

A warm summer hello to my St. Philip Neri parish family,

The transition between academic life and a structured day to day routine at the seminary has been going very well. As different as the two different experiences are, the major content is all the same - praying, going to mass, spiritual reading, and helping build up the Church. Although seminary takes 6 years, which seems to be a very long time, it doesn't prepare any seminarian to stay within the walls of the seminary, but prepares us to go out to the parishes - Christ's vineyard – and to be part of a faith community. Just like the mass, it does not end at the Eucharistic Feast but with the final commission for us to "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," or "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." We are truly a missionary Church!

It has been almost 3 weeks in Manistee and there is much to do. I have had the opportunity of serving at daily mass along with numerous funerals and weddings. Until this last week, I was spending much of my spare time with the students at the Catholic school in town – Manistee Catholic Central. It is one of the four Catholic schools in the diocese – St. Mary's Lake Leelanau, Gaylord St. Mary's Cathedral School, and St. Francis are the other three. The students are being educated on their faith with classes on the Bible, the Catholic Catechism, Theology of the Body and are attending weekly mass. It is powerful to see the effects of that faith can have when it is in the classroom. Please continue to pray for our Catholic Schools, especially for the faculty, priests, their Catholic and academic studies, and for an increase to their enrollments.

Additionally, I have had the opportunity to spend time in the greater Manistee community. It has been a unique blessing to serve the sick, the homebound and those in jail in the local area. Some are young and lost, others are sick and lonely. For the last few years, I have sadly forgotten about my commitment to community service. In the midst of a busy working life, I had overlooked my obligation to visit sick parishioners, family or friends or assist at a food pantry, or spending time doing something else for those in need. If someone asked me to go to a certain volunteer event and I had time, I would agree, but I wasn't doing it on my own.

Luckily this summer assignment would change that! Fr. Chet Collins and Fr. John McCracken invited me to assist them at local hospital, rehab clinic and jail. After just a few visits of serving those that are sick, elderly, imprisoned or simply in poor spirits, the perception of the blessings and priorities in my life have improved and much more clearly. All the sudden the daily ups and downs that caused so much anxiety seem so little in the great scheme of things. When I hear about the family circumstances about those in jail or in rehab, and what they went through, I thank God even more for His numerous blessings on my upbringing in beautiful Empire, Michigan. It also makes me thank God more for the relatively small crosses I have to bear in my life.

The Church has something called the 7 corporeal acts of mercy which aim the Catholic faithful to relieve worldly suffering that surrounds us. They are:

The Corporal Works of Mercy

- 1) Feed the hungry
- 2) Give drink to the thirsty
- 3) Clothe the naked
- 4) Shelter the homeless
- 5) Visit the sick
- 6) Visit the imprisoned

7) Bury the dead

These can all be referenced in **Matthew 25: 34-41** (See Below):

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

The last Corporeal Work of Mercy, Burying the Dead, can be found in the book of Tobit.

I remember volunteering for the Boy Scouts back in my college days and how that was truly the highlight of my week. God made us to help one another, especially the poor – the poor of heart, spirit, mind, money, and everything in between. After a few weeks of regular visits to the hospital, the jail and rehab clinic, I have felt spiritually rejuvenated. It is no coincidence that our Catholic Church has these seven corporeal works of mercy and that the Bible highlights them so clearly. It is not only for the poor who are being helped, it is for us as well. If the sick I am visiting even get half the joy that I do, it is more than words can express!

On a more casual note, during the evening and night time hours that I have free, I am able to keep up with some spiritual reading, long runs and bike rides for some exercise, and exploring the downtown and beaches of Manistee. I have missed those beautiful Lake Michigan sunsets we get to enjoy all summer long!

I hope to see you all very soon! Please keep all of our Diocese of Gaylord seminarians and future vocations in your prayers. Please be assured of my prayers for all of you.

St. Philip Neri and St. Joseph, pray for us.

God Bless,

Mitch Roman
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Gaylord Discernment Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Your Son told us to ask You to send workers into the harvest.

Bless our beloved Diocese of Gaylord with:
holy priests and seminarians who radiate Your love;
zealous religious who imitate Your Son's poverty,
chastity and obedience;
devoted deacons who inspire us to ever greater service;
faithful husbands and wives who reflect Christ's love
for His spouse, the Church;
and single men and women who love You above all else.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,
open the hearts of those who have yet to discern their calling
to the still whisper of Your voice
and the transforming power of Your grace.

Send Your Holy Spirit to help us recognize Your will
and embrace it in loving trust.

As we each strive to live out our vocation,
may our humble efforts proclaim Your greatness
and secure this local Church on the firm foundation that is
ONLY JESUS!