

Hello Everyone,

Greetings and best wishes from Rome. I had a safe trip arriving in Rome on Monday late morning. By early afternoon I had checked into my room here at the Pontifical North American College (PNAC). When I opened my window, I was pleasantly surprised to have a wonderful view that includes the Dome of St Peters Basilica! The welcome and opening Mass was held at 5:30pm that evening.

There are twelve of us participating in the sabbatical program and from four different countries. One priest is from New Zealand, One from Canada, two from Australia and eight of us from the US. The eight of us are from different US dioceses (Archdiocese of Miami- FL, Archdiocese of New York-NY, Archdiocese of St Paul Minneapolis-MN, Diocese of Winona-Rochester-IL, Diocese of Arlington-VA, Diocese of San Jose-CA, Diocese of Sioux Falls-SD).

In case you do not know, the Pontifical North American College is a seminary (like Notre Dame in New Orleans) established for the formation of priests to serve the United States. The Seminary also serves other nations, especially Canada and Australia. The College was established in 1859 by Pope Pius IX. The property of the current campus which is close to the Vatican was acquired in 1929 and construction commenced after the second World War. It was dedicated by Pope Pius XII in 1953. There are currently 100 Seminarians from different Dioceses including two from Houma-Thibodaux; Deacons Mathew Prosperie and Joseph Lapeyrouse.

The Sabbatical program is organized and hosted by the Institute for Continuing Theological Education. The institute is part of the PNAC. The institute was established in 1971 in response to the call from the Second Vatican Council for ongoing formation for priests.

As I look back at the first week the highlight was (Wednesday January 11, 2023) when we got to participate in the General Audience with Pope Francis at the Pope Paul VI Audience Hall. At the end of the General Audience, we as a group were granted an opportunity to meet the holy father! We asked for his blessing and he in turn asked us to pray for him and then we took a picture.

There is a beautiful chapel where we have prayer and liturgy together every day and communal Eucharistic Adoration once a week. The weekends are mostly free. Please know of my prayers for you and kindly hold me too in your prayers.

Thanks, and God bless,

Father Simon Peter