

A warm greetings to the St. Philip Neri parish family,

Well we made it! After a long winter and the 40 day Lenten season, we are now enjoying great celebration of the glorious Easter season. Our Lord is Risen, Alleluia!

It is difficult to believe that my first year of seminary is already over! When I first heard that it was 6 years, I was a little overwhelmed! It seemed like a much longer and daunting task, but I am now so thankful that I have this much time to pray, study, and deepen my relationship with God and my brother seminarians. Between the Church's Liturgical Year and the daily life here at the Seminary, weeks and months continue to quickly fly by.

This Lenten and Easter Season was a particularly reflective one for me. One of the best aspects was the monthly spiritual direction I received from one of our priest faculty. I definitely encourage everyone, especially our youth, to ask a priest about being a spiritual mentor and set up times to meet monthly. The frequent visits with my spiritual director allowed me to dive more into the real meaning of Lent: how to love God with my whole heart. Instead of giving up the usual sweet treats or promising to simply read the Bible more, I rather started with the questions: What is getting in the way of my love for God? And where have I set my threshold so low that it prevents me to be more loving?

After asking myself these questions, the Holy Spirit did the rest. I was made more aware of the little distractions in life that I usually overlooked and strived to simplify my routine and then give the rest of the time to charitable works and prayer. All of sacrifices and fasting days meant so much more when I understood how they were deepening my relationship with Christ. This was not easy, and I fell short of where I wanted to, but I felt God's love and mercy more than I ever have before.

After a more spiritually invested Lent at Seminary, there was nothing better than celebrating Easter at home in Empire! Thank you again to Fr. Zeljko, all the altar servers, volunteers, sacristans, music ensembles and to everyone else who celebrated with us. It is truly the best time in our Christian Liturgical Year.

This summer, I recently found out that I will be assisting Fr. John McCracken at St. Joseph's parish in Manistee. I am very excited to continue to serve the Church in northern Michigan. The idea of the summer assignment is to provide hands-on, pastoral experience for each seminarian. Some of my responsibilities this summer will include: assisting at weekday and weekend Masses, helping at the monthly food pantry, home visits, serving at the weekly Mass at the Medical Care Facility, and while school is still in session, have an opportunity to interact with the students.

All in all, my first year at Seminary has truly been a blessing. I am so thankful for the great faculty at the Josephinum, both the priests and lay, and for everything I have learned. I entered in this year excited about my Catholic faith and a little worried about all the philosophy classes, and now I am leaving my first year even more excitement because of everything I learned in my philosophy classes. I have one more year of philosophy to go and the list of books to read keeps getting longer and longer! I plan to continue reading some of my new favorite authors I found over the past year: Dr. Peter Kreeft, Archbishop Fulton Sheen and, after the recent canonization, Saint John Paul II. But of course, I am ready to spend time outside and enjoy another beautiful summer in northern Michigan!

Thank you for all of your continued prayers and support. I have truly witnessed all the blessings that have come from them. Please keep praying for our Gaylord Seminarians, the appointment new

bishop, all of our priests, religious, deacons, married and single brothers and sisters. We celebrated last week the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. We pray that under St. Joseph's patronage, we all may complete the works we are set out to do with a joyful and humble heart.

I'll be sure to stop in for daily mass when I am up in Empire this summer and to keep you all posted of any more news that comes about this summer. I continue to pray for all of the St. Philip Neri parish family and your intentions.

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

God bless,

Mitch Roman
Seminarian, St. Philip Neri Parish
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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!