



THE GUARDIAN

Vol. XV No. 4

Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

December 2013

How the time flies by! Here we are already in December, but this month too will fly by. Soon the vacation will be at hand and we will travel to our homes to spend Christmastide with our families. In the meantime, however, we continue to do our best to grow in knowledge but above all in grace and virtue, by following the daily seminary routine of prayer, studies, work and recreation. And perhaps that is why the time just flies by — because we are so busy.

So what have we been up to during the past month of November? Well, early in the month we had a burial at our cemetery. That means that the seminarians had a grave to dig. But here it is especially tedious, because the soil in the cemetery is rock hard and requires many laborious hours with pick and shovel. We all lent a hand and are happy to have been able to perform this work of mercy.

We also worked on learning the beautiful melismatic chants of the Requiem Mass. The singing went very well at the High Mass on All Souls' Day, but we still need to fine tune a few rough spots. We hope to be able to sing more Requiem Masses — perhaps one a month.

We also enjoyed recently a trip to the home of our friends the Slaters. Whenever we visit they treat us to a delicious meal and a relaxing evening. It is always a nice respite, and we are grateful for their hospitality.

Now we are trying to make a good Advent. We have each written down our plan for extra prayer and penance for approval. There will also be common penitential practices at the seminary, as well as the beautiful Advent hymns,

with their touching themes of eager longing for the coming of the Christ Child. Let us all prepare well for His coming! O come, O come Emmanuel. Come and reign in our hearts.

The Redemptrix of the human race

by Dominic Pulliam, gr. 10

It's almost Christmas! But Christmas is not the only feast to look forward to in December. If Christmas is on December 25th, and you take away 17 days, we happen to land on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th. This is the reason why I have chosen this topic.

The Immaculate Conception is an event to contemplate. Here we meditate on how Our Lady was preserved from original sin. Our Lady was formed in St. Anne's womb. She was so miraculous that as God formed her soul and infused it into her body, she was without any stain of original sin. This is how God destined His Son's Mother to start life. From then on she was called beautiful, pure, holy, modest, blessed and immaculate.

At the beginning of time God made the promise to send a Redeemer when He said: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." This gave a clear statement that there would be a second Eve, an Eve who would be the Redemptrix of the human race, the Mother of Christ and the Queen of the whole world and all of Heaven.

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December calendar

- 1 — First Sunday of Advent; Solemn High Mass
- 6 — Mid-quarter
- 9 — Immaculate Conception BVM; Day of Reflection
- 12 — Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe; Solemn High Mass
- 20 — Half day of school; Christmas Vacation begins after classes



O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

The Redemptrix of the human race

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Another topic we can contemplate is that Mary is one of the best intercessors we can have besides Jesus Christ. That is why it is good to have a great devotion to her. She can grant us so many things we need for our spiritual and bodily welfare, if only we ask in a humble and sincere way. Some of these ways are praying the Rosary and saying the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception.

And so, my devout readers, pray to Our Lady and meditate upon the Immaculate Conception. Ask her for all the things you need and make her the loving mother in your life. And may she intercede for us at the hour of our death and at the death of all our friends.

Love and grief

by Ryman Golpe, gr. 12

“**G**od so loved the world that he gave His only Son . . .” Because of God’s outpouring of love, Christ, His only-begotten Son, was sent into the world. Everything in this world from the tiniest microorganism to the biggest rock in the universe, from the simplest to the most complicated structures of elements — all exist because of love. People multiplied continuously from the first civilization after the great deluge at the time of Noe because of love.

Love cannot be achieved without any sufferings. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down to the earth “not to be served but to serve.” He endured all of the anguish and pains that men caused Him, and He saved them from the damnation of Hell. Love and sufferings are like salt and pepper.

Men are born because of the love of their parents, especially of the mother. The mother who loved her children so much, endured sufferings and difficulties especially during their birth to show them the goodness of God on earth. I remember my mother was always telling us that she gave us punishments to prove her love for us. Loving without sufferings is not a true love. It’s like you are just loving somebody because you are afraid to lose his friendship. Do not be foolish and misunderstand love. True love means to grieve, as St. Albert the Great explained: “Wherever you find the greatest love, there you will find the greatest grief.”

You can express your love by enduring all your grievances and sufferings. That’s why God became man and suffered and was crucified for our sins — because he wanted to show us love. Do not be afraid if you are suffering, because it means you are loving.

A season of preparation

by Vincent Prado, gr. 10

Advent is a time for preparing for the most joyous feast of the year: Christmas, the Birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a season in which our minds and hearts must be prepared for the Nativity of Jesus. Advent is such an

important piece of the Church’s liturgy because of two things: it prepares us for Christmas, and it is the beginning of the new liturgical year.

Advent is a solemn and penitential season. The vestments are of a purple hue, the flowers are removed from the altar, and the organ ceases to play its joyous tunes. There is the Advent wreath, and the Christmas decorations starting to appear in the Church.

As in Lent, some people do small penances to further prepare themselves, such as fasting, which is not obligatory in Advent. (In my opinion, it is a very beneficial practice). Giving up small luxuries that we are accustomed to, draws down many graces from God, making the Advent season more meritorious for us.

Worldly people have no idea of the essence of Advent; it does not exist among them. Their Christmas decorations sometimes go up the day after Thanksgiving. The radio is flooded with worldly Christmas music, “Santa Claus” is brandished everywhere, and it’s not even December yet. And Catholics are ridiculed for being so “late” in their Christmas apparel. If only other people knew the value of such an important season. They have no knowledge of preparation for the Birth of Christ, who is unfortunately neglected at Christmastime these days.

Take Advent to heart, dear reader, and prepare yourself for the Birth of Jesus. Do small sacrifices and give up small luxuries, and you will be happier come Christmas, and you will be filled with more grace. I leave you with a quote that I am familiar with, and that is applicable to this time of year: “If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.”

A misunderstood sound

by Jordan Hartman, gr. 11

“**W**hat is so fragile that even to say the name of it in its presence would break it?” (I put this riddle in quotations because I heard it from another seminarian). If you can guess the answer to the riddle, you will know the topic of my article. Time’s up! The answer is silence. I once heard it said that “silence is golden and duct tape is silver.” Both statements are true, but the point is that silence is a virtue.

Here at the seminary we enjoy Grand Silence each night after some prayers and meditations. With our minds already uplifted to the things of God we are better disposed to get a peaceful sleep and retire with recollection. Silence is, however, a very misunderstood virtue in our modern world. Everyone is constantly finding new ways to distract themselves, and technology has made that much easier to do. Silence is seen as an eccentricity, typical of a recluse or a hermit. Do not, dear reader, believe it.

Silence brings peace of mind when used in the proper way. All the saints practiced their virtues in a humble, all-encompassing silence. They meditated and fulfilled their daily duties in silence. But why? What’s so special about silence?

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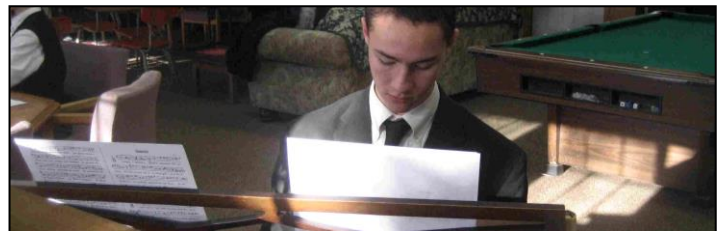
On All Saints' Day we had dinner at a nice Italian restaurant.



This Italian restaurant is adorned with many beautiful religious pictures and statues.



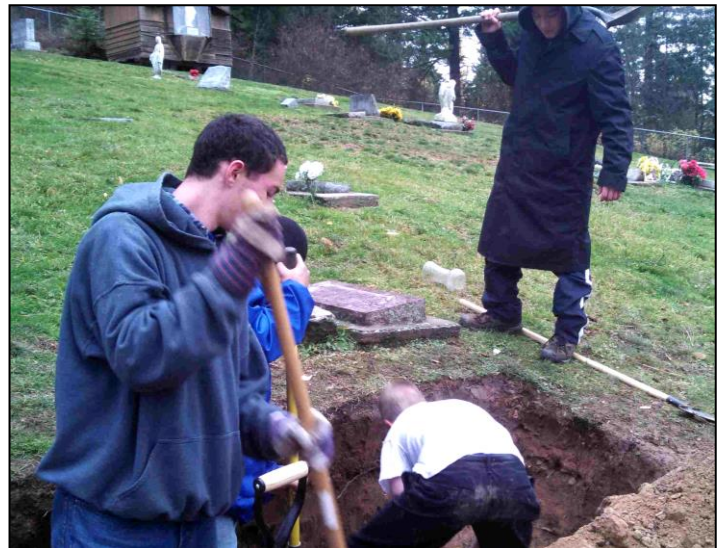
Our annual talent show featured various musical selections.



Dominic prepares his piano piece for the talent show.



The seminarians enjoy playing hockey in the gym.



The seminarians assist in digging the grave for a deceased parishioner.



A recent project — cutting down pine trees by the cemetery to improve the view.



This moose has been seen foraging near the seminary.

A misunderstood sound

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Well, for one thing, God speaks to the individual very quietly. This seems to be, in my mind, a huge contrast. The almighty Creator, King of all that is or ever will be, converses with us so quietly that if we are not listening carefully, we will not hear Him. Some rush through life asking God for answers and complain that He never replies. This is simply because they do not give Him the chance to speak.

Silence is also the virtue opposed to the vices of gossip, blasphemy, rash judgment and foul language in general. There is so much of this going on in the world today that it is sickening. Even many people who call themselves Catholics are guilty of these sins. “For every kind of beast and bird, and of serpents and the rest, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind; but the tongue no man can tame — a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (St. James, 3:7–9).

The above quote does not mean that people can’t say good things, but that they choose not to. It would seem to me that the best way to avoid sinning with the tongue would be to practice not saying anything at all. By so doing, we can think before we speak. We have a tongue with which we can bless or blaspheme God. How one uses his tongue is totally up to the owner of it. So let us give thanks to God for the gift of speech and fortify ourselves against sins of the tongue by practicing the beautiful and woefully misunderstood virtue of silence.

“Learn of Me . . .”

At this time of year we reflect on the incarnation of the Son of God and His humble birth at Bethlehem. Although many virtues are exhibited in the life of Christ, and especially in His lowly birth, the one that shines most brightly is the incredible humility of the Son of God.

Jesus could truly say during His public life, “Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” No truer words were ever spoken, for our divine Lord personified meekness and humility. As for us, eradicating pride and cultivating humility is the work of a lifetime. But acquire it we must, for unless we become as little children, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven — and this applies principally to the virtue of humility.

Do You Have a Vocation?

If you are a young man of high school age who has a vocation, then St. Joseph Seminary may be the place for you. Our four-year course of studies offers the regular high school curriculum, with an emphasis on Latin, theology, choir and foreign language. A well-rounded program of daily Mass, prayer and sports complements our academic schedule. For more information, write to the rector of St. Joseph Seminary at the address below.

Pride is so insidious that it worms its way even into our good actions. How then, can we gain humility? First, meditate on the beauty of this virtue. Second, be on your guard against pride. Third, practice humble works, such as serving others. Fourth, forgive those who have offended you. And finally, pray continuously for this all-important virtue.

There are many wonderful prayers for humility. One of the best that I have ever come across is the “Litany of Humility” composed by Cardinal Merry del Val. This great man, secretary of state to Pope St. Pius X, prayed this litany every day during his thanksgiving after Holy Communion. I encourage you to pray it daily, but especially to pray it slowly, thoughtfully, and meaningfully — from your heart. The more we ask, the more we shall receive, and the virtue of humility is one of the best things we can ask for.

During this Christmas season, as we gaze at the image of the Christ Child, let us especially call to mind His wonderful humility. From being the all-powerful creator of heaven and earth, He became a little Child for love of us. May we also become little, learning the beauty of this virtue from our Savior Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the staff and seminarians of St. Joseph Seminary, I extend to each of you and your loved ones, our heartfelt wish and assurance of prayers for a most joyous Christmas season. We are most grateful for your support and pray that God will abundantly bless you, as only He can. Above all, may He give you the gift of His peace during this holy season.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI

The Guardian is published monthly for the enjoyment of our benefactors and for the family members of our seminarians. This newsletter is free upon request.

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