years, it was a blessing to reconnect with the seminarians I had not been able to stay in touch with and meet all the new seminarians (19 men entered this fall!). It was also great to hang out with some NAC seminarians on this side of the Atlantic. Men from my Jesu Caritas Fraternity Group (comprised of DC and Arlington, VA, seminarians) went for a hike on the Billy Goat Trail, ate some Korean BBQ, and hung out at the rectory of one of the guys' parish assignments.

At the beginning of August, we had our annual Seminarian Days at Saint John Paul II Seminary (where I did my Pre-Theology formation). Seminarian Days is a gathering of all the seminarians from the Archdiocese (both old and new) for a few days of prayer, hanging out, and excursions. During those days, we had Mass at Saint Ignatius - Chapel Point (one of the oldest Catholic parishes in continuous service in the US), a cookout sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, and a tour of the Pentagon. We also played some softball in the rain.



*Fraternity time hiking the Billy Goat Trail with my Jesu Caritas Group*



*Cookout at the Donohoe compound in Southern Maryland*



*Picnic and walk on Santa Monica Beach with this crew!*

## Roaming around the States

Following Seminarian Days, I had a few days at home before I jumped on a plane back to LA LA Land (Los Angeles, CA). I was excited to return there after all this time. I was really looking forward to seeing my friends again and visiting all my favorite spots in the city and doing a few of things I used to do when I lived out there. I was able to stay at Saint Monica's, which was a great joy because the community played a big role as to why I came to love Los Angeles so much.

I remember arriving in LA on August 10. I jumped into my rental car, turned on the radio to my favorite station (93.5 FM for old-school hip-hop and R&B), threw on my shades, rolled the windows down, and began to drive around the streets that were still so familiar. All the memories and nostalgia hit me like a ton of bricks – the familiar sights, sounds, and smells; the beautiful weather; even the traffic. It was good to be back.



Taking all these things in again reminded me why I loved this city so much. Then I realized that only God could have called me out of such an amazing city and an amazing life. God did call, and I'm grateful. As I was praying and reflecting on my return to LA, God showed me that it was good to come back to LA and see what I left behind - the job, the people, the lifestyle - not to show how big of a sacrifice it was, but to see how good God is. That was the grace.

From LA, I headed to Chicago for the Baptism of my Godson, Elliott, and his twin sister, Lucy. Adam and Kelly, Elliott and Lucy's parents, are good friends of mine from the young adult group at Saint Monica's. I was honored to be asked to be Elliott's Godfather and overjoyed that I could be present to welcome him and his sister into the Church.

My summer in the states concluded with the wedding of my sister Ninia to her husband Joe. The two got married at Saint Martin de Porres in Poughkeepsie, NY, about an hour-and-a-half train ride from Manhattan. I had the joy of serving at the wedding ceremony. The ceremony was followed by a reception for 300+ family and friends of the bride and groom. There were tons of food, a lot of dancing, and an abundance of joy. I could not have been happier for my sister and new brother-in-law.

The day following the wedding, we all made our way to Croton-on-Hudson, NY, where my brother Paul and his family live. After more eating and celebrating, it was time to say "arrivederci" to my family and friends in the states. I made my way to the Newark International Airport to catch the red-eye back to Rome.



*Baptism of Elliott and Lucy at Old Saint Pat's in Chicago, IL*



*At Ninia and Joe's wedding reception in Poughkeepsie, NY, on September 1, 2018*



*Far left: Visit with my friend Mark back in DC*

*Top center: Visit from Tita Ella and childhood friend Karla in Rome*

*Bottom center: Visit from Fr. Edwin from the Philippines in Rome*

*Above: Visit from Fr. Mark, pastor of St. Bartholomew where Dcn. Ben and I each spent a summer assignment*



## BACK IN ROME - A JAM-PACKED SEPTEMBER

### September Workshops: Pastoral Counseling, Homilies, Retreat

Once I arrived in Rome, I didn't have a lot of time to settle in. I joined my class for the September Workshops, which had already begun. As you may recall, last year's workshops were heavily focused on preaching (i.e., delivering homilies) since most of the year's formation would be dedicated to that. This year's workshops, however, were focused on pastoral counseling. A clinical psychologist was brought in from the states to give conferences on how to interact with people who may come to the priest for various issues: grief counseling, marriage counseling, infighting within a ministry, etc. I realized that counseling is definitely more of an art than a science, and I hope to build this important skill over time. Additionally, we had a few workshops dedicated to "advanced preaching," which included preparing and delivering homilies for funerals, weddings, etc., as well as a few days dedicated to Hispanic pastoral ministry.

Following the workshops, my class took our annual week-long silent retreat. This year, we went to Casa Divin Maestro in Ariccia, a town just outside of Rome. The retreat this year was different from years past; the previous two years' retreats were held in Greccio and had daily conferences, while this retreat was individually guided by a spiritual director with whom we met every day.

There were many graces from the retreat, but one I'll share here has to do with Colossians 3: 1-4: *"So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory."*



*Class photo from Third-Year Silent Retreat in Ariccia, Italy*

Upon returning to Rome, a chronic pain in my right foot returned. The pain got especially bad during the retreat, and it made it very difficult to walk around. I pretty much only saw my room, the chapel, the dining room, and my spiritual director's office the entire week. Sometimes the pain was too much that I had to stay in my room, even to pray. *It's like I had to remain hidden.* During the retreat, I was reading *In Sinu Jesu*, written by a Benedictine monk who wrote down the locutions he had of Jesus and His Mother Mary. One of the recurring messages the monk received was that Jesus was looking for priest adorers, for men who will adore Christ - both outside and inside of the tabernacle. Christ desires for His priests to adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament and yearn to be Him when they can't. Jesus said to the monk, *"Observe Me in the Sacrament of My love. The Sacred Host that you see is silent, still, humble, poor, and hidden. Imitate Me in the Sacrament of My love. Become silent, still, humble, poor, and hidden. Hide yourself in Me as I am hidden in the tabernacle, and as I am hidden beneath the appearance of the Sacred Host."*

The Lord showed me that I needed to experience this physical hiddenness of staying in my room to understand what it means to have a life hidden with Christ in God. It means to do everything with Christ and in Christ, to abandon myself to Him, to unite my joys and sufferings with His, and to see each moment of my life as an unfolding of His Father's will.



## Diaconate Week



*Four new deacons for DCI (Joe, James, Ben, and Christian)*

The month of September at the NAC concludes with Diaconate Week. Diaconate Week this year was special. On Thursday, September 27, forty men were ordained at the Altar of the Chair in Saint Peter's Basilica, of which four came from the Archdiocese of Washington. It was awesome to see four of the guys that welcomed me into the seminary four years ago finally reach this point. To see them officially say "yes" to God's call and for the Church to affirm that call; to see them make the promises of prayer, obedience, and celibacy before God and His Church; to see them prostrate themselves and give up their lives willingly for God and His people... it was incredibly moving. I could not have been happier for them, and I had never seen them happier than at that moment.

My house job for the year is Head Cantor, and one of my responsibilities was to cantor for the Diaconate Ordination at Saint Peter's. I never thought I would have the opportunity to sing at Saint Peter's, let alone lead the congregation in music. I led the Litany of Supplication, where the Church on earth joins with the saints in heaven to beseech God on behalf of the men to be ordained. As the Litany is being sung, the deacon candidates are lying face down in a gesture of humility and supplication. After singing with the Diaconate Choir for the past three years, this was to be the last time I would sing with them as the next time would be, God-willing, my own diaconate ordination.

Following the ordination, we returned to the seminary for a reception for all the guests, then dinner in the evening at da Orazio with the newly ordained deacons for DC and their family and friends.

The following day, the tradition has been for the new deacons to have a Mass of Thanksgiving at one of the many churches in Rome, where they would assist at the altar and preach for the first time publicly. I had the joy of attending two Masses of Thanksgiving for the DC guys, at which one I was asked to cantor.



*2018 Diaconate Ordination Choir*

*Mass of Thanksgiving at Dodici Apostoli with Dcn. James and a few seminarians*



## Prayer Intentions

- For all those just ordained to the diaconate, particularly those from the Archdiocese of Washington, the NAC, and the Diocese of Padua, as they live out their diaconal ministry and prepare for ordination to the priesthood later this year
- For my brother seminarians and me, who will be ordained to the diaconate this year, that we will continue to grow in holiness and give ourselves selflessly to the vocation God has called us to
- For a successful completion of my STB studies



## FALL 2018 SEMESTER

*With the end of the Fall semester, I have just one more semester left before completing all the requirements of the STB (Bachelor's Degree in Sacred Theology). Here's the rundown of my classes (based on the course descriptions):*

- Johannine Writings:** The purpose of the course is to acquaint the student with what has been referred to as the 'Johannine Corpus': The Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and the Book of Revelation, because of certain linguistic, symbolic and theological affinities. The course will examine these elements in each of the Johannine writings. The question of provenance and historicity of the writings will also be addressed, and a reading strategy provided for a better understanding of the profound revelations the writings represent, and which constitute the Scriptural basis and support for a number of fundamental doctrines of the Catholic Faith.
- Catholic Epistles:** The aim of this introductory course is to become acquainted with the main characteristics of the following Catholic Epistles: James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude. A short discussion concerning the place of these letters in the New Testament canon and their use in the early centuries will open the course. This leads to an introduction to each of the letters under examination: genre and style, structure, addressees, purpose, place of composition, date, and authorship. We will discuss theology, Christology, and Ecclesiology of each letter. This course will conclude with a brief discussion concerning the importance of the Catholic Epistles in relation to other biblical writings.
- Justice and Allied Virtues:** The topics discussed in this course include: justice in relation to charity and other Christian virtues; the notion of "right" in medieval and modern Catholic tradition; society and the common good in relation to legal, distributive, and commutative justice; specific requirements of justice regarding human life, material goods, honor and esteem, communication, privacy and secrecy; religion in connection with justice; truthfulness, gratitude, and other associated virtues; equity as essential complement to justice.
- Ecumenism:** Ecumenism is about seeking dialogue and unity among the Christian religions (cf. John 17:21). The course will be organized according to "Modules": Spirituality, Method, History, Systematics. We will review Vatican Council II's *Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio*, John Paul II's encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity's *Directory for the Application of the Norms and Principles on Ecumenism*, among others.
- Sacraments in the Life of the Church (I):** Part 1. Sacraments in General: The development of the doctrine in Scripture and Tradition (institution, name, properties, number); Aquinas synthesis (*Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, q. 60-65). Part 2. Sacraments in Particular. - The sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism; Confirmation.
- Fundamental Sacramentality Seminar:** A seminar on the different aspects of fundamental sacramentality: Church as a sacrament (*Lumen Gentium*, 1); Christ as a sacrament; the sacramentality of the Word; the concept of a sacrament in Aquinas; sacramental man; is creation a Sacrament? The sacramentality of the poor... A good contemporary and traditional synthesis of dogmatic theology, and a perfect complement to the annual course on sacraments.



Sacraments lecture



## PIER'S DIACONATE ORDINATION IN PADUA

On Friday, October 26th, I hopped on a train to my home away from Rome, Padua. It had been about ten months since my last visit. My friend Pierclaudio was going to be ordained a deacon! I met Pier during my summer assignment in San Bartolomeo Apostolo in Tencarola. He was the seminarian assigned to that parish and one of the first people I met when I showed up at the rectory almost two years ago.

The ordination itself was beautiful and moving. The Cathedral was packed with the faithful who were excited to welcome five new deacons. I had the opportunity to process in with the other seminarians from the Diocese of Padua. I remember being up there in the sanctuary, taking the whole experience in, asking myself, *"How did I get here?"* I'm in Padua, attending a diaconate ordination Mass in Italian, for a person I didn't even know before the summer of 2017. How did our paths even cross? Only God in His Providence could have ever willed something like this to happen. I was so grateful to God and so proud of my friend Pier.

After the Mass, we headed to Padua's major seminary just down the street for a reception. It was great to see so many people from Tencarola there for Pier and to reconnect with them and catch up (and practice some Italian). Following the reception, don Daniele, the parochial vicar of Tencarola asked me if I wanted to see the scouts with whom I went to the Holy Land during my summer abroad. I excitedly said, "Yes!" It was going to be great seeing them. He also threw in, "Would you like to give a talk to them?" I laughed, but obliged because I know there will be many more instances like this in the future where I'll be asked to speak unprepared! We drove up into the hills in pitch black darkness and surprised the scouts with our visit. I gave a talk about faith and trust in God using my own vocation story. It was a brief visit, but it filled my heart with joy.

The following day, I attended Mass at Cristo Rey, Pier's parish where he would be preaching at all the Masses. He asked me to serve the 11am Mass with him (but by then he had already preached an earlier Mass, and I think already baptized a baby!). It was beautiful to see the joy on Pier's face living out his calling. I look forward to the day where I can deacon at a Mass he will celebrate or even celebrate Mass together (in English, in Italian, both... who knows?!)

After a lunch reception with his family and friends, I hopped on the train back for Rome, with a heart full of gratitude and joy for an incredible weekend in Padua.



*With the newly ordained don Pierclaudio*



*Friends from my summer assignment in Tencarola*



*Serving at don Pier's Mass*



## NEW APOSTOLATE AT NSA NAPLES

Upon the conclusion of my second year of theology, my time with the students at Saint Francis International School came to end. I really enjoyed teaching them and preparing them for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.



NSA Naples Apostolate team with Navy Chaplain Fr. Lito (center)

My new apostolate for the next two years is at NSA (Naval Support Activity) Naples, supporting the American military and their families down there. A group of third-year seminarians and deacons take turns going down every weekend to serve at the Masses, teach Religious Education, share meals with families, and assist the chaplain with any of his programs.

For example, on December 8, 2018, I, along with two deacons and a fifth-year priest, had the opportunity to lead an Advent Evening of Recollection that included Eucharistic Adoration, the opportunity for Confession, and a few reflections prepared by us. Something like this had not been done at NSA Naples in recent memory, so it was a wonderful and unique opportunity to introduce something new to the community.

Fr. Lito, the chaplain, gave us freedom with regard to the topics of the reflections. After putting our heads together, we had come up with a number of potential ideas: speaking about Isaiah, reflecting on the persons of Joseph, Mary, and the Infant Jesus, reflecting upon the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, etc. After consulting the fifth-year priest, he thought it would be better to go even more basic: prayer. We thought it was a great idea and settled on this theme to be the thread for the three talks we would be giving. One deacon would kick off the Advent Evening of Recollection with a reflection on the Sacrament of Confession, the second deacon would give a talk on *Lectio Divina* (praying with Scripture), and I would close out the evening leading the Rosary with Scriptural meditations.

As I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament before going up to lead the Rosary, I began to pray over the word “mystery.” The Lord brought a number of insights to mind, and He prompted me to share these insights with the people gathered. I was not anticipating on giving a reflection, but He moved me to. I began with how easy it can be to zone out or become distracted when praying the Rosary, but the Church in Her Wisdom, gives us the mysteries of the Rosary to reflect upon. When hearing the word “mystery” we might think of it as something that cannot be known, but I have heard it described as being called such because we cannot say enough about it – it is so deep, so expansive. I shared that we are given these mysteries to reflect upon – the same mysteries Mary must have kept in her heart. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then how much more are these mysteries worth? As we reflect on these mysteries, we would be entering into Our Lady’s heart. I ended with, “If we find ourselves getting lost in the repetition, let us ask for the grace to get lost in the mystery.” This definitely was a line from God.

I have really enjoyed this apostolate so far. It is probably the closest thing I could have to an American parish experience abroad. When giving our preferences for these new apostolates, NSA Naples was my first choice given the military presence in the Archdiocese of Washington. I wanted to better understand their experiences and needs since I would inevitably encounter them throughout my priesthood (I have already met a number of families that have connections to the Archdiocese of Washington, particularly my home parish of Saint Columba and my most recent summer assignment at Saint Raphael’s!).



## CHRISTMAS BREAK

### Around Belgium

For Christmas, I and three brother seminarians (Tim, Tony, and Joseph) took a trip to Belgium and the surrounding countries. We began in Liege, Belgium, which was prompted by the fact that the tomb of Saint Lambert rests in Liege's cathedral, and this saint happens to be the patron of Tony's parish.

Upon arriving in Belgium, we hopped in our rental car, checked into our AirBnB, and drove straight to Maastricht in the Netherlands. There is a small military base there, so thanks to Tim and his service with the Air Force, we were able to load up on American groceries that you might not normally find in Europe (like bacon!). We explored a few of the Christmas markets in Maastricht before heading back to Liege.

On our second day, we drove to Cologne, Germany, for a day trip. We attended a beautiful Mass at the Cathedral (which houses the Shrine of the Three Kings). Not too far from the Cathedral were the tombs of Blessed John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan friar from the 13th century (who argued for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary), and Saint Albert the Great (the teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas). It was awesome to be able to pray at their tombs and to thank them for their contributions to the Church.

We spent Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Liege, with Mass at one of the local parishes. We had a great time making our own meals, sharing our family recipes, and really enjoying the fraternity time together. On Christmas Day, we had cinnamon rolls, eggs, and bacon for breakfast (Tim's family tradition) then a Christmas ham with all the trimmings for a late lunch. It was also fun calling home on Christmas Day and seeing each other's families and friends via FaceTime. While it wasn't home, it definitely was not a bad way to spend Christmas Day with my brothers. We left Liege and made our way west towards West Flanders, Belgium. Before we reached our final destination, we made stops along the way, visiting Leuven (visiting the tomb of Saint Damien of Molokai and the former American Seminary there) and Waterloo. The second half of the trip was filled with so much war history, beginning with the French Revolution through World War II. We visited the American cemetery of the fallen soldiers near Flanders Field; we walked through one of the trenches; we visited the Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, Belgium; and towards the end of the trip, we crossed just over the border to Dunkirk, France, to cap off with a World War II visit. While on the west side of Belgium, we made side visits to Bruges and Ghent also.

It was a grace-filled Christmas break, and I'm very grateful for everything we were able to see, the experiences that we had, the fraternity that we shared, and the memories that will last a lifetime.



Above: Outside the Cologne Cathedral  
Above right: Inside the Cologne Cathedral  
Right: Shrine of the Three Kings, Cologne



Tomb of Saint Lambert, Liege, Belgium



Tomb of Saint Damien of Molokai, Leuven, Belgium



American cemetery for the fallen soldiers of WWI, Flanders Field



In Bruges for Christmas Break with Tim, Tony, and Joseph



## Assisi

After whirlwind Christmas travels, I returned home to the NAC to ring in 2019 with a few of my brother seminarians. It was great to be on our tower and see all the fireworks go off all around the city. Then one of the guys said, "Well boys, this is the year we get ordained!" Wow, God-willing, I'll be ordained later this year. It's a bit surreal to say that, but at the same time, not all that scary. It's more excitement than anything else.

As such, I thought it would be good to go to a quiet place around Italy to spiritually prepare for the year ahead. I and my brother seminarian Martin took a train to Assisi to spend three days there praying to Saint Francis and Saint Clare. Martin had never been to Assisi, and it had been over a year since I had been back. I had wanted to make a visit to Saint Francis this year because God-willing, my classmates and I will be ordained on the date of his death, October 3, and will preach for the first time publicly on his feast day, October 4. I have chosen Saint Francis as my patron for my preparation to the diaconate, so it was humbling to be able to pray at his tomb for a few days and ask for his intercession.

Another person whose intercession I have begun asking for daily is Venerable Carlo Acutis. I had heard about him before and knew a little of his story, but a friend of mine told me that his tomb was just outside Assisi and that it would be worth visiting. Carlo died at 15 years old from leukemia, but even in his earthly life, he was already a saint in the making. Being a self-proclaimed "computer geek," Carlo had the desire to document all the Eucharistic miracles throughout the world and put them on a website. Within a few years, he completed his goal. He said, *"The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven."* Martin and I searched the cemetery for a good hour before finally finding his tomb. We spent a few moments before Carlo's tomb, asking for his intercession. His story is quite incredible. For more info on him, visit: <http://www.carloacutis.com/en/association>.



View of Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi



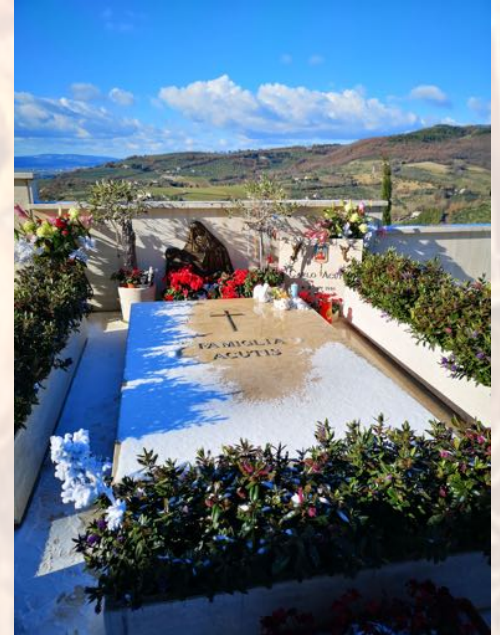
With my brother seminarian Martin



Tomb of Saint Francis of Assisi



Spot where Saint Francis died, October 3, 1226



Tomb of Venerable Carlo Acutis, Assisi, Italy

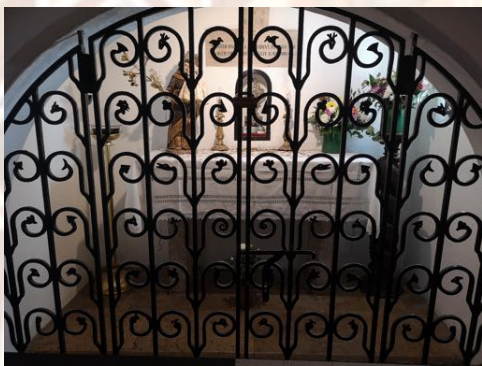


## A VISIT TO OUR LADY OF FÁTIMA

Upon the start of the New Year, we had a few more weeks of classes and then final exams. Once those were completed, we had a few days of break before the second semester began. A few brother seminarians and I took a trip to Portugal. We stayed in Lisbon at a vibrant parish named São Nicolau. The parish had three daily Masses each day (including the last Mass in all of Europe at 10pm!), perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, and many young adults. The parish took us like family, and we felt at home immediately. During our few days in Portugal, we made stops all around Lisbon, visiting the place where Saint Anthony (of Lisbon or Padua depending who you ask) was born, the Cathedral, and a number of churches and monasteries.

We also made visit to Our Lady of Fátima, a Marian apparition site about an hour and a half outside of Lisbon. On May 13, 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary first appeared to three shepherd children - Lucia and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta. The children described seeing a "Lady more brilliant than the sun." The Lady told the children to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and to pray the Rosary every day for an end to the Great War. The Lady appeared to them a few more times, to the unbelief of the locals. She told the children a miracle would take place on October 13, 1917. Tens of thousands of people gathered at Fátima and what took place was known as the "Miracle of the Sun," where some report to have seen the sun dancing.

It was a beautiful visit to Fátima, where we were able to attend Mass at the Apparition Chapel. We also saw the crown that contains the bullet from John Paul II's assassination attempt. While in Fátima, I made sure to pray for you all and your intentions.



*Spot where Saint Anthony was born*



*Igreja de São Nicolau, Lisbon, Portugal*



*With the generous priests of São Nicolau, Fr. Mario and Fr. Hugo*



*Old Basilica of Our Lady of Fátima*



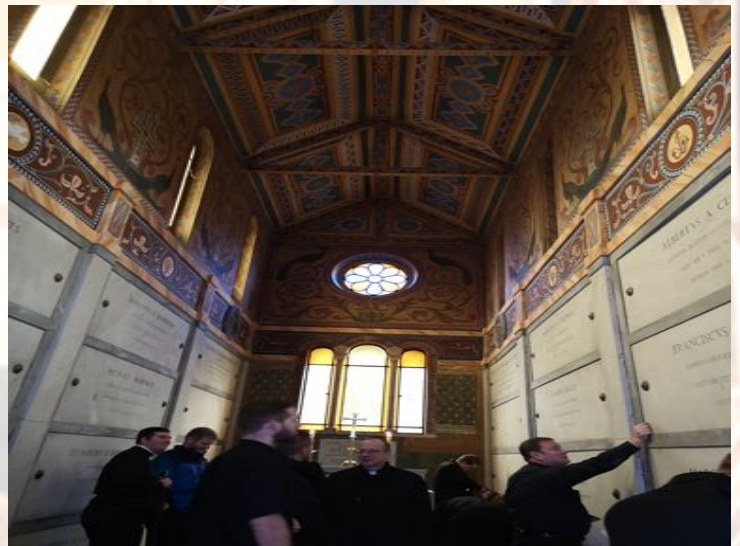
*Our Lady of Fátima*



*Visit to the home of Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, to whom Our Lady appeared*



## MORE PHOTOS



Top left: In Vienna, Austria

Top right: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Saint John Paul II Seminary Dinner at the NAC

Center left: With Cristiano, current seminarian at Tencarola

Center right: NAC Mausoleum at Campo Verano for All Souls' Day Mass

Bottom left: Tomb of Saint Dominic, Bologna, Italy

Bottom right: Blarney Castle, Cork, Ireland



## CLOSING WORDS



*Our Lady of Częstochowa*

As I said in my introduction at the beginning of this newsletter, a lot has happened these past few months – yes in my own life, but very much so in the life of the Church. While I don't think this newsletter is the appropriate place to express my grief and shock over the current situation in the Church, and in particular the Archdiocese of Washington, I would be remiss if I completely ignored it. What I will say is that I am even more resolved to be the best priest I can be, which I can only do by the grace of God. Now, more than ever, the Church, the victims, my brother seminarians, myself, priests, and bishops, all need your prayers. These scandals have hurt the Church immensely, but consolation comes in Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20, **"And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."**

When I spoke to a priest about these scandals, he brought up an analogy to the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa (pictured above). Our Lady is depicted here with two huge scars on her right cheek. A legend says that in 1430, the Hussites stormed the Pauline monastery in Częstochowa and attempted to get away with the image. Unable to get away, one of the plunderers took the image and threw it on the ground, inflicting two lashes to the right cheek. When he tried to strike it a third time, he fell to the ground and writhed in pain until he died.

The priest compared the Church to the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa. Just as this image will bear these scars, these scandals have hurt the Church greatly and they too will leave a scar upon Her. However, like the image, the Church remains beautiful. She is Our Mother.

Please continue to pray for the Church, Her leaders, and Her members. With the utmost sincerity, thank you for your continued prayers and support. And know of my daily prayers for you all and your intentions.

God bless,  
Patrick

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