

NEWS FROM BR. JAMES-PETER TRARES, OP

If the familiar saying, “time flies when you’re having fun,” is true, I must be having a really fun time! Life as a Dominican brother has been an exciting adventure for sure. While I haven’t been sent around the world and back as I was last year, the past six months have brought me to new territories nonetheless.

I spent the summer months living with our community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There I completed an intense 10-week hospital chaplaincy program at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. I was part of an intern group of six people from various Christian denominations, led by one of the chaplains at the hospital. My days primarily consisted of pastoral calls to patients and their families, as well as to hospital staff on occasion. I was assigned to two medical/surgical units, dealing primarily with spine issues and joint replacement. I also spent a good deal of time in acute rehab, maternity, and mental health. Each day all the interns would gather for some combination of presentations, lectures, discussions, and reflections on difficult encounters we had. About once a week, I would be handed a pager overnight or on the weekend to be the emergency chaplain on-call. The entire experience really helped me grow as a minister and allowed me great opportunities to care for people in times of great need. Staying in the Twin Cities was also a great experience—always something going on (often free!) and bicycle paths that will take you about anywhere.

In August, just the day after finishing at the hospital, I packed up and flew back to St. Louis. This, however, was only a transitional trip, as I was repacking again to move out for the year. This school year, I am doing a full-time pastoral internship in our campus ministry at Purdue University. The community of five other brothers welcomed me warmly to West Lafayette, Indiana, and I jumped into a bustling university parish in the first week of the semester. It took a few weeks to get my bearings and remember a few important names and faces, but I quickly got engaged in all the many activities and ministries going on. Our parish, St. Thomas Aquinas (www.boilercatholics.org), is a large Catholic center on campus, serving both resident and student parishioners. Purdue has about 13,000 students who identify as Catholic, and while all of them don’t come to our church, you can understand we have our hands full! We also reach out to the significant international student population at Purdue.

My role at “St. Tom’s” is primarily to be present, observe, and guide. We work with a lot of student interns and leaders who often need support and direction from the staff. I help out primarily with Confirmation Formation, RCIA, Bible Study Groups, Music Ministry, and Retreats. Probably my favorite part of campus ministry is spending time with the students—getting out on campus and walking (literally and figuratively!) with the students as they work through the exciting and challenging college years.

At the end of the Fall Semester, I will be coming back home for a couple of weeks. Then, just after Christmas, I’ll be going with a group of students on a mission trip to Haiti, where we have had a sister parish for many years. Soon enough, the Spring Semester will be here, and the journey continues.

I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving, and I hope to see you when I return home for Christmas. Keep the prayers coming and I’ll do the same!

Br. James-Peter Trares, O.P.

