

Your Grace, Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Today, some of us have come to the end of our struggle in seminary. With God's help, we have faced temptations and hardships, and come through as different people—new, and formed for the service of Christ's Holy Church.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” These words express a deep truth: we have come to this day because of our fellowship in Christ. To live constantly together can be difficult, but the common goal of communion with God overcomes all strife and discord. It is impossible to express how comforting it is to understand that your brothers know how to forgive, how to help, and how to show Christ-like love.

The book of Job is one of my favourite books in the Scriptures. It provides answers to many of life's questions, as well as to questions a young seminarian might have. It is very easy to enter the church and forget oneself in its beauty, but then temptations befall us, and one might despair, or even worse, become prey to the spirit of criticism. Here in seminary, thank God, I have not undergone temptations such as Job, but it has, nevertheless, helped me many a time to remember him. I thank God that I never had friends like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, the friends of Job. Instead, I found friends who live by the words of the Apostle Paul, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” These spiritual brethren were found among long-suffering and kind professors, as well as classmates, whom I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart. In this seminary, it is vitally important to cherish our spiritual communion, our brotherhood, and our fellowship on the path to salvation. Without this, it is extremely hard to bear the yoke of church service, for which we here prepare. Here, we foretaste the reality of

pastoral service—all the hardship, and all the spiritual joy. We girded ourselves with belts, and with a blessing, took upon ourselves this soul-saving endeavour. The seminarians who are still studying here should cherish the fact that the divine services happen every day. We know that great hardships lie ahead, but we only need to set foot in the church to experience the joy of paradise. Over the years here, I have developed the most profound respect for those Christians who have never had this, or a similar experience, yet remain in the church. Here, one is safely within the ship of the Church and anchored in the faith, not tossed in the tempests of the world. As a pastor, one has to provide that ship and anchor to his flock. Remember this, my dear brother seminarians. Learn to love silence, to pray, to bear one another's burdens, and remember why we all found ourselves here. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When things got really hard, one little phrase God spoke to Job always came to my mind: "Gird up now thy loins like a man..." Remember this, be manly, bear your crosses, and all shall be well.