“One, two, three…” The prefect counts off as each man in the Fraternity of St. Michael bustles out the door of Castel Nuovo and processes to Florance Chapel to pray Lauds, the Church’s morning prayer, at six-thirty. On the way, the stars are often the only companion on the journey, and seeing bright Venus next to the crescent Moon gives inspiration and fodder for meditation for the line from Psalm 19 which we often recite: “The heavens proclaim the glory of God.”

After Lauds, we assist at Holy Mass at seven in the Chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas. A man of the Fraternity begins his day intentionally earlier than most college students, in order to be united in prayer with his brothers and the universal Church, to beg assistance from almighty God, and to dedicate his day to the Lord’s service. As we make our daily pilgrimage to the chapel to pray, we remember that not only this day, but our entire lives, are for the glory of God.

After Mass, I enjoy my packed breakfast in the serene tranquility of Our Lady’s garden by the chapel, then head off to classes for the day. Study is a way of life for the man of the Fraternity, insofar as he acknowledges due diligence to his work as God’s will for him in his current vocation as a student, but it extends beyond the classroom as well. From time to time, the Fraternity attends talks and hosts professors, and the conversation naturally develops as the dinner courses unfold. It is not uncommon to return to the house after a full day’s of classes to find housemates conversing about some topic from class that day: anything from philosophy to business ethics, to engineering and astronomy.

Around midday, I quietly slip into one of the many chapels on campus to rest with the Lord a moment and to renew my day’s offering to God. That morning, in Catholic Studies 301, we discussed the intimate connection between creation and redemption. In the afternoon, in astronomy class, I gained a greater appreciation for the operations of creation as we discussed exactly why Venus, which I had just seen that crisp morning, is the “Morning Star.” What other response can one have, but that of immense gratitude and awe?

When the weather cooperates, I pedal down to the Mississippi River and enjoy a ride along the tree-lined paths, offering a welcome mental break from study. As afternoon rolls into evening, I return to the house to find pleasant aromas wafting from the kitchen as two of the men cook up rigatoni Bolognese and a roasted chicken. This particular night, we enjoy a community meal together as part of our weekly formation night. Realizing that there is great grace and opportunity for growing in charity in living with those whom we did not choose, we maintain an intentional brotherhood among us, a brotherhood which is supplemented with directed formation talks on growing into men of God and men for others.

After a festive meal, we all lend a hand to clean up, then make our way to the porch to continue the conversation. Like all students, however, the books beckon, so we continue our studies, and do our best to retire early for the night, for we know that at six-thirty the next morning, we will be in the chapel to continue the sacrifice of praise.