



THE GUARDIAN

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Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

March 2018

It has been a great month here at the seminary, with important liturgical ceremonies, another ski trip, our annual retreat, and the usual routine of studies. But there also has been a lot of snow to shovel. The snow has been relentless this winter, and we are all looking forward to spring.

But before the warm weather arrives, we have the important season of Lent. We are all making sacrifices, for we know that is necessary. Soon it will be Easter, and our joy then will be in proportion to our penances during Lent.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our newsletter, and we especially hope that you also will have a holy Lent. Please remember to pray for us and for vocations to our seminary.

The Silent Days

by Nicholas Middleton-Ensign, gr. 9

On February 23, 2018, the earth stood still when Father Mary

Benedict forced us to be quiet for three days, as we ventured into the unknown (annual) Lenten Retreat. Here's the story of how it all happened.

The retreat started on Friday, with seminarians, priests, and Sisters praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary. Supper followed, with spiritual reading throughout the entire meal (and of course, I was lector that week!) We read *Saint Gabriel the Passionist*, and finished page 60 by the end of retreat. After supper and dishes, we were met with a fiery sermon from Father, speaking about how it was up to us to make the retreat a "good" retreat. He talked about why we observe silence (vocal and body language), focusing mainly on silence allowing for fullness of prayer.

The day continued into night, with Eucharistic exposition from night prayers to early morning. With a small amount of confusion, we made it through each of our holy hours, waking up just a few hours later for morning prayers. With morning prayers said in front of the exposed Sacrament, Our Lord returned to the tabernacle. It was a wonderful night of adoration, accompanied by complete silence and candlelight.



This view of our church from the seminary was taken recently, after yet another snowfall.

March Calendar

- 1 – Final basketball game for the season.
- 5-9 – Annual pool tournament
- 13-15 – Achievement tests
- 17 – Saint Patrick's Day talent show
- 19 – Solemn High Mass in honor of Saint Joseph, our seminary patron
- 23 – End of Third Quarter
- 29-30 – Holy Thursday; Good Friday (special schedule)
- 31 – Easter Vacation begins

Saturday came to a beginning with Mass, followed by breakfast and three spiritual conferences. By 2:00 pm we were done with conferences and headed to choir practice. As most of us had never chanted Sunday Vespers of the Divine Office, we struggled a bit at first, but then got ahold of the chants. Saturday came to a close with recreation, basketball, and a spiritual movie on St. Philip Neri.

Sunday began with Holy Mass and a beautifully crafted sermon, followed by breakfast. The retreat concluded around 1:00 pm with one last conference and the final blessing.

The retreat, I believe most of us would say, was a good retreat. We had a break from seminary life and time to grow stronger in the constant battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. On Monday it was back to classes, and the perpetually useful schedule of the seminary.

Solemn Occasions

by Dominic Scherling, gr. 10

This month at the seminary, we were extremely privileged to have had four High Masses. Our first, third, and fourth Masses each had incense, and one of them was a Solemn High Mass.

The first Mass was on feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The High School students and seminarians came together and sang the Mass of Our Lady on February 2nd. Not only was it a High Mass, but we also had incense filling the chapel with the sweet smell of frankincense. With beautiful chanting and Sister Maria Providencia's helpful directing, we sang the propers and the melodic tones exceptionally well.

The second Mass was on Ash Wednesday, and although it also had incense, the highlight for me was the ashes and what Father Benedict said during his sermon. Father talked about how Christ had given his stamp of approval on receiving ashes, and that it was symbolic of our being created from the slime of the earth. His sermon was really inspiring, and it was a great way to start my Lent.

The third High Mass was on February 18, being our twice-monthly parish High Mass. Robert and I sang with the choir for that Mass.

Lastly, on February 22nd, the feast of St. Peter's Chair in Antioch took place. At the City of Mary, we had the great pleasure of participating in a Solemn High Mass on this glorious feast. The Mass which took place was offered by Father Benedict, while Father Gilchrist assisted as Deacon and Father Augustine as the Subdeacon. The servers for this Mass were as follows: Mr. Parker as M.C., Robert as thurifer, myself as one acolyte and Thiet as the other acolyte. I would especially like to congratulate Thiet on serving his first ever Solemn High Mass, and the exceptional job he did. I also wanted to thank Father Benedict, Father Gilchrist, and Father Augustine for allowing us to have a Solemn High Mass.



We pray the Stations of the Cross every Friday of Lent.

A Son of the Passion

by Thiet Nguyen, gr. 8

The 27th of February is the feast day of a young saint who was canonized by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV. This is the season of Lent, the season of sacrifice and penance, which very much fits the character of the saint. Since I have read a book on this saint's life written by a Passionist priest, I was inspired to write about the life of this saint.

Over 97 years have passed since St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows was canonized and chosen as "the new patron of youth for the Universal Church" by Pope Benedict XV. This holy saint is widely known and venerated in Europe, especially in his lovely homeland, Italy. Sadly, in America this young saint is not well known. Fr. Godfrey Poage, C.P., the author of a book about the life of St. Gabriel Possenti, wrote: "This long overdue biography offers American youth the chance to become acquainted with the lad who, in the short span of five years, achieved sainthood not by doing extraordinary things, but by doing ordinary things extraordinarily well."

Considered by his father to be too frail to endure the severe Passionist life, St. Gabriel was able to gain permission to enter the Order only by respectful but unswerving determination. He received the name of Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, and from that time until his death of tuberculosis in 1862, his career is the inspiring record of attaining perfection, through 5 years of continual and cheerful self-surrender.

In my opinion, this book is very good to read, especially for youth of these days, who are relaxing and enjoying their youth of fun, so that they can learn their lesson through the holy life of St. Gabriel.

In this busy American world, young people nowadays often waste the advantage of their youth. There are moments when it is good for them to stop and rest, to consider doing some of the things St. Gabriel found out by himself about very small, tiny, insignificant things everyone can do. And that is the lesson we learned from this life of Gabriel Possenti, a son of the Passion and the patron of youth for the Universal Church.

Our Daily Routine

by Robert Kolinsky, gr. 12

Every school day Father Benedict gives us the wake-up call by ringing the bell at 6:20 am. It is not the most pleasant sound to hear, but the bell should be recognized as the *Vox Dei* (the voice of God). So a good seminarian promptly gets up, even though it may be hard, and says a morning offering.

Continued on page 4



The conditions weren't perfect for our second ski day—but good enough to have a great time.



The seminarians joined the school children for a science field trip right before Lent began.



Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament concluded the all-night vigil of adoration.



There has been a lot of shoveling this winter, given the frequent snowfalls.



Our Sisters and staff members joined the seminarians for a pre-Lent dinner.



Our outdoor procession on Candlemas Day was brief, given the winter conditions.

Our Daily Routine

Continued from page 2

We then have twenty-five minutes to get dressed in our uniforms, brush our teeth and get ready for morning prayers.

After morning prayers we have our daily Mass, which we seminarians take turns in serving. After Mass we have breakfast with the lector of the week reading a spiritual book that has been assigned. Afterwards there are chores to be done, such as washing and rinsing the dishes, putting away food, and cleaning off the table. We then get ready for the main part of the day.

At 8:30 we begin classes, which are divided into seven periods. We also have a five minute break between classes so the teachers and students can prepare for the next one. We end the school day with the classes of PE or choir, depending on the day of the week. We recently had a solemn high mass for our choir to prepare. For PE there has been a great deal of hockey playing, with Father Augustine as our PE teacher. Now we are

starting volleyball, with a little basketball still going on.

We conclude the school day at 3:00 pm. For the rest of the afternoon we have free time. During that free time we can either recreate or sometimes we are given assigned after-school chores. And then the later part of the day consists of our daily Rosary, dinner, study hall, some recreation time, spiritual reading and finally night prayers. We then retire and the schedule repeats the next day.

So you see that we constantly have periods in which we are doing something from study or fun to prayer. This is our normal seminary routine. And it is certainly fitting for a seminary to have such a schedule so that we can become disciplined, and it gives us an aid to do the will of God.



The seminarians listen attentively to a spiritual conference during the retreat.

“Alms deliver from sin....”

The season of Lent is a valuable time of spiritual growth for those who make a good use of it. It is especially during Lent that we recall the three great works of penance, which are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer includes all forms of devotion, while fasting covers all kinds of mortification and self-denial. But what about almsgiving?

When we hear the word *almsgiving*, we think of giving money to the poor, and indeed it includes that form of charity. But in a wider sense, almsgiving covers all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Let us not forget during Lent this great work of penance.

The archangel Raphael instructed the holy man Tobias as follows: “Prayer is good with fasting and alms more than to lay up treasures of gold, for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting” (Tobias, 13:8-9). So while prayer and fasting are most pleasing to God, it is the work of almsgiving that has a particular value to atone for the temporal

punishment due to sin.

We find ourselves every year, during this season, in need of asking your particular support, as a Lenten sacrifice. Our annual Lenten Alms Drive helps to pay the bills to keep the seminary going. Please consider making an extra offering to our seminary this Lent.

As always, we thank you for all your support and your prayers. We are most grateful for your support and promise, in return, a remembrance of you and your needs in our daily prayers. May God abundantly reward you.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI

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**St. Joseph Seminary
15384 N. Church Rd.
Rathdrum, ID 83858-7650**