



# THE GUARDIAN

Vol. XXVII No. 6 Issue #318

Monthly newsletter of Saint Joseph Seminary

February, 2026

January was a hectic month for us here at the seminary. We did many things this month, such as celebrating Epiphany, going skiing, and finishing the First Semester, but one of the greatest highlights was ice skating. We have all been interested in hockey recently, so we took the opportunity to go ice skating multiple times. All of us, even though we are at different skill levels for skating, seem to be improving. In addition

month, and we are looking forward to February.

Although January was jam-packed with fun and eagerness, we will have to buckle down and get ready for many things, such as feast days, the talent show, and, of course, school. We will have many beautiful ceremonies because of the great feast days, which we all enjoy. We are all kind of stressed and excited about the Talent Show, as we will have to put on some

## February Calendar

- 2 – Purification BVM feastday; no homework; Candlemas ceremonies
- 7 – Leo's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday
- 14 – Annual Parish Talent Show
- 18 – Ash Wednesday ceremonies
- 20 – Mid-quarter
- 27-28 – Annual Lenten Retreat



*We all enjoyed the annual seminary visit of the Bishop and priests.*

to ice skating, we also enjoy playing hockey on roller blades in our gym.

Another highlight of this month was the annual CMRI priest meetings. We hosted a dinner for the bishop and priests. We also got the chance to play some sports and board games with several priests and brothers we rarely get to see. All in all, we had a very busy

skits, which we hope are going to make the audience laugh. Although these things will bring us some joy during this month, the rest of this month will be spent studying for Standardized tests—need I say more?

All in all, February will be a mix of excitement and stress, which we can all push through with the help of our guardian angels and by the

grace of God. "I never said it was going to be easy; I just promised that it would be worth it." May God grant you great graces during this month, and may God bless you.

## Strive for Holiness!

*by Leo Mansfield, gr. 10*

Every month each minor seminarian picks a spiritual reading book. This month I read one called Son of the Passion. I highly recommend it. This book inspired me to write to you about St. Gabriel, called Francis Possenti in the world, or Checchino as they nicknamed him.

St. Gabriel was a boy with a quick wit and was very smart; he made many friends in the world and went to a college in Spoleto. The

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main problem was that he ignored his vocation. Earlier, he had made two promises to Our Lady when he had deathly illnesses. St. Gabriel was always weak and had many sicknesses. He promised Our Lady that if she cured his sickness, he would become a religious in return.

He later forgot these promises but was reminded of his unfaithfulness during a procession. When the icon of Our Lady of Sorrows passed him, he heard an interior voice say, "Francis, why do you remain in the world? It is not for you. Follow your vocation!"

St. Gabriel took these words to heart; he went straight to his spiritual director and told him that he wanted to become a religious. St. Gabriel had a liking for the Passionist order. He was

inspired by their dedication to hard work, poverty, self-denial, and their penitential lifestyle. He loved the Passionists and wanted to become one. His father Sante wasn't happy about this idea, though. He told little Checchino that he wouldn't last a day as a Passionist, due to his illness and inexperience. Plus, out of all the religious orders, that was the one his father wouldn't let him join. After many failed attempts he finally got permission from his father to become a Passionist.

St. Gabriel became a great Passionist; he loved the life even more than he had expected. He strived for holiness. He would write down all his failings and work on each virtue until he excelled in them. He didn't let his sickness get in the way of this, even though it became so bad that he couldn't do all the manual labor and penances that the others were doing. Having this train of thought, he decided that he was going to strive in obedience to his superiors and to follow the Rule of his religious order as perfectly as possible. He did this so well that he became a saint in less than seven years!



*Gift opening on the feast of the Epiphany is always full of surprises.*

Like St. Gabriel, we should strive in the virtue of perfect obedience, because if we follow his great example, we also can become saints. He died as a saint in 1862 and was made the patron of youth by Pope Benedict XV.

**The Instrument with Which We Are Born**

by Louis Albin, gr. 11

**C**antate Domino canticum novum: quia mirabilia fecit. "Sing to the Lord a new song: because He has done wonderful things" (Psalm 97:1). These words of Scripture are to be taken quite literally. What better way could there be to repay God, however imperfectly, for His great wonders, than by praising Him with the most noble instrument, with which He has endowed each of us at birth – that is, the human voice? St. Augustine, after all, declared, "Singing is praying twice."

It should be the goal of every boy and man to know at least the basics of reading Gregorian chant, which has been declared the official music of the Church. But though it is highly encouraged to contribute to choir if one has the talent, it is not necessarily true that everyone must sing. What is important, though, is the appreciation of the music used in the worship of God.

Before the days of music recordings, the church was one of the only places where one had the chance to listen to music. You can imagine how inspired the faithful were by the beautiful chants or works of polyphony, and how these heavenly performances must



*Several of the seminarians performed the corporal work of mercy of digging a grave for a burial in our cemetery.*

have lifted their minds and hearts to God! In modern times, the abundance of music of all types – most of them sadly disgraceful – has caused the depreciation of good music, with some, even among Catholics,

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*The seminarians join the priests and religious for the recitation of Vespers.*



*Brother Mary Fidelis supervises breakfast preparations after Mass on Sunday.*



*Epiphany Water is blessed in a solemn ceremony, in which the entire ceremony is sung.*



*The choir and servers contributed to a beautiful Christmas Midnight Mass.*



*A view from the choir loft of the Solemn High Mass on the feast of the Epiphany.*



*Father Casimir plays the piano during a casual sing-a-long during the priests' visit.*

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daring to call the chants of the Church “boring” or “outdated.” Where Church music is concerned, one should appreciate its beauty and the time and effort put into its making, even if it does not appeal to one’s personal tastes.

When one considers the importance of the Mass, it is easy to see that Church music must be as perfect as possible. We are singing for God Himself, and this should be the primary purpose of each choir. The secondary purpose for which they should also strive is the edification of the faithful. We would certainly not want to disedify anyone by poor singing in the house of God. St. Francis Solano provides a dramatic example of the horror we should all feel of executing Church music badly. Franchon Royer tells us in the book *St. Francis Solanus: Apostle to America* that when “his choir committed the slightest error or faltered on a single note, he blamed himself severely for the offense of remissness in praise of our Lord and added extra penances to his habitual heavy penance.”

So, having established that music is an excellent and indispensable means of praising God, but also that it must be performed well to be fitting for His divine presence, how can we ensure that these praises are not only sung, but also sung well? The answer is one word – practice. Having seen it many times here at the seminary, I can assure you that a little effort can go a long way where music is concerned. So with that, I hope I have helped inspire you, at least a little, with a love of Church music, and I wish you the best of luck with any choir endeavors.

**A Very Special Day**

by Liam Isakson, gr. 8

**I**t is that time of year again, when the snow is falling, when all the kids are outside sledding and having a snowball fight, when your house is nice and toasty. Another great thing about this time of year is when the priests come to Mount Saint Michaels and the City of Mary for their yearly priest meetings. When I was younger, I used to live in Spokane, Washington, where the Mount is located. I remember that whenever there were priest meetings there, it was one of the most exciting times of the year, because the priests would join you at school for lunch and PE (and even in cassocks the priests are really good at playing sports). And sometimes they would even visit the classrooms as well. And that was always a lot of fun.

But that was just at Mount Saint Michaels. Here at the seminary there is a different story. First of all, they got here around rosary time (about 5:00 pm) and we prayed Vespers with them. After that we got to know them a little more while eating appetizers like cheese and crackers, and we also played pool, which was a lot of fun. When we finished talking and started getting hungry, we had dinner, which was meat stew, mashed potatoes, and green beans. After dinner we sang some songs like *Angels We Have Heard on High, Laudate Dominum, Da Pacem Domine,*

and the *Ave Maria*. Once we were done with that, we played soccer and kickball in the gym with a few of the priests and brothers. A few days later we went to the Mount before the priests left and played some board games and physical games, like soccer, with them.

Even though priest meetings at the Mount and at the seminary are kind of different they both are equally fun and awesome and are always one of the times of the year to look forward to.

**Lessons of the Passion**

**S**eptuagesima Sunday (February 1st this year) is always a stark transition from the Christmas and Epiphany seasons. It begins a short season of two-and-a-half weeks—an important time to change our focus, as we prepare for the most important season of Lent.

To make a good Lent, we must do penance. Our human nature does not like the idea of penance and self-denial, but Our Lord has assured us that it is essential if we want to save our souls: “If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me.” By generously giving up things we enjoy and practicing penance during Lent, we find that we can pray better and temptations are reduced. As the Church states in the preface for Lent, “by bodily fasting, God curbs our vices, lifts up our minds, and bestows virtue and rewards.”

But penance is only part of Lent. The other very important element of a good Lent is meditation on the Passion of Our Lord. We can read spiritual books on the Passion, pray the Stations and the Sorrowful mysteries, read the Gospel narratives of the Passion, or just look at our crucifix. As we meditate on the terrible sufferings of our loving Redeemer, we learn the value of our souls, the evil of sin, and the inestimable love of God for each of us. We become ashamed that we so often complain of the little inconveniences we experience each day, and we learn to carry our cross better.

The saints are great models of love for Christ crucified. Saint Augustine wrote: “Imprint your wounds in my heart, O Lord, so that in them I may read suffering and love; suffering so that I may endure all sufferings for you; love so that I may despise all other loves.” Saint Paul wanted to know nothing “except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (I Cor, 2:2). And Saint Bonaventure declares that “There is no practice more profitable for the complete sanctification of the soul than meditation on the sufferings of Our Lord.” Let us, then, resolve this Lent to frequently reflect on what Jesus suffered for love of us.

Be assured that we remember you, our seminary benefactors, in our daily prayers. May God bless you and your families, and may He grant each of us the grace of having a holy Lent! Thank you for your support.

- Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI