
GREETINGS FROM ROME

Sunday, January 24th, 2010

Happy New Year! Know of my prayers for all of you as we enter in to this New Year. I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas celebrating the great event of the Incarnation. Life here in Rome at the North American College has been busy this semester. I would like to share with you some of the events I have been privileged to partake in during the past few months.

This Christmas Break, through the help of some generous benefactors, I had the opportunity to attend a two week Iconography Retreat at the American College in Leuven, Belgium. During this retreat we wrote the icon of Our Lady of Kazan (see photo). It was a great retreat for me as I was able to blend my love of art and prayer while meditating on the “Word Made Flesh” during the Christmas Season. Actually this is what icons are designed to do, they make visible the saving mysteries of Christ revealed to us in the Sacred Scriptures. Icons in a sense are “window’s into heaven” designed to transport us into heavenly realities unseen by man. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn about the spirituality of iconography, something I hope to incorporate into my daily life of prayer, time permitting of course.

Following the retreat I spent three days in Ars, France with fellow Portland seminarian Matt Libra, Fr. Joseph Betschart and Fr. Theodore Lange, both priests of the Archdiocese living in Rome. It was a tremendous blessing to be able to pray at the tomb of St. John Vianney, especially during this Year for Priests. The spirit of St. John Vianney is still very alive in the tiny town of Ars. He was truly a man who sought nothing other than the heart of Jesus Christ. Recognizing his lowliness in front of the face of God he poured himself out as a self-gift for the conversion

of sinners. What an example for all of us to follow. Our prayers and penances we do for one another are efficacious and have the ability to win souls for Christ. St. John Vianney will always have a special place in my heart and I count on his intercession daily.

As we brought in the New Year we concluded the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the North American College. The last two weeks we hosted an Alumni Reunion of 200 plus priests who returned to the college to strengthen their relationships with each other, the college and the Holy Father. During the reunion we had the privilege of attending a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI. It was truly a special occasion, as the Holy Father does not usually hold such intimate gatherings. During his address the Holy Father exhorted the priests present to recommit themselves to the high ideals of holiness, fidelity and pastoral zeal which they embraced on the day of their ordination.

Finally, I wanted to let you all know that my diaconate ordination date has been set for October 7th, 2010 at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. You all are invited to make a pilgrimage to Rome for the ordination. I realize it may not be feasible for you all but if you are interested please contact me because we do have a travel package available for guests.

Thank you all for your continued prayers and support. I look forward to seeing you next year, as I will be back in Oregon for a Pastoral Year. It is truly a great joy to be called to the priesthood!

God Bless,
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