



# THE GUARDIAN

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*Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary*

January 2010

**I**t would be an understatement to say that our life at the seminary is a busy one! And that is a blessing, because in the midst of the daily Masses, prayers, classes and activities, time passes quickly. We all agree that each year seems to pass more quickly than the one before. And so, here we are already, at our Christmas vacation.

Early December was frigidly cold, but right now (a week before Christmas), it is raining and the snow is being washed away. We are not sure whether or not there will be a white Christmas here in Idaho, but we hope (especially the California contingent), that there will be plenty of snow upon our return. We always enjoy January at the seminary, with the opportunity for skiing and other snow-related activity.

Finally, we wish all of you a most blessed and Merry Christmas, and we pray that you will have many graces in the coming New Year. Please also pray for our seminary, that the year of 2010 will be one of more vocations and growth for our minor seminary.

## Where's my bicycle?

by Juan Garcia, gr. 12

**T**he world is full of customs and traditions. Both religious and secular customs are beautiful, and some of them have great meaning. The celebration of the Epiphany in Mexico will be the topic of my article.

Starting on December 1, all children must behave well if they want to obtain from the Kings what they asked. Just as St. Nicholas brings gifts and rewards to children in some countries, the Three Kings bring presents to children in Mexico. My mother used to tell me: "You see those three stars in the sky

(Orion's belt). They are the Three Kings, and they are watching you. You had better behave."

From New Year's Eve to January 5, all children go to the Three Kings' stations and do their asking. I remember asking Gaspar for a bicycle. He wrote it down on a paper and slyly gave it to my mother. Meanwhile Melchior put me on his horse so I would not see the paper transfer.

Early next day I woke up and saw various gifts: cookies, candy, army men, little cars, but the bicycle was nowhere. I told my mother what happened and she answered: "Oh, that's because Balthazar (the brown King) is the one appointed to give us presents. He doesn't have a lot of money and still he had to visit many other children." I decided not to ask other questions and so it remained until a few days later, when I finally got a bicycle.

During this Epiphany let us think of what we can give to the Divine Infant child, not so much in material things, as in spiritual things. Let us make this, not only a tradition, but a way of life.

## Pinnacles of literature

by Zachary Odom, gr. 11

**I** like reading — not too complex though. Usually a simple book with a simple story will get me hook, line, and sinker. So when it was proposed that we start a Great Books Club, I was caught lock, stock, and barrel. I had heard before of these great books, these pinnacles of literature (by

## January calendar

- 1 — Robert's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- 4 — Seminarians return
- 5 — Blessing of Epiphany Water
- 6 — Martin's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday; Epiphany celebration
- 19–21 — Semester Exams; priests' meeting
- 22 — Semester Break; end of Second Quarter; Ski Day

Homer, Aristotle, Dante, St. Thomas Aquinas, Shakespeare, etc.), and yet I never had the pleasure of reading any of them before. To say the least, I was ecstatic to read them. So began The Great Books Discussion Club, with three other seminarians, our fantastic English teacher, Mrs. Gallagher, and myself.

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*The outdoor shrine of Our Lady is beautifully illuminated with white and blue Christmas lights.*

## Pinnacles of literature

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We do precisely what the name of our club implies, we read “great books” and “discuss” them. The class begins with someone raising a question (as in the Iliad of Homer, “Was Achilles honorable?”) and the others answering yes or no. Usually, a yes or no answer does not cut it in this class, so the questioner would then ask Why? This leads to people scratching their heads and racking their brains for an answer. Not only this, but in class you also have a two-sided discussion where people from one side are trying to refute and convert those on the other side to their way of thinking. At the end of class we reach a single conclusion with the people on the wrong side having to admit their error.

In this way our club/class teaches us: 1) great literature, 2) how to discuss, and 3) how to reason and come to a logical conclusion. A number of you may be asking, “Why waste your time on Greek mythology and Achilles anyway, isn’t that pagan?” Yes, some of these books are secular, but our discussions apply the Faith. The Great Books Discussion Club proposes to teach us the skills of analyzing and drawing conclusions, and is thus beneficial. When the questioner asks, “Was Achilles honorable?” the others are forced to think of Catholic principles and apply them to the topic. Our definition of honor (or whatever) is neither pagan nor a waste of time, but a good exercise in applying Catholic principles to the questions and problems of life.

## Organized chaos

*by Martin Concepcion, gr. 8*

Every year in December we seminarians run frantically around the seminary with piles of boxes, containing rows and rows of tangled festive lights. The different occurrence this year was that some new LED lights for the church’s exterior and the pillars were purchased. If you can think of how hard it must have been to decorate the church with coils and coils and COILS of Christmas lights, I would have to say you have quite an imagination.

We brought ladders and the truck to remove the old lights and bring in the new. It was freezing cold, our teeth were chattering, and the staple gun was punching with noises that could be heard from a mile away in the tall snow-covered trees. As it became darker, my hands could no longer function in the blistering cold. The church wasn’t the only thing we had to decorate; we also decorated Our Lady’s Shrine, which is absolutely beautiful because it illuminates all the shadows and makes Our Lady holding our Savior and Redeemer in her arms just magnificent.

After we put up those lights we grabbed even more and more and MORE boxes of Christmas lights, tinsel, and my favorite – multi-colored ornaments. It was just absolutely wondrous to see how different the seminary looks when you turn off all the lights and see sparkles of Christmas lights

which frame the windows and a beautiful tree which just brings a warm feeling to your heart. So as we sat there on the couch at the end of the day, absolutely EXHAUSTED, we just couldn’t avoid the gigantic grins as we thought to ourselves: Wow! We did it.

So now I bid you goodbye and I leave you with the familiar phrase, “although it’s been said many times, many ways . . . Merry Christmas . . . to you.”

## Where God isn’t

*by Forrest Nguyen, gr. 11*

In our recent theology classes, Fr. Benedict has been teaching us about the Novus Ordo Missae, what it says and its problems. “The Novus Ordo has changed the words of the Canon of the Mass — it has changed the essence of the Mass, and because of this the New Mass is invalid.” This fact alone should be enough to settle any doubts concerning the Novus Ordo: “its essence is invalid”. But, while I have nothing against the facts, I personally would like to set aside the facts and use experience to disprove the New Mass.

I was raised with the Novus Ordo. I had attended a “Catholic” school for four years and “Saturday-Sunday Masses” for ten. And it was finally in that tenth year that my family converted. I was the normal ten-year-old: I could not think; I could not reason; I could only feel. I could only see. But what I felt and saw then confirms what I’m thinking and reasoning now.

I remember the table. It was the center stage for the party: the celebrant would clap and shout and crack jokes from that stage. I even remember performing a Christmas pageant from the sanctuary and sitting on that table! I remember the altar girls (more of them than the boys) and the “eucharistic ministers” who would parade around the table, especially around the time of “consecration.” Oh! And during the “consecration” I never remember many kneeling and at the time of communion: communion in the hand.

I remember the hymns, every so often the tune of one pops into my head and the words: “From the corners of creation to the center where we stand” and, during the “Jesus Jams” shouting the name, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” to the rhythm of “Rah, Rah, Rah”. The choir was more like a band: complete with guitar, piano, drums and tambourine. During the Gloria (which now incorporates clapping) and Sanctus, the cantors would come into the sanctuary itself and raise their hands for us to raise our voices in the “hymns of man.”

And during the Orations, Epistle, Gospel and Novus Ordo addition of the “Petitions,” I remember lectors coming to the pulpit to read from the King James translation of the Bible.

But besides what I do remember, I do not recall many of the traditional ceremonies of the Mass in the Novus Ordo. I do not remember reverence: no kneeling, no genuflections, no silence, no modesty, nothing edifying as in our Mass. Really, I do not remember God being anywhere in those churches. And I think that is reason enough.



*Our delicious Thanksgiving buffet dinner was prepared by staff and enjoyed by all.*



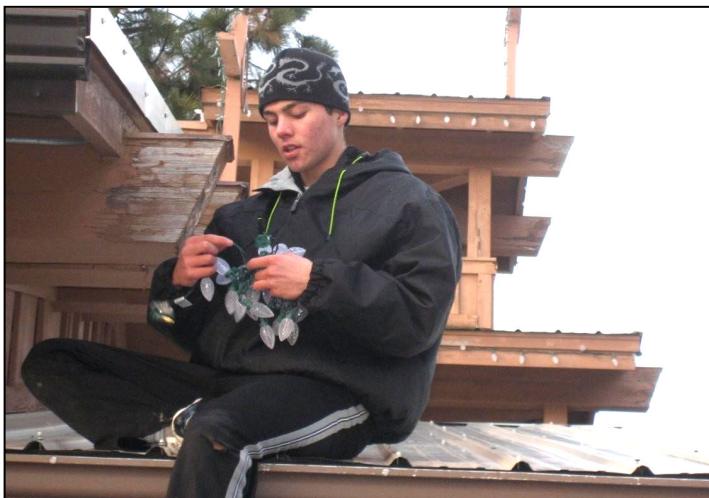
*A chapter of Holy Scripture is read every evening at the supper meal.*



*Lighting the Advent wreath is a tradition we observe at the seminary.*



*Juan and Marty decorated our Christmas tree after procuring it from the forest adjacent to the seminary.*



*Robert untangles a string of lights for the church exterior.*



*One of the seminarians installs Christmas lights on the bell tower.*

## Of chalk and trash

by Robert Prado, gr. 12

**Y**es, chores are not always on the top of the list of things we want to do, and we usually put them off, and off, and off until well . . .

“Zack, you forgot to wipe the chalk-boards!” Two minutes before the bell rings Zack scrambles into the classroom, conjures up a rag, and starts rubbing the boards as if his life depended on it. We, of course, like typical friends, don’t help him, but are laughing instead, as he ferociously tries to finish his neglected chore. With seconds counting down and arms flying over the board, desperately battling the chalk dust, Zack races time. We stare at the clock counting the seconds . . . 3, 2, 1 . . . the bell rings and Fr. Benedict, forever on time, walks into the now somewhat dusty room. Zack has miraculously finished the boards, and is now in his desk panting.

Okay, so yes, we forget to do our chores sometimes and end up having to pull off a desperate dash to finish them. I, for example, I am in charge of the garbage — yes, that dreaded chore. It always seems that the huge garbage bag needs to be emptied. Oh, and did I mention that it always happens to be when nature is most angry, when she places all that lovely ice on the ground, just for me, and when the snow is whirling through the sub-zero air making the usually short walk to the garbage dumpster a trek you could write a book on. So far, I have made it to the garbage can and back alive every time, just a little . . . frozen. When I finally make it back to our warm, cozy, seminary, the seminarians are shocked to see a snowman (me) stepping into the room. Fortunately, a blazing fire makes quick work of their illusion, and I thaw out to my normal self once again.

So the responsibility of chores can be a little exciting at times, and yes, although it pains me to say it, a bit fun. Ah, but we still long for that day when God has mercy on us and our chores, when Zack’s tired arms are given a rest when Fr. Benedict is finally late (which will never happen), and when the sun beats down on me and my garbage bag.

## The value of time

**A**t the conclusion of every year the topic of *time* comes to mind. God has given each of us another year. What a blessing! According to St. Alphonsus, *time is worth God*, because in a moment of time a sinner can regain God’s grace

## Seminary Support Club

If you are not yet a member of the Seminary Support Club and would like to become a member, you may write to the seminary at the address below. Members pledge to pray for the success of the seminary and, if able, to send a regular financial contribution for its support.

## 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.

and thus save his soul, while, sadly, in a moment of time, one could also sin and lose his soul. How precious are the moments of time that God has given to us!

How much would a soul in hell give for just a few moments of time? And yet, for the damned, time is no more. Shall we then squander the time that is now ours? These reflections motivate us to use carefully this precious gift of time to work out our salvation. We do not know how much more time remains for us in this world, so let us use the present moment to love and serve God.

Let us also not dwell upon past sins. Leave the past to God’s mercy. The future also is uncertain. How much more time will we have? We know not, so leave the future to God’s loving Providence. But the present is ours, and it is in the present that we must cooperate with God’s grace and live our Faith. May we value as we ought this precious gift of time, and use it for our salvation.

You can all be assured of our prayers for the blessings of God for you and your loved ones in the New Year. We thank you for your support over the past year and ask your continued prayers and support for our seminary. May God reward you.

*Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI*

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