

June 18, 2010

Ciao Fratelli e Sorelle in Christo!

The semester has finally ended and so have my days in Oregon at Mount Angel Seminary. I shall not miss the weather too much although it did grow on me quite a bit during my two year stay, but I shall definitely miss the families, friends, and spiritual fathers that I must leave behind until I am able to return again, God-willing as a priest of Jesus Christ. For those of you who are counting like me it should be approximately 4yrs, 1 mo, and 3 days (late June 2014). Please pray hard and save the date!

This whole year seemed to move by very quickly for me, and this last semester seemed to pass by without much notice at all. The course work was not terribly difficult and only became burdensome in spurts, which allowed me a good amount of time to spend in leisure. I have been able to study Italian a bit in preparation for the move to Rome and to be involved in other groups to further the spiritual life in the seminary. We started up a fledgling Marian group (*Semines Mariae*¹) that planned celebrations to highlight the major Marian feasts during the liturgical year in order to foster deeper devotion to Jesus Christ through the perfect way of Our Lady. The primary focus of the group was to let any acts we did stem from our weekly communal prayer as a group and various private devotions. I was overjoyed that the group permitted me to head up the seminary's first May Crowning. It was quite a daunting task to do so without a working model to go off and having never been a part of a crowning before, but the men rallied around the project and made it a great success by shattering expectations with ~65% attendance seminary wide on the weekend before finals (May 1st)!! Our Lady even garnered perfect weather for us in the form of the bluest sky I have ever seen above the hilltop when the rosary procession to the grotto was put in jeopardy up till the final moments before the event!

Academically, the semester was a culmination of all my previous studies. *Maximam diciplinam Latinae capissens, per hic annum doctissimus scholasticorum Latinorum factus sum, sed res scholasticos tam illic modo fuerunt ut illud multa non diceretur*². My epistemology class (theory of knowledge) was really a course of on phenomenology (study of the way things appear to our consciousness). The course was very intriguing. Although I am not sure that I can entirely trust this perspective, I see how it can be useful to articulate things in a modern, subjective way that is open to faith, and since Servant of God Pope John Paul II and St Edith Stein used it, it made me confident that I could use some of what I learned in a recent testimony I gave at the parish. Our metaphysics class challenged us to put all our philosophical skills to the test by researching is-sues and putting forth our own theories or poking holes in those of others theorists while defending our positions against our critical peers and the department head. Whenever you were able to communicate a point well in this class, it was something you could celebrate because all comments were tried in the crucible. If our peers didn't dig in the professor would leap upon us, so there was no escaping with half-baked ideas in-tact. A compliment from the professor was a high honor indeed.

This summer I am amidst my preparations for Rome. I just received my official provisional acceptance to the North American College, which leaves the difficult process of procuring a long-term Schengen Visa. If I don't have to make a last minute flight to LA to get it in person I will be very relieved. Pending the visa, I will leave for Rome July 18th, spend a week filling out copious amounts of paperwork and adjusting to my new home, and then be rushed off to Verbania, Piedmonte³ for a month long of intensive private tutoring in Italian. Since I will be there for 4-5yrs, picking up the language is a very important part of the equation. Fortunately, most all of my classes at the Angelicum (Univ of St

1 Literally "the Seeds of Mary" in Latin, but we used the English title "Sons of Mary."

2 Latin: Eagerly taking the highest instruction of Latin, I became the most learned of the Latin scholars during this year, but there were only three scholars so that might not be saying much.

3 Piedmonte means "at the foot of the mountains." Verbania is in the northernmost part of Piedmonte on Lake Maggiore.

Thomas Aquinas run by the Dominicans) will be taught in English for the first 3yrs, unless I opt for a more challenging method of instruction, which I hope to do at some point.

The greatest difficulty of the affair is that I will not be able to return home for the first two years (23 months and a week or so not that I am counting). As a diocesan priest who is called by God to serve the people of a particular diocese under the local Archbishop, this can be a difficult task. The connection between priest/seminarian and people of the diocese is very strong so separation from the mission field can be tenuous even though he knows that nothing can separate those in Christ, those living and truly living with Christ; we have the whole communion of saints making intercession for the Church and all. I know that within the sacrifice of the Most Holy Eucharist that moment becomes dilated to contain all moments drawing into itself all eternity, the secular and the sacred, into itself to become Christ, "body, blood, soul, and divinity," to be re-deemed and sent forth anew in the Spirit to renew the face of the earth. This then becomes a greater opportunity to die to myself and press into a deeper trust in Christ and His ability to sustain me as His beloved son. Nevertheless, I shall not spurn any prayer and penance offered on my behalf.

Also, I just received notice on Monday that the Archbishop has honored my request to have my call to candidacy (rite of engagement to the Church) at my home parish!! It will be on Sunday June 27th @ 10:30 AM @ Prince of Peace in Albuquerque. This is the rite whereby I commit to the Church and she commits to me. She formally recognizes that I am making progress toward the clerical state by asking me whether I am resolved „to complete my preparation so that in due time I will be ready to be ordained for the ministry of the Church“ and „to prepare myself in mind and spirit to give faithful service to Christ the Lord and his body, the Church.“ You may recall I requested prayer for my preparation retreat over Holy Week this year, which by the way was a marvelous success. THANK YOU!!

You may also note that this is the weekend of ordinations, which means that Sunday will be the first Mass of thanksgiving for our three newly ordained priests. If you have to make a choice between my candidacy or the first Mass, I would encourage you to go to the first Mass as that is an intense moment of grace for all involved. You will have an opportunity to gain, once, a plenary indulgence by receiving His blessing that day or any day during his first year in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. If it works out that you can make it to my call to candidacy, I will appreciate it greatly, but your prayers throughout my journey to vocation are what is most important to me, without which I would indeed be in dire straits.

Thank you for your constant support in every way you offer it! The fruits of vocation, not just mine or the priestly vocation but all vocations answered and lived out unto Christ, are not directed toward the individual embracing the vocation, but rather are oriented transcendentally back toward their origin, Christ, and horizon-tally toward the good of the other, our brothers and sisters. We are intimately connected in a way that only the creator can comprehend as he orchestrates it all. As you fulfill and answer your call to vocation, you strengthen and encourage mine and visa versa. Know that I am praying for you in this regard for none of us reaches glory on our own; we are corporately saved as individuals. Praise God there is hope for us all!

In the loving arms of our dear savior,

Christopher Bernabe
On the Feasts of Venerable Bede, Priest and Doctor, 2010
St, Gregory VII, Pope
Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, Virgin