

Hello Everyone!

Thank you very much for your prayers during my first few months that I have been here in Italy. I am deeply indebted to each and every one of you, and I truly know that this Rome experience could never have been possible without the support of so many. I feel deeply humbled and awe-struck to have this opportunity. I pray that these years will pierce my heart, my soul, and my very being with the awesome humility of our Beloved Lord. And thereby I shall be able to minister his Holy Word and his life-giving Sacraments, to be a servant of many, so that the many may have the joy of our Lord!

I wanted to share a summary of my experiences during this first stage and attach a number of pictures. I hope that it will all be accessible to you. Should you have any problems please email me. Also I will not be able to reach those who do not have internet so if this email could be shared with them, I would greatly appreciate it. Thanks.

I was blessed to land in Rome on my 31st birthday, July 18th. So this was quite a gift. My only complaint was that the plane cut across time zones so my birthday was actually about 8 hours shorter. But I guess I can deal with that. ☺ We were kept up this entire day, so I remained awake about 48 hours straight. The following day we visited St. John Lateran, had Mass in one of the earliest Baptisteries, and then also went to Santa Scala.



St. John Lateran

The following day we toured the catacombs of St. Priscilla. Pagan religions seldom honored the dead, especially those of the poor. However, Christianity saw dignity in the body and attempted to give it honor even after death. Therefore, some of the rich Christians generously allowed their land to be dug and thousands of graves were placed underground in a maze of tunnels. Here pictured is just one of those areas. The bodies would have been placed in individual 'tombs' stacked on each other.



Throughout our first week, a 2nd year seminarian who is a professional cook, donated his time to prepare us cena every evening. I wish I had a greater discernment of tastes, because he really did a wonderful job. Each evening we ate a meal from a different region of Italy. To me they all tasted wonderful, but unfortunately I can't remember any names of what I ate. This meal was on our upper terrace which overlooks Rome and has a view of St. Peters. Below is a picture from our terrace.



For our 4th day in Italy, we caught a train and visited a large lake some distance from Rome, in a city called Bracciano. Some of the guys went swimming and I did some hiking.



We also had a trip to the church of St. Lawrence. This saint is perhaps the most beloved saint in all of Rome. St. Lawrence died in the year 258. He was a deacon for the church of Rome. Following the martyrdom of the Pope, the Roman authorities sought to collect the wealth of the church. St. Lawrence, who was in charge of donations, showed the Romans not gold but the poorest of the poor. He said, "These are the treasures of the church." In response, St. Lawrence was grilled to death. When he was baked on one side he told his executer that he

was done on that side and that he should be turned over. St. Lawrence – pray for us. Today there are acres and acres of cemeteries located next to the church of St. Lawrence.

Continuing on, we visited the city of Orvieto. This city is blessed to have a beautiful church with one the most detailed and elaborate facades. Below is a picture. The church stands about 150 feet high (My guess – I could not find specifics).



After one week in Rome and a few day trips to surrounding regions, we began to get to work in studying Italian. For 40 of us we headed up to Assisi. This is the home of St. Francis and St. Clare. The days were long and mentally exhausting, but I truly did enjoy this opportunity to be in this special city. We stayed there about 4 weeks. My Italian has improved, but it is still in need of much practice. Below are some pictures from this wonderful place. The picture of the grassy land is actually from the top of Mt. Subasio which overlooks Assisi. Us seminarians hiked up there and truly enjoyed the amazing scenery.



The Church of St. Francis



Santa Maria Degli Angeli



The City of Assisi is over my left shoulder – Hardly to be seen.



Now I have returned to Rome and will be continuing with one more month of language studies and orientation, prior to starting school on October 10th. We have 76 men in our class and the school will have over 250. It is very awesome to be surrounded by so many young men giving their life to Christ and to the Church, men with joy and peace. A truly special part of seminary is the immediate friendships made between seminarians. In my experience the friendships are so genuine and honest that every man feels himself to be truly an important part of the community. I pray that this vibrancy can continue on and spill over into our ministry in the future, thus making the parishes houses of deep prayer and of joyful community. Please keep us in prayer! Please pray that we can be small enough, humble enough to allow the grace of the Holy Spirit to work through our unworthy selves.

Today we took a picture of us seminarians standing outside of St. Peter's Basilica. The below picture, which is exactly like the one taken today, will have to do (it is of the class from last year) but it conveys what I want to share. These are the future shepherds, sinful and weak, prone to mistakes and failures, but nevertheless ready to serve our Lord. We bring our brokenness forward, knowing that it is through our brokenness that we will learn how to distribute the mercy of our Lord. "[For the Priest] is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness." (Heb. 5:2)



God Bless you all! With prayer everyday! Your friend Dan