Hello I am Brother John Maria, one of the seminarians in the Diocese of Joliet. I have been here in this Diocese for about two years. I was sent here by my community specifically by our Prior General of the Dominican Missionaries to work with the Deaf People. The first time I came here was on June 1, 2018. Since I don't know how to drive at that time, I wasn't able to see the Deaf Community in the Diocese until I waited for several months to learn how to drive and be able to get the Driver's License and I got familiarized with the Diocese of Joliet. Knowing that I am just new here and getting used to driving cars because I only drive bicycle way in my hometown in the Philippines.

When I was in Philippines, I was able to see my family members before the Christmas of 2018 just before I returned to USA. After that I was able to drive car so that I can visit the deaf community in Joliet. Every other Sunday I go the different Churches in the Diocese of Joliet that has deaf interpreted Mass. Deaf people are so nice to me. They encouraged me a lot to go on and they even teach some signs and corrected me in a nice way whenever I don't sign the way it should be signed. To help me to be attuned with American Sign Language I am taking ASL Classes in Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Illinois. Last Summer of 2019 I was blessed to be sent for ASL Summer Classes in Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. Right now, I am still at Saint Mary Mokena but I will be moving soon to another parish to have more exposure in parish ministry experiences. I feel very excited about working with the Catholic Deaf community in the Diocese of Joliet.