

To my St. Philip Neri parish family,

It was just one short year ago that I was writing my first letter stating that I will be attending the Pontifical College Josephinum seminary in Columbus, OH. After a wonderful summer assignment in Manistee, I am ready to begin my second academic year of studies. This will be my second and final year of Pre-Theology, or Philosophy, studies before the next four years that will be dedicated to Theology.

The summer assignment is a crucial part of a seminarian's vocational discernment. It gives valuable insights into what the daily life and responsibilities of a priest *really* looks like. The time at seminary is very much devoted to developing a deeper relationship with Jesus through prayer – whether praying morning and evening prayer together in community or setting aside an hour a day individually, called a “Holy Hour.” It is the goal and aim of every seminarian to maintain their deeper prayer and spiritual reading habits throughout the summer while they shadow the priest in his daily duties.

The day-to-day activities of a priest contain lots of variables. There is the celebration of daily mass, typically in the morning and sometimes in the evening. After a quick breakfast, the day keeps moving very fast! It can be either a trip to the various weekly ministries at the hospital, home-visits, Catholic School activities as well as the prison and rehab center which are both local to Manistee. It was such a pleasure to serve people, especially the sick, imprisoned, and poor, because it made the joy of my faith come alive! To see Fr. Chet administer the sacraments, like the Anointing of the Sick, the peace it brought to the person was so real. We read in the Gospels how Jesus commissioned the apostles to go out and heal the sick. Seeing how the sacraments truly work and heal people every day by the hands of the priest was such an inspiring experience of my summer.

The other great thing about the summer is that it is also ordination season! This summer, I went to my first priestly ordinations. The first was Fr. Matthew Cowan, a priest from our Diocese of Gaylord who studied in Rome at the North American College (NAC) seminary. We currently have two other seminarians studying in Rome: Chris Jarvis from Cedar, MI and Tyler Bischoff from East Tawas, MI. The second was a fellow Josephinum seminarian from the Diocese of Nashville, TN who was a great mentor to me during my first year. The tradition and beauty behind these ceremonies are so rich and powerful. Each priest can actually trace his ordination lineage all the way back to St. Peter! How is that for a family tree!? Being able to serve and witness two of God's young men dedicate their lives to the Church was a powerful and remarkable experience.

On top of that, our Diocese of Gaylord had the unique experience of ordaining a new Bishop, Most Reverend Steven Raica. This ceremony had even more beautiful traditions of the Church, including the presence of at least three Bishops – even though there were more than 20 in attendance – and the presentation of the Bishop's miter (hat), crosier (staff), and ring. The Diocese of Gaylord is so blessed to have a humble, kind and accomplished man as Bishop Raica. I know he is excited to meet our St. Philip Neri family and the rest of the Diocese soon!

Returning to the Josephinum this fall semester, I feel refreshed and ready-to-go. The summer gave me some helpful insights what to expect in future priestly ministry. One of the main, and reassuring, insights I greatly appreciate is how well the parish families take care of their priests. It is through all of our prayers that we help our priests to have the strength to care for us. A special thank you to the Empire and Manistee Catholic Communities in particular for being so generous with your time, prayers and resources. As Fr. Pablo has said many times, that God always gives a “100-fold” to what we give. How true this is!

On a fun note, we just returned from a relaxing canoe trip with a few of the new men here at the Josephinum. I look forward to the upcoming Fall Tennis Tournament this weekend – there is a priest that is very good, so I will have to bring my A-game! The annual Mud-Bowl football game is coming up during the end of October as well, and after a tough loss to the college seminarians, the Theologians look to take back the trophy this year!

Thank you for the prayers and support. As always, know that the intentions of our St. Philip Neri parish are in my daily prayers. Please continue to pray for vocations and for our new Bishop Raica.

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

God bless,

Mitch Roman
2nd Pre-Theology
Seminarian, Pontifical College Josephinum