

Greetings to my St. Philip Neri Parish family!

Buon Natale e Buon Anno! *Merry Christmas and Happy New Years!* It has been quite an amazing experience here in Rome over the last few months. It is difficult to believe that it is already January! But maybe that has something to do with the lack of *abundant* snow that we are so accustomed to in Northern Michigan!

These past few months have been especially packed because it was the holiday season. It was very different spending Thanksgiving, Christmas and celebrating the New Year away from home, but having over 300 NAC priests, staff and brother seminarians together in one place made it very special. For Thanksgiving, we had the typical American Thanksgiving of turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing – but since we were in Italy, they found a way to make *pasta* a part of the meal, so we had some sweet potato ravioli too!

For the Christmas break, although we are not allowed to go home, we were encouraged to travel around Europe to experience the Advent and Christmas celebrations in another culture. So with 5 other seminarians from my class, we planned a 12-day trip: 6 days in London, England and 6 days in Lisbon, Portugal. We had a wonderful trip, filled with everything from sight-seeing major monuments like the London Tower and Bridge, to beautiful liturgies at various Churches and Cathedrals, especially the Lessons and Carols sung by the Cathedral Boys Choir at Westminster Cathedral on Christmas Eve.

One of the most memorable excursions was a day-trip to Fatima, Portugal where Our Lady appeared before three children in 1917. Our Lady of Fatima asked the children to pray for many of the lost souls on earth and for a stronger devotion to our mother in heaven, especially by using the devotion of the rosary.

Over the course of 6 consecutive months of apparitions to the children, she proved her presence to the whole town of Fatima when she performed the miracle of the sun: where the sun supernaturally grew very large and danced in the sky. This verified that the children truly had an experience with Our Lady, especially to government who was trying to spread disbelief about the children's' message.

It was quite amazing to walk in the quiet, rolling hills of olive trees where she had appeared so mystically to the children and pray in their footsteps. There was a very profound feeling of peace there.

(On another note, Our Lady of Fatima was whom Pope St. John Paul II attributed his miraculous safety from his assassination attempt. The bullet that was taken from his body is now inside the crown of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima!)

Now that we are back in Rome, we return to our studies with our first semester exams next week! So please keep us in your prayers. Thank you to all for your prayers and letters you have sent, they are very much appreciated.

Have a very blessed beginning of the New Year, especially the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis!

In Christ,

Mitch Roman

Seminarian, Diocese of Gaylord, MI

1st Year Theology

Pontifical North American College, Rome





Our group of 6 NAC seminarians in front of the Tower of London Bridge in the evening.



Standing in the **Pena National Palace in Sintra, Portugal**, a small town outside Lisbon, which is popular day-trip for tourists like us! The palace was one of the most unique buildings I have ever seen with its vibrant and colorful exterior walls.



This is our visit to **Fatima, Portugal**. I am standing in front of the main **Basilica of Fatima**. On the left, where all the people are gathering, is the Chapel of Apparitions. We were very fortunate to have some blue skies that day too!



Upon our return to Rome, we made our pilgrimage to **St. Peter's Basilica** to go through the **Holy Door of Mercy**. It has been so powerful to see all the pilgrims from around the world making their way through the Holy Doors of the cathedrals during our Christmas trip. If you can, make a trip to our own St. Mary's cathedral in Gaylord this year to receive the plenary indulgence the Church offers to us this special jubilee year.