

MEET PTS



M.DIV. STUDENT EARNS GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN URBAN MINISTRY WHILE EXPLORING ECUMENICAL EDUCATION

Felix Rivera-Merced grew up in Southern California. “Though my family wasn’t religious, those around me taught me the love of studying the Scriptures, from which I learned the love of thinking about and praying to God. And those activities led to my desire to love others more and more.” Then, in his junior year as an economics major at Santa Clara University, in the Bay area, Felix sensed the call of God to teach and to help others grow in a deeper understanding of their faith and how to walk with God.

In my exploration of and visit to PTS, it became clear that, while the Seminary highly valued its inherited, Reformed tradition, it was at the same time sincerely ecumenical. And because of PTS’s generosity in financial assistance, my long-awaited dream of studying in seminary came to fruition.

“This call was continually confirmed by friends, peers, and mentors,” Felix recalls. Yet after he graduated, he felt prevented from enrolling in seminary due to his lack of adequate financial resources and a job. “So I waited,” says Felix. “Three years later and even less money in the bank, I took a step of faith and applied,” he continues.

“I applied to Pittsburgh Seminary because I had grown to value the traditions of the greater Church while also understanding that a true appreciation for the universal cannot be divorced from a commitment to the particular. In my exploration of and visit to PTS, it became clear that, while the Seminary highly valued its inherited, Reformed tradition, it was at the same time sincerely ecumenical. And because of PTS’s generosity in financial assistance, my long-awaited dream of studying in seminary came to fruition,” he remarks.

Now that Felix is just a year away from graduating—and is about to get married to fellow student Kalyn Stevwing!—he appreciates the preparation for ministry he has found in the community of learners at PTS. Some of that preparation has come through his participation in the Seminary’s **Church Planting Initiative** and **World Mission Initiative**. Some of it has come through his **graduate certificate in Urban Ministry**. Much of it has come through faculty in the classroom and worship in the Chapel Program. “Through the challenges and opportunities Pittsburgh Seminary has provided, I see God’s hand in molding me into a minister—a leader with courage to rise to adversity and uncertainty, yet with the insight to depend wholly on God and the humility to acknowledge the work and leading of God in others.”

“No matter what sort of ministry I find myself in after graduation,” Felix notes, “as a minister of the gospel I will pray for others the Apostle Paul’s prayer for the Philippians: ‘that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.’”

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