

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

After a blessed Christmas break, I am finally back down in Columbus, OH starting my second semester at the Josephinum Seminary. We had a few significant and unique events to start the New Year and new academic semester.

First, the arrival back to the Josephinum began with a 5-day silent retreat. During this time, we had two daily conferences (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) and daily mass together. Besides that, we remained silent. I have personally never experienced a silent retreat before, and I was so surprised about how fruitful and spiritually refreshing it was. The conferences consisted of a 30 minute talk on St. Ignatius method of spirituality consisting of reflections on: Mercy, the Holy Spirit's influence in our daily life, Grace, Forgiveness, and becoming Hopeful Leaders.

After a few days of "getting into" the silence, the third and fourth day were especially prayerful and powerful. The retreat leader, Monsignor Russell, explained it as "our lives are like rivers, the shallow surface level is very turbulent, but God's present is in the deep and is constant." A silent retreat allows us to get past all the surface level anxieties and to become much more aware of the Holy Spirit's presence. This provided a spiritual foundation to begin the semester, and a true awareness to all specific areas in life God is calling us grow and develop.

Secondly, last week the Josephinum sent over 120 seminarians to the 41st annual March for Life in Washington D.C. This was my first time attending and it proved to be an eye-opening experience. To see the hundreds of thousands supporters of life from all over the country, marching in the cold, windy condition validates the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Being a witness was very moving, especially talking to those who have had abortions in the past to remind us emphasis of protecting the life of the unborn.

Besides the march itself, the trip to Washington D.C. included a mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest church in North America. All 500+ seminarians, 200+ priests, bishops and 8 cardinals processed in together. It was one of the most wonderful and indescribable feelings I have ever felt to be in the procession with my cassock processing towards the alter with so many men who have answered their calling into religious life. God was truly at work there. The procession took about 30 minutes and the Eucharist distribution took another 45 minutes, which just goes to show how many thousands of people were in attendance!

The March to Life can only be described as a pilgrimage. Even if it's only to Washington D.C., or even Grand Rapids or the Carmelite Monastery in Traverse City, there are so many places for us to experience God's presence outside of our daily routine. A pilgrimage does not have to be to Rome or the Holy Land, but it can be just an intentional trip, filled with silence and no distractions, for the sake of listening to Our Lord. I encourage everyone to think about doing any type of retreat/pilgrimage/trip once or twice a year. You won't regret it!

Thank you all so much for the prayers and support, both spiritual and financial! Keep all of our Gaylord Seminarians in your intentions and for all of those discerning. And, as always, I would love to answer any of your questions and pray for your intentions, so please feel free to contact me here in Columbus.

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

God bless,

Mitch Roman
Seminarian, St. Philip Neri Parish

Quotes from the Retreat:

"Rising early the next morning, he went off to a lonely place... There he was absorbed by prayer." - Mark 1:35

"God is everywhere ready to hear our prayers." - St. John Vianney

"Those who are led by the Holy Spirit experience all sorts of happiness in themselves." - St. John Vianney

"Seize the hope which is placed before us, a sure and firm anchor - Jesus." - Hebrews 6:11-19

"Sucipe" of St Ignatius Loyola:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, and my entire will,
All I have and call my own. You have given it all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me.

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!