Time always seems to move quickly as we approach the holidays. It's almost hard to believe Advent is upon us, but here we are already in this great liturgical season of anticipation. This is a special season for Franciscans because Christmas was probably St. Francis' favorite holiday. We anticipate many things this time of year, but most importantly, we anticipate the birth of Jesus who became a human baby so that we could be in loving relationship with him.

While I'm most excited for the coming of our Lord on Christmas, I also find myself in my own season of anticipation. This year marks my final year of religious formation, often referred to as our internship or pastoral year. The internship is a capstone year of sorts when we're placed in a ministry site and practice some of the ministerial skills we've developed in our formation process. For my internship, I'm ministering at a soup kitchen called St. Francis Inn in Kensington, Philadelphia. God willing, next summer I will make my final vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Order of Friars Minor.

For the last 6 years, my formation in the Franciscans has taken me all over the country, to DC, Santa Barbara, NYC, New Mexico, the southern border, and even other countries like Jamaica, Mexico, and Italy. I've been blessed with many opportunities to discern God's will in my life and to serve the people of God in many different contexts. I'm so grateful for all the many relationships I've made over the years, but I'm most grateful for the prayers and support of the St. Joan of Arc community, my home parish.

Some of you may not know who I am when you pray for me at intercessions, and some of you are probably wondering how much longer you'll have to pray for me. I'm sure it seems like you've been praying for an eternity and are wondering if the prayers are actually working, but I promise you that your prayers were not in vain. They have strengthened my resolve over the last 6 years to live the gospel and to give more of myself in service to others. Your prayers often motivated me to pray especially when prayer seemed difficult or impossible, and comforted me when I felt lost. And most of all, your prayers reminded me that I was not on this journey alone - none of us are.

Prayer is powerful. Even when prayer seems repetitive or routine, as I'm sure praying for me may have seemed after a few years, it can transform even the most stubborn of hearts. And that's no small feat. In our ministry in Philadelphia, prayer continues to help me see the guests who come to our meals as brothers and sisters, as faces of Christ smiling back at me.

Your prayers helped push me on to the finish line of my formation. I'm blessed to have had a community supporting me these last few years. As I anticipate the end of my formation and the final profession of my vows as a Franciscan, I'm also aware that the journey has only just begun. My ministry as a Friar will continue, and so will my prayers for all of you. Peace and all good, and prayers for a blessed new liturgical year.