



THE GUARDIAN

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Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

December 2010

Winter came early this year! Beginning on the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, the snow has continued to fall. The temperature last week fell to single digits and even below zero at night. So we have had quite a start to our winter.

Refreshed from our Thanksgiving vacation, we are now ready for the final few weeks before Christmas. Advent is always an enjoyable time at the seminary. Of course, we have our Advent penance practices and other preparations, as we eagerly look forward to Christmas. These penitential practices, however, assure us of a good preparation for the coming of the Infant Savior.

We hope that you all have a good, spiritual Advent. The world begins to celebrate the birth of Christ during the very season when Holy Mother Church wants us to prepare our hearts for His coming. Let us not be caught up in the excessive materialism and busy activity of the world, but rather spend Advent in prayer, sacrifice, and meditation upon the wonderful blessing of Christ's coming into the world!

Las Posadas

by Juan Garcia, gr. 12

The birth of Our Lord is coming. Advent is the time in which our Holy Mother the Church prepares us for His Coming. During this season, penances and abstinence are encouraged by our pastors that we may give a warm welcome to the divine Bambino. As a result of the various practices done by the faithful, customs and traditions have developed in certain places. Among these places is Mexico, my native land. To prepare a present for the Infant

Jesus, we have an original custom that I would like to share with you, called *Las Posadas*.

Las Posadas is a dual novena, prayed in preparation for the Messiah and in remembrance of the anxiety and sorrow of St. Joseph and Our Lady at the refusal of shelter they received. This custom began in the colonial era, when Mexico was under the dominion of Spain. In this ceremony, parish members take turns inside their homes to manifest the *Posadas* (the inns of Bethlehem). Sometimes there gather several groups depending on the size of the parish, with each house displaying a beautiful nativity scene. The feast of St. Eusebius is the commencement of the *Posadas*.

The first part of our novena is the recitation of the Rosary accompanied with hymns, followed by the prayers for the particular day of the novena. Now the moment has come. A shrine of Our Lady sitting on a donkey, with St. Joseph for guide and an angel guarding, is carried in procession. We all carry candles. (Sometimes, little children are dressed as Mary and Joseph or angels.) We make three stops. At the arrival of the first house, the group is divided into two choirs.

Those inside the house represent the owners of the inn. Outside St. Joseph begs: "In the name of heaven, I beg your hospitality, for my beloved spouse is soon to bear a Child." The reply from within follows: "Here is not a mansion; continue on ahead. I shall not open

December calendar

- 3 — Mid-quarter
- 6 — Feast of St. Nicholas
- 8 — Feast of the Immaculate Conception; holyday; no classes
- 16 — Begin Novena in preparation for Christmas
- 18 — Cutting Christmas trees and begin decorating
- 21 — Christmas vacation begins after classes

to thee, lest a thief gain entrance." Then St. Joseph replies: "Do not be inhuman. Give us charity, for the God of heaven shall reward thee." And then the reply: "You can go now, and do not molest us, for if I become angry, I shall have you arrested." With a hymn of lamentation after this rejection, we continue to the next home. When we arrive at the third and final house (sometimes a church), Mary and St. Joseph are finally welcomed. Rejoicing in chorus, we enter the house.

continued on page 2



The seminarians and Mrs. Gallagher begin history class with a prayer.

Las Posadas

continued from page 1

The shrine is then placed on a podium or place reserved for it. After the ceremony all line up going out, and often receive candy or fruit or both, at the door of the house. Sometimes there is even a piñata! With this we conclude our Posada practice, which is observed daily until the nativity of our Divine Lord.

In this season of Advent let us prepare ourselves for the Christ Child who comes to us. Let us prepare a warm dwelling for Him, unlike the “rejectors” who do not even open the door, but shout from within, “Go away!”

Lessons from the thought of Purgatory

by Robert Kowalczyk, gr. 9

During the month of November we think about the Poor Souls in purgatory, their great sufferings and their longing for God. In November there are indulgences available for the release of the Poor Souls from purgatory. We know that many souls are in heaven because of our prayers. To pray for the Poor Souls is also a warning, however, because we remember that perhaps one day we will be in their position. Who will pray for us? And what good works have we done to be weighed against our evil deeds?

These questions must drive us to do good works, to ask for forgiveness, and to do penance. We must ask ourselves, “Do we deserve to be with God?” Focus on your life, recall all the things that you have done for self and not for God. Resolve to do all for God and to repent for all your trespasses, for it is by your forgiving others that you will be forgiven. We should remember to ask forgiveness from all those we have wronged and to forgive all that have done wrong to us.

In purgatory the faithful are cleansed of sins which they have previously committed, and they long for God. We must pray for the Poor Souls daily and ask of God to relieve them of their sufferings, because like them, we too have offended God and deserve punishment. We are no better than the sinners, because we have not ceased to offend God, and we know that we may offend Him again.

We who have so often offended God must resolve to never offend Him again. Try with all your effort to not sin again. We hope that we never have to go to confession again. We make up our mind never to put ourselves in a position where we are likely to be tempted — don’t just make a cycle of sinning and going to confession.

We must make it our goal to go straight to heaven, although we will probably go to purgatory. Do not merely aim for purgatory; those who do so may be lost to hell. And let us always remember to pray for the Poor Souls in purgatory, because we might one day be there, depending on the prayers of the living.

The greatest love

by Aedan Gilchrist, gr. 11

Well, this is the second time I have the pleasure of writing for you. This time I’m not going to write about any saints, but instead I am going to write about our Lord Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist. Our Lord, as you know, has not left his children alone in this valley of tears, but instead He visits and stays with us in our churches under the appearances of bread and wine. When we receive Him in Holy Communion we are so close to Him that He shares our life, every heart beat, every breath, every thought and every action. We are the temples of the Holy Ghost but also the tabernacles of Christ our Lord and God.

Christ desires with an unrelenting, burning love to unite Himself to us. If we were to see but a small ray of His love we would be destroyed by its intensity. Christ loves us so much that He was willing to die for the sins for which we rightly deserve to be punished. One sin was enough for Our Lord to want to die to redeem us. Yet, not even this was enough for Jesus to show His love. He stays with us in this sin-ridden world in the Blessed Eucharist, so that we may show our love for Him and receive the bread of life.

So then, why is it that after all Jesus has done for us — creating, redeeming, feeding and sanctifying us — that we return His love with ingratitude and crimes beyond measure? Just think, every time someone commits a serious sin, he pierces Our Lord’s heart with the lance. This is what Our Lord receives every time we sin, but still He stays here on earth because He loves His faithful children who follow His commandments and receive Him worthily. Christ stays hidden in the Blessed Eucharist so that we can see Him without having to fear Him, which we would if we saw Him in all His heavenly glory. God stays here because He is a slave to His own love.

Now we can never repay this love completely, but we should still do our very best in everything, even the little things, to show our love for God. Here is my challenge to you, my dear readers. If you are able, visit Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist every day. Pray to Christ every day and go to Him in every trouble or in doubt. Just ask His help. “Ask and you shall receive.” This is Our Lord’s promise. It may be hard at first, but with prayer you will grow in love for God. If you don’t visit our lonely Lord in the tabernacle, then who will? Remember what Christ has done for us. May God bless and guide you.

Nothing to fear

by Zachary Odom, gr. 12

There comes a time in all our lives where we are confronted with fear. When this happens there are two options: face the fear, or run away from it. But what if you don’t have a choice in the matter? What if instead, somebody

continued on page 4



A rented splitter made easy work for Juan, Robert and Aedan, who stacked the wood for winter.



We always enjoy an evening at the home of our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Slater.



We paused for a break during a hike near Lake Coeur d'Alene.



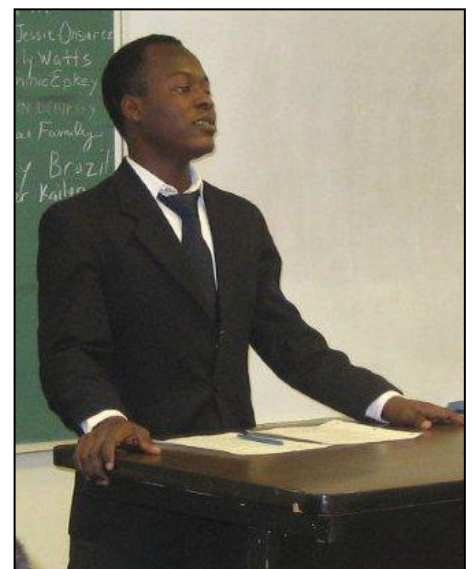
Several of our seminarians are experiencing snow for the first time.



Heavy equipment was brought in to widen the road by the seminary.



Can you identify the seminarians? (The first snowfall came with bitterly cold temperatures.)



Speech class: Mathias gives his speech to the high school students.

Nothing to fear

continued from page 2

made the choice for you, and you were forced to comply with their decision? And if they told you to face your fear, would you be able to?

Well, as you have likely figured out by now, this situation has happened to me.

The class was speech, and after studying for months the proper way to give and prepare a speech, the time finally came for us to organize and give our own. I am not too fond of standing in front of crowds, but since I was in the beginning stage of speech preparation, the butterflies hadn't hit me yet. I used the days of preparation to the fullest, preparing my speech so it could be the best it could possibly be.

When the dress rehearsal finally came, I realized that I had spent all my time on preparing the speech, and had neglected to practice what I was writing down. So, as you can guess, when I stood up at the front of the class, my speech was ill-prepared. And when I sat down, our teacher berated me for not practicing it, and reminded the class of the date when we would give our speeches.

After the dress rehearsal, I really began practicing my speech, trying to memorize the introduction and conclusion, and going over the body of the speech. The day when I would have to give my speech drew steadily nearer, and with it the butterflies.

When the day came to give the speech, the butterflies were fluttering around so fast in my stomach, I felt as if I were going to die from nervousness. To make matters worse, the teacher came around with pieces of paper with numbers on them that placed us in the order in which we would give our speeches, and, lo and behold, I drew number one.

As I started for the podium my legs felt as if they would collapse, and I wanted them to, but unfortunately before long I was standing at the front of the classroom, staring at the group assembled before me. It was at this moment that the full feeling of fear kicked in, and I desperately searched my mind for the starting lines of my speech. They came in a rush, and as I spoke them I realized that I knew the material, and that the purpose of my speech was to tell the group of people what I knew. They would have to listen, whether they wanted to or not. And thinking on these things I grew in confidence, and before long I was at the closing lines of my speech, relieved and unafraid.

Blessed Christmas

The priests, staff and seminarians of St. Joseph Seminary wish all our friends and benefactors a most joyous and Blessed Christmas. We will especially pray for you during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

So the next time you are faced with a fear, just remember that there is nothing to fear, for God is always with us and will not let us come to any harm.

Preparing, with hope in our hearts

Advent is a time of joyful expectation, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Although we know that He has already come into the world, during Advent we call to mind that yearning of the many just men and women of the Old Testament. How earnestly they prayed for the coming of the Messias!

This longing, this anticipation, is a valuable reminder of the importance of the theological virtue of *hope*. We often reflect on the necessity of faith and especially charity, but we sadly neglect this important virtue. So what exactly is *hope*? It is the virtue by which we trust that God will fulfill His promises: He will give us eternal life — if we live according to His commandments — and He will also give us the means (grace) to attain heaven.

Many persons, even Catholics, are deficient in this important and necessary virtue. Some doubt God's goodness; others are forgetful of His promises. But a lack of hope, a lack of desire for heaven, is displeasing to God. It is to doubt His goodness, mercy, and love for us. The *Imitation of Christ* puts it well, when it states that many persons, so absorbed with the material goods and pleasures of this world, would prefer to live always here. How sad!

For us, the spirit of the season of Advent should be a microcosm of the longing in our hearts for everlasting union with God in heaven. Let us pray daily the act of hope, and ask God to increase this important virtue in our hearts. For heaven is our true home, rather than life in this sinful world.

Here at the seminary we will pray for all of you especially during this season. May the Christ Child grant your prayers, and may He bless you and your loved ones with His peace and joy at this holy season!

— Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI

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