



THE GUARDIAN

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Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

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As we enter the month of December we begin the season of Advent. This season is very important for us, if we wish to prepare properly to celebrate the birth of Our Lord at Christmas. As we usually do at the seminary, we have common practices, such as the Advent wreath and sacrifice bowl, but we also each write out our individual list of penitential practices.

Since we will be going to Omaha again this year for the ordination ceremony, Father has decided that our Christmas vacation will start early. By the time we would return from the ordination ceremony, there would be only a few days left, so we will have a longer Christmas vacation than in the past. Then, on January 5, it is back to the seminary for the continuation of our classes.

Let us all resolve to make a good Advent, performing some sacrifices for the love of the Christ Child. And, in advance, we wish you a most blessed and joyous Christmas!

Adventus, Adventus

by William Davis, gr. 8

Adventus is a 4th declension masculine noun, translated as *arrival* or *coming*. Such is taking apart the root word of Advent. The term Advent did mean the actual day of celebration itself, but gradually came to mean the time of preparation before the coming of Christ into the world.

The way we celebrate Advent was

begun by the Romans, who had the idea of having a time of preparation before Christmas. The modern way that we celebrate Advent, however, was really started by Pope St. Gregory I, or as he is more commonly known, Pope Gregory the Great, in the late 6th century.

Advent is not so much a preparation for the coming of Christ into the world, but more the anticipation of the joyful event of Our Lord's birth. On the four Sundays during Advent the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary are prayed, and for Mass the priests wear violet vestments. It is an ironic fact, because the Joyful

December Calendar
5 – Mid-quarter
8 – Immaculate Conception BVM; Holyday of Obligation
10 – Leave for Omaha
12 – Ordination ceremony in Omaha
16 – Novena for Christmas begins

exception, and that is Gaudete Sunday. On that Sunday the priests are permitted to wear rose-colored vestments and the altar is bedecked with flowers.

In the year 380 the council of Saragossa decreed that there be a three-week fast before Christmas day. The holy season of Advent is not as much to prepare to welcome Christ into our unclean, blasphemous world or to greet Him in the hour of His triumph, but rather to show our love for Him by having a time of penance before Christmas. Let us show

our appreciation to Him by also being joyous during the time of His humble beginning in that well-known cave in Bethlehem. And a special thanks to the Catholic Encyclopedia for giving me many of the facts for this article!



We were able to make many visits to the cemetery this past month.

mysteries are obviously a prayer of joy, but violet vestments signify penance. That just goes to show the mixed feelings of both penance and joy for the holy season of Advent.

As I said, the priests wear violet, or purple, vestments. But there is one

The Cold For A Greater Joy

by Thiet Vincent Nguyen, gr. 9

Finally, it's December! I thought I would never make it! When the second school year started, I said to myself: "Oh boy, this is going to be another long year! May God bless me so that I will survive 'til the end'." But here I am, standing on my feet and preparing for another exciting Christmas.

This December will be a joyous month (except for the fact that it will be very cold). The 8th of December is the feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. On the 10th of the same month, we'll be leaving for Omaha—a 22-hour drive to attend the ordination to the priesthood of three deacons on the 12th. Most important of all days will be the 25th, the Nativity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This month of December is also the month of penance, but in a spirit of joy. For me, the cold of winter is probably one of the greatest penances. Therefore, one of my penances is going to be related to the cold. For example, taking a shorter warm shower. It might be an easy penance for some of you folks who are used to the freezing cold of Northern United States. But if you put yourselves into my position as an originally-born Asian, your perspective about the cold will be completely different. I guarantee you would not survive after this month.

Anyway, it is going to be a very hard penance for me to survive this deadly winter. If you really think about it, it would be nothing compared to what the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph suffered 2,000 years ago. Imagine St. Joseph and Our Blessed Mother anguishing in Bethlehem to find a place for the birth of Our Lord. "So, the cold for a greater joy, it is," I thought to myself. "It might be tough, but the thought about Christmas and the suffering of the Holy Family will calm me down!"

Above all, I hope that my penance will at least partially satisfy for many blessings and graces that Our Blessed Savior has granted me and all mankind, especially coming down to this sinful world, for our salvation.

The Christmas season is approaching within 25 days. Let us call to mind that December is not just the month of joy, but also of preparation, the preparation for the

birth of Our Lord—that we may prepare a "stable" for Him in our hearts by our prayer, penance, and sanctification of our thoughts, words, and works. I wish you a safe and joyful Advent, a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

The Revival of a Diminishing Art

by Gabriel Davis, gr. 9

During the five-minute break between every class, each seminarian makes the best out of his brief and short break. I spend the majority of my breaks juggling. I come from a long line of jugglers in my family, meaning two siblings who somewhat know how to juggle. Father Augustine and determination were my teachers. Surprisingly, it took me only five days to learn how to juggle three balls.

Juggling is fundamentally about timing and patience. I

found after the 10,000th try that without patience it would be quite impossible to learn how to juggle. Besides it being impressive and fascinating to watch, juggling has many benefits and is also a very convenient hobby. It sharpens your concentration, improves your hand-eye coordination, and actually strengthens your biceps. For me, juggling is one of the more relaxing hobbies. To those of you

out there that might want to learn how to juggle, it's actually very simple, and I highly suggest it, especially to all boys who are bored on long summer days.

The first record of juggling goes all the way back to Egyptian hieroglyphics found on the walls in the tomb of Koryssa I, who lived in 1781 BC. In contrast to the sports and social media people watch today, during the medieval ages many people watched jugglers juggle iron rings and flaming torches.

When Philip Astley opened the first circus in 1768, the popularity of juggling exploded, although its fame soon plummeted when moving pictures and radios became the more desired pastimes. Even now, juggling has become an almost lost art in today's world. It's incredible to me to see the astonishing feats that professional jugglers can accomplish.

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The seminarians baked some pies during the Thanksgiving Break.



Gabriel gives his speech to his teacher and classmates.



The seminarians take advantage of every snowfall for outdoor fun.



Frisbee football was the game of choice at P. E. on a beautiful fall afternoon.



There was quite a large burn pile this fall.



The seminarians joined in on the fun at the parish All-Saints party.



William turned 13 last week.

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The Revival of a Diminishing Art

My ultimate goal when juggling is to learn different tricks with only three balls. A couple of tricks I would like to learn are The Factory, Matins Mess, Burke's Barrage and the Boston Mess. After watching some videos of the more impressive tricks the professionals can do, your rhythm becomes more accomplished, and your hands almost seem to get minds of their own. As I come to a close for this December article, I wish you all a holy Advent and a Merry Christmas. I am unbelievably excited to practice my juggling during a month of Christmas vacation.

Victor and His Life in the Seminary

by Gabriel Riley, gr. 9

Here in the seminary a mysterious creature dwells—a creature that loves to gain attention from seminarians.

He is named Victor. Victor is a chocolate lab who is loved here in the seminary. Father Benedict, Victor's master, assigns us turns in doing the honors of caring for Victor.

In the morning, whoever is caring for Victor will go upstairs after Mass and open the door of the laundry room. Victor endures the night there all by himself on his cushioned bed. As soon as that door opens the dog dashes downstairs to his food bowl!

After eating our breakfast on the day of my rotation I would take Victor on a walk. He would spin in circles as fast as he could and then run into the forest for a short time. Sometimes I try to race Victor to the cemetery. I never win. Not yet, at least. A chocolate lab such as Victor can run up to 35 miles per hour.

When it is time to do my homework, I often need help from Father Benedict and see Victor lying alone in the shadow of the hallway outside Father's office, so often I take him on walks to the cemetery. Sometimes I would have to find Victor because someone had left the door open; therefore, Victor slipped out unseen. It would take up my time to go and look for that adventurous dog. Once he finally shows up, with a strict face I would say, "Where have you been?" With a sad face, Victor would then go to his place beside Father's office.

When Father Benedict returns from a mission Victor goes crazy! He BARKS, and then he jumps so high he almost touches the ceiling. Victor is one of the best dogs for making friends. The first time I stepped foot on the seminarian grounds he was my first friend.

Prayer to Know One's Vocation

O my God, Thou art the God of wisdom and good counsel, Thou who readest in my heart a sincere desire to please Thee alone and to direct myself in regard to my choice of a state of life, in conformity with Thy holy will in all things; by the intercession of the most holy Virgin, my Mother, and of my Patron Saints, grant me the grace to know that state of life which I ought to choose, and to embrace it when known, in order that thus I may seek Thy glory and increase it, work out my own salvation and deserve the heavenly reward which Thou has promised to those who do Thy holy will. Amen. (indulgence of 300 days, once a day).

"With expectation I have waited"

An important quality in human life—including the spiritual life—is anticipation or expectation. When I was young my grandmother and aunt would come to our house and spend the Christmas holidays. Since they did not live close by, we did not see them often, especially during the school year. So you can imagine our anticipation of their arrival.

That is like our anticipation of Christmas. This expectation is especially evident in children, who grow so excited about the coming of a longed-for occasion. That quality of anticipation can even provide as much joy as the attainment of the longed-for event itself.

Now let us apply this human quality to our spiritual life. Do we desire and long for heaven as we ought? If we truly understand how fickle and temporary this world is, we will not be attached to it but will rather long for the joys of heaven—joys that never grow dim but last forever.

In Psalm 39 King David expresses this beautiful quality: "With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me. And He heard my prayers, and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs. And He set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps. And He put a new canticle into my mouth, a song to our God. Many shall see, and shall fear: and they shall hope in the Lord" (Psalm 39:2-4, Douay-Rheims translation).

Let us all pray for a share in that longing for heaven that inspired the saints. May this year's Advent and Christmas bring us that excellent quality that marks the spiritual lives of holy men and women. And may the Divine Infant bless you and your loved ones this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI