

AN UPDATE FROM BR. JAMES-PETER TRARES, OP ~ December 5, 2016

A few weeks ago, on the First Sunday of Advent, we began a new church year. This anticipates our secular celebration of the New Year on January 1, but regardless, I think it's a great time to look back on the past year and look ahead to what God has in store for us.

For me, this past year has been a blessed one. I was ordained a transitional deacon on May 14 last spring with my four Dominican classmates, and then I launched out into a whirlwind of a summer. My first few weeks were spent in Fort Totten, North Dakota, where a priest from my community has been ministering among the native peoples for many years. I had the special opportunity of providing him company and sharing in his tireless ministry while taking advantage of the quiet of the prairie to begin work on my master's thesis.

After a series of planes, trains, and automobiles, I was back in Ohio for a few weeks of vacation with family. It was a privilege to come back home to St. Joe's to assist and preach at Mass. While home, I joined my classmates from Crestwood High School for our 10-year reunion, with a good showing of St. Joe's alums. (Has it really been 10 years?!)



Basilica of St. Dominic in Bologna, Italy,
where St. Dominic died and is buried

Then it was time to launch into a new adventure. This year is the 800th anniversary of our Dominican Order. As part of our jubilee celebrations, the Order organized a pilgrimage to the "Lands of St. Dominic" for brothers and sisters in formation. I was blessed to be among a group of over 100 young Dominicans from all over the world who gathered for a bus-trip through Spain, France, and Italy. It's hard to say what the best thing about the pilgrimage was. It was powerful to be in places with a long and important history for the Church and the Dominicans. Just as valuable was connecting with my peers from nearly every country where Dominicans serve. Although we spoke many different languages, there was a special bond and enthusiasm we shared as we returned to

our roots and looked forward to continuing our mission of preaching worldwide. Sadly, our audience with Pope Francis in Rome was cancelled, so I didn't get to see him!

After crossing back over the Atlantic and getting over the exhaustion and jet lag (and thanking God for the gift of air conditioning!), I went to Memphis, Tennessee. For the third year now, I helped teach our new brothers singing and liturgy. Praise God, we continue to attract good men who are excited to live out the Dominican charism in service to the Church.

With the few brain cells I had remaining at the end of the summer, I prepared for and took the four-hour written comprehensive exams required for our academic degree. Then it was up to Chicago for a special jubilee assembly of my province. Think of it as a mix between a business meeting and a family reunion!



Basilica of
St. Dominic
court yard

By the end of that, summer was winding up, and it was time to get back to "normal" life of studies in St. Louis, Missouri. "Normal" has come to mean "busy" for me, as the full course load of studies is juggled with community responsibilities and the new excitement of diaconal ministry. For the year, I'm assisting at St. Anthony of Padua Church, a local parish in St. Louis served by the Franciscan friars. It's been great getting my feet on the ground and gaining confidence and experience in ordained ministry.

I have one more semester to go before graduation and ordination to the priesthood. (Save the date—ordination is scheduled for May 20 in St. Louis, and you're all invited!) I'm caught between excitement and intimidation at moving on and taking the next step in my vocational journey. As of right now, I don't know where I'll be for my first assignment, but I expect to know in the next several months.

For now, classes are nearly over for the semester, and after some quieter days in community, I'll soon be home in Ohio for a little vacation after Christmas. I hope to see you all at church on the weekend of New Year's and to hear how the past year has been for you. Please pray for me, and I promise to pray for you.

God Bless,
Rev. Br. James Peter Trares, O.P.