

October 2, 2016

Greetings from Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary. It looks like I am allowed to use the computer to type, but I am not able to use the internet. This makes things a little easier in terms of communication with everyone. I hope in this letter to describe somewhat the daily life of the seminary and also how things have been going for me over the past month.

Rising is at 5:45 a.m. In fact, to wake up any earlier than that we need to consult our spiritual director. This gives us about a half hour to get up, get showered, and head to the chapel. Lauds (Morning Prayer) is chanted every morning at 6:20 a.m. It's an amazing way to start the day, hearing the seminarians (there are 85 total and about 10 priests) chant in the quiet and dark hours of the morning. This is followed by a short period of meditation. Mass is said at 7:10 a.m. During the week we have Low Mass, unless it is a First or Second class feast when we have a Sung High Mass. On Sundays we have a Solemn High Mass (truly the most beautiful thing this side of heaven!).

Breakfast is taken silently. I enjoy taking a cup of coffee and sitting on the porch outside the refectory. The mornings are cool and not too humid. For the past couple of days there has been fog surrounding the seminary which is very beautiful, especially being from Arizona where this is almost never happens. Following breakfast we begin classes. Classes are 45 minutes each. This first semester I am taking Scripture, Latin, Catechism, Spirituality, Gregorian chant, and Liturgy. Latin has been my favorite so far, and is definitely the most challenging. All of the seminarians have a good working knowledge of Latin by the time they are ordained. Also, in the later years the seminarians study certain theological and philosophical works in Latin, since most of these works do not have English translations (or at least very good ones).

Sext (Noon Prayer) is chanted at 12:15 p.m. followed by Lunch. The first half of both Lunch and Dinner are taken silently while one of the ordained Lectors reads from scripture, the lives of the Saints, The Roman Martyrology, or an edifying novel. Sometimes these readings are done in Latin. The upper year seminarians are able to fully understand those readings, which is something I look forward to being able to do. During the second half of meals we are allowed to talk to our neighbor. Lunch is followed by a one hour period of mandatory recreation. During this time we are not allowed to go to our rooms or study. This is a good policy because it forces everyone to interact and relax from their studies. I will often go for a run on the mowed paths on the property. We also have a soccer field as well as a gym where we can do a variety of sports. Soccer is the most popular at the seminary. In fact today the seminarians played a game with a local parish from Omaha (I am not particularly good at sports so I just watched). I also have a very little endurance, which I hope to fix by running on most days during recreation. Recreation is followed by a few more classes. On Mondays, the First Year seminarians (that's me), spend a couple hours doing manual labor, either pulling weeds or picking vegetables for meals. There is a type of weed here that produces 8 inch thorns which can go through your boot which we are responsible for clearing out. I think our formation directors take particular pleasure in making us do that particular job!

Vespers (Evening Prayer) is chanted at 5:30 p.m. This is the most solemn of the hours and is the most beautiful. Often it is done with full procession and incense. This is followed by dinner and then an hour

of optional recreation (most people, including myself use this valuable time to study). Compline (Night Prayer) is chanted at 7:30 p.m. This particular prayer includes one of my favorite parts of the day: at the end of Compline all the lights in the chapel are turned off and a statue of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom is illuminated while the seminarians chant the Salve Regina. After Compline we begin Grand Silence. Silence continues until after breakfast the next morning. We need to be in our rooms by 10 p.m. and lights out is at 10:30 p.m. (though I am usually asleep by 9:30 or 10!).

On Wednesdays and Sundays we have the afternoons free which allows us to go into Lincoln to purchase anything we might need such as school supplies, go to the bank, etc. It also gives me an opportunity to write letter such as this, as well as time to call my family (which I just realized I still need to do today!). On Saturdays we have a free morning to study. We also have afternoon work assignments on Saturdays which include mopping hallways, cleaning bathrooms, etc.

During our first week at the seminary the First Year men got to go on a retreat about a half hour outside of Lincoln. It was a five day silent retreat using the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It was a very profitable and spiritually enriching retreat as we prepared to begin the academic year. The next weekend the upper year seminarians went to Denver for a hike, so the First Year men went to Kansas City and Omaha to see the Fraternity apostolates there. We also got the chance to meet the nuns in Gower, Missouri. We got to hear the nuns chant Vespers and then had dinner at their retreat house. To raise money for their new monastery these nuns make beautiful vestments (usually there is a yearlong waiting list) and make music CDs. In fact these CDs have topped the charts for classical music for the past couple years. If you get a chance to look them up they are called the Benedictines of Mary Queen of the Apostles.

In the First Year class there are 14 men. We have people from Poland, Denmark, Ireland, and Canada in our class. Everyone else is from all over the United States. I am the only one from Arizona in my class. The youngest person in the class is 19 and I am the oldest at 28. All of the seminarians have been very approachable and helpful in figuring things out. I continue to need help from the upper year seminarians in figuring out where certain things are and I am sure this whole first semester will be a big learning curve. In chapel, they have us assigned to sit next to a second year seminarian who can help us find our spots in our prayer books (The Roman Breviary and the *Liber Usualis* being the main ones). Overall things are going very well. I look forward to continuing on in my studies and see where the Lord takes me.

Please continue to pray for me and know of my prayers for you as well. Pray also for many vocations to the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. Please feel free to write and I will do my best to respond. Also feel free to send me your prayer intentions. I can post them at the seminary so everyone else can pray for them as well.

Andy Miller