

PRIESTS FOR TOMORROW



SPRING 2020

Covid-19: A Prayer of Solidarity

For all who have contracted coronavirus,

We pray for care and healing. For those who are particularly vulnerable,

We pray for safety and protection.

For all who experience fear or anxiety,

We pray for peace of mind and spirit. For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between food on the table or public safety,

We pray for policies that recognize their plight. For those who do not have adequate health insurance,

We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone. For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status,

We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all. For our brothers and sisters around the world,

We pray for shared solidarity. For public officials and decision makers,

We pray for wisdom and guidance. Father, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope, comfort and love to all.

Grant peace.

Grant comfort.

Grant healing.

Be with us, Lord. Amen.



3710 East Avenue South | La Crosse, WI 54602-4004
Phone: 608-791-2667 | diolc.org/vocations



DIocese of LA CROSSE



Father Alan Wierzba
Director of the Office for Vocations

“You will not fear the terror of the night, ... nor the plague that prowls in the darkness...For the Lord is your shelter and refuge; upon you no evil shall fall, no plague approach where you dwell, for you has he commanded his angels to keep you in all your ways.”

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

May 2, 2021

Diaconate Ordination

June 26, 2021

Priestly Ordination

Every Sunday evening, priests, deacons, religious and many lay people join in praying Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the breviary. Sunday Night Prayer has, as part of the prayer, a recitation of Psalm 90. I am struck by a couple of lines in the psalm that are so apropos to us at this time in history:

“You will not fear the terror of the night, ... nor the plague that prowls in the darkness... For the Lord is your shelter and refuge; upon you no evil shall fall, no plague approach where you dwell, for you has he commanded his angels to keep you in all your ways.”

I, as so many of you, feel periods of worry, fear, and uncertainty of what the future holds for me, for our Church, and for our country. I watch the news and feel discouraged by unemployment numbers. I see the footage of people on ventilators in New York hospitals struggling to breath and I get scared thinking, “What will happen to me if I get it?” I get anxious at the grocery store when someone gets “too close” to me, or when I touch a public doorknob. My heart breaks at the long lines for food and as I pray for those who succumb to the effects of the virus. It is a reminder of how fragile we are and how much we need faith.

These are difficult days, but these are also times when the words of Psalm 90 resonate so strongly, and comfort me the most as I pray with them. The

Lord says to me, “Alan, no need to fear the plague that prowls in the darkness, for I am with you.” And, “Trust that upon you no evil will fall, and no plague approach where you dwell, for my angels are watching over you.” I do not know if I will get the Covid-19 Virus (maybe I already did and had no symptoms?), or what it will do to me if I do catch it. Regardless, God knows, and God is with each of us. Now is simply a time for patient trust – to take responsible precautions – but to trust that Jesus is with us, and that nothing, certainly no virus, is more powerful than His love or the power of His cross and Resurrection. Through the power, compassion, and authority of our Lord, we will overcome this just as He overcame death itself.

Thank you for your support of our priests for tomorrow. Please keep them and your priests and deacons and religious in your prayers. Pray for the health and safety of all who are working with Covid-19 patients, for the researchers and scientists to find a vaccine. May God’s angels keep you and your loved ones safe and well; may we soon have an end to this pandemic and the suffering it is causing our world. And may we find strengthen in our faith that the Lord is our shelter and refuge, now and forever. Amen.

— Rev. Alan Wierzba
Director of the Office
for Vocations

How has the pandemic affected you?



My experience of the Coronavirus outbreak has occurred in three stages: the initial outbreak in Italy, the two-week quarantine upon returning to America, and then the statewide stay-at-home order that started right as I left quarantine. Each has come with its own graces, which I share below.

In late February, a few towns in the north of Italy were put on lockdown, but Rome continued as normal. I even remember telling a classmate on March 4th, “I don’t think classes will be cancelled unless someone in the university gets sick.” The next day, the government announced that they were suspending all school activities. Then on March 9th, the lockdown was extended to the whole country. We were called back to America, with a flight out in 11 hours. I said my goodbyes, packed a single suitcase, and we left Rome. An hour after we landed on the 11th, the U.S. suspended travel from Europe. During this stage, my biggest graces were the clear reminder of how little we are in control of things, and having a bishop who acted so wisely as to call us home when he did.

When we got back to America, the four of us La Crosse seminarians had to quarantine together for two weeks before we could go to our families. In the unused rectory where we stayed, we established an horarium and continued to pray, study, and enjoy fraternal time as usual. There was a sliding glass door, and on Sundays a nearby priest would say Mass on the porch outside (with us safely contained in the house). This was the greatest grace of the personal quarantine—a concrete reminder of how lucky we are to have the sacraments, and the lengths to which priests will go to bring them to us.

The day before our release from personal quarantine, Governor Evers issued the statewide stay-at-home order, so as soon as the health department cleared us to leave, we all went straight back to our families. Since then, I have been at home, still taking classes online, spending time with my family. Having little to do besides pray, study, and hang out with my family members has been a great grace.

I am reminded of the words of one of my favorite holy women, Servant of God Chiara Corbella Petrillo.

She said, “God does not want to take good things away from you, and if he takes, it is only to give you so much more.” Obviously, I cannot wait to go back to Rome, or receive a parish assignment here in our diocese, but it would be wrong to only long for those things without thanking God also for the good things he has given me in the meantime.

— Isaac Pecha



For us seminarians who study in Rome, it was very unexpected to be called back to the U.S. by our bishop. We found out that we were coming home around dinner time and were at the airport about 12 hours later. This, for me, was a simple lesson in obedience. There is a necessity for fast acting obedience in the priest-

hood. Like the Apostle Andrew who dropped his nets and instantly followed Christ, so too the priest needs to be ready to take a new parish assignment at a call from the bishop. Formation never stops! Even when we can’t be in a seminary.

— Eric Mashak



Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray that everyone is doing well and is staying healthy. If you or your family or your friends have been deeply affected by the Coronavirus, please know that they are being prayed for in a special way.

Like other places, St. Francis de Sales Seminary had to adjust to the Coronavirus situation. After finishing our spring break, we had classes the week of March 9th. On Friday, March 13th, around 11 a.m., we received an email stating that the plan was to continue with classes on the following Monday. Later that evening around suppertime, all that changed when emails were sent about going to online classes until Easter and that formation would be suspended for a couple of weeks. Seminarians would be allowed to St. Francis Seminary under quarantine during that time if they so wished. For the seminarians of the Diocese

of La Crosse, we received an email after supper stating that we were to go home as soon as possible. I have been home since March 14th.

Since then, classes will be conducted online through the end of the semester, and seminarians are to remain where they currently are until St. Francis Seminary tells us otherwise. At home, I have found balance in completing my schoolwork while maintaining prayer times and other healthy habits (e.g., eating well, exercise, and leisure activities). I have been catching up on some good movies and enjoying home-cooked meals with my parents. Further, I help out around the house. Other than that, my life is somewhat uneventful and routine, and there is a peace with that. The stress and pressure of a normal seminary life, which does give me life, have been removed, and I have a more comfortable position to reflect on the good that God has given me during my time as a seminarian. God has given me good gifts during this time of trial and tribulation.

I would like to conclude by asking everyone to continue to keep faith. Although this is a difficult time for everyone, let it bring forth good fruit that can only be achieved by uniting oneself to the will of God. Trust God, and He will do good things for you (in ways that you may not expect). While we brave this storm, let us pray for one another. I will continue to pray for the families of the parish, and I ask you to pray for my family and for my brother seminarians. May the merits of Jesus' Passion enliven our faith during this Holy Week.

— *Matthew Bowe*



Coming home was a crazy time. Going from the chaos of Rome to a two week Quarantine in a Rectory where I was incarcerated with 3 good friends to being at my home filled beyond capacity until further notice. It has been both a blessed and crazy time. My family has bonded

in this once in a lifetime opportunity in incredible ways. While being at home, I have attempted to continue my full time school schedule with

scattered success and have found time to pray each day. With the rest of my time, my family has played various board and card games. This time has definitely been one bringing my family closer together.

— *Jared Clements*



For me the quarantine has been a trying time in not having the Mass and not being able to do ministry. The very two things I enjoy the most. But also it has been a time of learning to trust and to grow deeper in Faith. Understanding that even with doing “nothing” I can still enjoy the fruits of

what it means to be Catholic and a member of the Body of Christ. The fruits, being of course, striving for holiness and becoming a Saint.

— *Brian Ward*



After the shutdown of everything, I went home, and now I am helping my parents with chores around the house. It is quite amazing how many projects one can find. Every day I try to call someone I have not talked to in a long time, and the Lord has given much fruit from it.

— *God bless, Steven Weller*



I have had good silent time for prayer, and the Lord is meeting me where I am. It saddens me not to be able to see people face-to-face very often, and it was difficult to leave people in La Crosse during Regency. I miss socializing more, but am developing a good routine here at home.

— *Philip Grygleski*

Meet the New Seminarian



Hello, I am Maxwell Turzinski. I grew up mainly in Almond, Wisconsin with my parents and younger sister. Almond is a small town in the Stevens Point area. Going up through middle and high school, I enjoyed playing baseball. I was mainly an outfielder and a second baseman, though I did get some

pitching in during my junior and senior years of high school. In my spare time I enjoy learning piano and watching car races at the local speedways and on TV. Since I was in 4th or 5th grade, I have been an altar server at the St. Maximilian Kolbe parish. I've been blessed with the opportunity to serve Mass with many priests throughout the years, and they have been the biggest influences in my life. I recently completed the Journey Program at the Diocesan Center of La Crosse. I am looking forward to the studies and continuing formation as I go through my first year in seminary.



The biggest impact for me has been the lack of access to the Sacraments for everyone. Though we cannot receive Christ Sacramentally, this has been a great opportunity to trust in the Lord's grace outside the Sacraments. It has also given my family an opportunity to increase devotion in the domestic house-

hold with Rosaries, Chaplets of Divine Mercy, and the like. We have been blessed with these devotions to the Blessed Virgin and Christ's Mercy that, although they don't replace the Eucharist, can help sustain our faith in this tumultuous time.

— David Nowicki



Quarantine has made me realize how much I appreciate being able to spend time with people! This is something I took for granted before and am looking forward to once all of this is over.

— Peace, Deacon Sam McCarty



Besides, not being currently in the seminary, being quarantined has allowed me to spend more time with my family. I have been especially enjoying playing with my niece (3yrs old) and nephew (2 yrs old). Besides continuing doing my school work online this time of isolation has been fruitful as it has allowed me to have

a deeper appreciation for my vocation. I have been able to spend a lot more time in prayer and reaching out (via phone and online) to friends and relatives and provide spiritual support as they continue to endure the different difficulties they face in their lives during this time.

— Arturo Viguera

The Covid-19 changes came about quickly for all of us, myself included. Being called out of seminary formation for an indefinite amount of time I have found to be both challenging and, at the same time, has opened new horizons not available in formation.

With daily Mass or a morning holy hour in front



of the blessed sacrament no longer an option, the proverb, “Distance makes a heart grow fonder” takes on new meaning. Distance from the presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist has increased my desire to be in the presence of the Eucharist as well as my understanding of the great gift which we receive so complacently.

On the onset, this distance could easily be devastating, but I have also found by entering into the liturgy of the hours faithfully and frequently, spiritual reading, and devotional practices (such as the rosary), while not making up for the absence of Mass, have deepened my relationship with the Lord in a new dimension. The Liturgy of the Hours is a public work for the people by the people, and while said in homes “privately” across the world, the unifying nature of the prayer has become much more apparent.

Finally, the webcasts of Sunday Mass with Bishop Callahan have allowed myself and others to clearly see the unity of the church of LaCrosse. What a wonderful opportunity we have during this time to “attend” Mass each weekend with our bishop and hear a unifying homily from the pastor of church of LaCrosse.

God’s blessings be with everyone during this difficult time. May you come to find a deepening of relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ in this time as I have so we are ready to be united more fully that before once our churches open once more!

— Joseph Glatczak

The on-going Coronavirus pandemic has affected many of our lives in ways we never expected it to. Early on in the midst of the lockdown that has taken over our state and nation, St. Francis de Sales Seminary, where I was completing my



theology studies, shut down and required me to move back to the diocese. Since then I have been residing and assisting at Notre Dame Parish in Chippewa Falls with Fr. Jesse Burish. This has been a quicker transition from seminary into parish life than I was expecting, but the Lord uses

these things for our greater good. I have enjoyed my time in the parish although it is very different with the restrictions on gathering for Mass. I have been completing my seminary classes online and have been finding creative ways to serve the people of the parish while I am here. Please pray for me and my classmates as we approach ordination. Know of my prayers for an end to this pandemic so that we may all again join together for Mass.

— Deacon Daniel Williams



This close to ordination, it’s been a peculiar few weeks. Halfway through March, Mundelein called the whole university in for a big meeting, where they told us the campus was closing down for the year. A week later I was moving into St. Pat’s in Onalaska, and this has been

home-base ever since! I’ve been splitting my time since then pretty evenly between the parish and classwork online. What’s been most strange for me is hearing from young families how difficult they’re finding it to keep building themselves up as a domestic church while waiting to be able to come back to the sacraments again. The whole experience has been resonating with me as one extended Holy Saturday, an occasion for deeper prayer into the Lord’s passion and resurrection.

— Deacon Joseph Richards



Currently, I am back on the farm chasing cows and doing seminary online. It was a big jump to have to return suddenly from Rome, but now I have settled into the new schedule here. Everyone was very helpful in the transition and in setting up the two week quarantine at the “bunker”. I am looking forward to continue preparing for my diaconate ordination.

— Timothy Reither



COVID-19 threw seminary for a bit of a loop, like it has with most things. A few weeks back classes switched to an online platform, and I was assigned to St. Mary’s parish in Altoona, WI. The change had its challenges early on, but now that I’m established things have been going quite excellently. The lighter schedule has given me a greater opportunity for prayer and reflection leading up to ordination this summer.

— In Christ, Deacon Levi Schmitt



The coronavirus has affected me just as it has a lot of other people, especially college students. I had to quit my job, move back home, and basically be at home all the time. It’s not too bad, and my parents’ work has continued so they weren’t hit too hard by this thing.

— John Duranso



Quarantine has brought some challenges but it also has brought with it some blessings. Some challenges that I have faced is adjusting to online classes, not being able to receive the Eucharist daily, and just the brotherhood environment the seminary provided. There were a lot of changes in our “normal” routine

in such a short period of time. Although there has been challenges, it’s been a blessing to be able to spend some quality time with my parents and brothers. With the business of daily life it can be difficult to find time to spend that quality time with family. I’ve also been able to play some golf so I can’t complain to much about the current situation. But in all seriousness, please stay safe, stay strong, and God bless.

— Alex Kren



With the COVID-19 quarantine, homeschooling 2.0 has started! (I was homeschooled before entering seminary). I do miss being with my professors and classmates, but I have been able to connect with many of them online. The online school platform has allowed me to spend more time reading, fishing, and

occasionally helping with my family’s business (Gilbert Creek Woodworks). It has also been great to spend time with the family, and the quarantine almost feels like an extended spring break.

— Thanks, John Zweber

We encourage you to write to our seminarians as a way of showing your support and prayers throughout the school year using the addresses provided below.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY

3257 South Lake Drive | St. Francis, WI 53235

PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE

Via del Gianicolo, 14 | Rome, Italy 00165

MUNDELEIN SEMINARY

1000 East Maple Avenue | Mundelein, IL 60060

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY SEMINARY

750 Terrace Heights | Winona, MN 55987

Happy Birthday

May 3

Steven Weller

May 15

Brian Ward

June 5

Deacon Levi Schmitt

June 7

Conner Franz

July 26

Deacon Daniel Williams



DIOCESE of LA CROSSE

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*Check out
our website*

