



THE GUARDIAN

Vol. XI, No. 8

Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

April 2010

The past month began with our annual Lenten retreat. The month continued with various activities which have kept us so busy that it is hard to believe Easter is already at hand. Now we are practicing for the various Holy Week ceremonies, in order to perform them as perfectly as we can for God's honor and glory. Our coming Easter vacation will be a welcome respite from what has been a busy Third Quarter.

But the past month has not been all study and work. We have had two guests visit the seminary, and we enjoyed their company. We particularly enjoyed the day off classes for St. Joseph's Day, as well as a spring ski day. Recently, the weather has turned considerably warmer, so we have been working outside: raking, planting grass, preparing the garden, cutting and burning dead tree limbs and brush, etc. We also have been working on improving and expanding Fort Chabanel, our tree fort.

Our recreation of choice lately has been soccer. With the warmer weather we are out of the gym and on the parking lot. That makes it difficult when you lose your balance and take a fall, but we enjoy it nonetheless. Father has also planned on taking us once again during Easter week to western Washington, so that is something exciting to look forward to.

In the meantime, however, we have to concentrate on the ceremonies of Holy Week. We hope to finish this Lenten Season well, by persevering in our Lenten practices right to the end. We pray that we and all of you, our families, friends and benefactors, will be blessed with a most joyful Feast of the Resurrection!

In Our Lady's hands

by Juan Garcia, gr. 12

Life in the world is present, then it passes, and finally there is the life of the world to come. All the people who have lived and are living, and all the power and wealth that are at hand are ended on the day when the body returns to dust — the day of death.

I have attended six funerals since my arrival in 2006. Only this last service was at Mary Immaculate Queen Church. The departed soul was that of a beloved member of the community, a patriarch, and a supporter of our parish and seminary, Mr. Kenneth Louis Strain.

Just one week before he died, we went to his home to pray the Rosary and other prayers. We entered the room and saw him lying peacefully on his bed beneath nine holy pictures which he called his "Sistine Chapel." Fr. Benedict began blessing and reciting the Prayers for the Dying. Then we commenced the Holy Rosary. As we were praying, it seemed his departure was imminent, perhaps shortly after the Rosary. His breathing seemed to stop. I was kneeling before him and about the third mystery he quivered and mumbled something. I recalled the story from the book on St. Louis Marie de Montfort, who said on his deathbed: "No, no it is useless for you to attack me. Jesus and Mary are with me." I thought of the devils

April calendar

- 1–4 — Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil ceremonies
- 4–11 — Easter Break; spring trip
- 12 — Classes resume
- 23–25 — Annual Forty Hours' Adoration
- 26 — Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel; chanted Vespers
- 28 — Feast of St. Louis Marie de Montfort; begin preparation for annual renewal of Total Consecration

around us, but I knew that our Guardian Angels are always protecting us and praying for us. What a blessing it is to die with the holy Sacraments and a priest near you!

Mr. Strain died one week later, and on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph,

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The graveside ceremony for Mr. Kenneth Strain was held on a beautiful, sunny day.

In Our Lady's hands

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patron of the dying, we had the public Rosary. On the morning of St. Cuthbert's Day, Fr. Benedict offered the funeral Mass. After the prayers at the cemetery, where Mr. Strain was laid beside his wife and three children who had preceded him, the military honor guard gave the 21-gun salute to honor a WWII veteran. Finally, we sang a hymn to Our Lady of Sorrows that she may accompany him to eternal glory.

Many people think that death is only of concern for older people. In our days, however, it appears that we teenagers are losing lives through accidents, drugs, suicides, and so on. We should always be ready for death, for as Father reminded us, quoting the words of Our Lord: "Be ready, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

Admission and advice

by Forrest Nguyen, gr. 11

I must admit I was skeptical. Retreat, I thought, was either a coward's escape or a childish "nap time" away from work. Work I could be doing, physical, academic or even spiritual, on my own without the "help" of a retreat or its stifling quiet. I didn't need to hear another cliché about virtues and holiness. I could get those from practice, not from listening to some theoretic lecture set by some priestly genius to elementary English because of the supposed ignorance of his high school audience. I thought I knew better. And under the pretext of independence and intelligence, I thought I could stand alone: no retreat, no help needed. I must admit I was proud — and I was wrong.

So the week of the retreat arrived and my pride was in the superlative degree. I met the on-coming weekend's retreat with reciprocally headstrong obstinacy. My pride, unwilling to condescend to the level of rocking the boat for the "benefit" of the others, decided to row off on its own. I'd be there — but only in body; my mind would be devising some "ingenious" scheme to storm heaven single-handedly. My pride was ripe for humbling.

The priest gave no elementary speeches. He spoke in the vernacular, and in humility condescending to our slang sometimes. He gave no semblance of any "supposed ignorance" on our part. He spoke as he would to an equal. His mannerisms lured my pride off-guard. And I found myself listening. Most importantly, I found myself listening to a species of homiletics I had never heard before.

He preached Total Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He stressed absolute dependence upon and honest humility toward the Virgin. For a split second my pride was awakened — until he mentioned the vast benefits of this devotion: multiplied value added to all one's prayers because of the multitudinous value of Mary's prayers, all made *exponential* when given totally to her use.

I followed every word, in every lecture, into every quiet break between lectures, and by the retreat's end, I was free from my pride. "Independence" and "pride" could not compare to a devotion so "exponential."

So my recommendation to you, dear Reader: listen to your priest, be eager to the superlative degree to make a retreat, take Total Consecration, and don't be proud — 'cause you'll be wrong!

Phenomenal benefits from a blessed string

by Robert Prado, gr. 12

On the feast of St. Joseph we took on the task of making what are known as St. Joseph Cords. Before then I had not had the pleasure of knowing what the cord was or what exactly the benefits are for those who faithfully wear it. And so I researched and was fascinated, and I assume you will be too as I explain this tremendous sacramental.

The St. Joseph Cord originated in Belgium in 1657 with the miraculous cure of a nun who had an incurable disease. From this point on, the cord spread like wildfire throughout the Catholic world, which peaked when the devotion was approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1859.

But what makes this particular sacramental so special? Besides the numerous indulgences bestowed on it by Pope Pius IX, there are also particular graces which are obtained by wearing the cord. These are: 1) St. Joseph's special protection; 2) purity of soul; 3) the grace of chastity; 4) final perseverance; 5) and particular assistance at the hour of death — an incredible benefit for so small an effort as devoutly wearing this cord.

Yet what is even more impressive is the utter simplicity in the design of this cincture. It simply consists of a cotton cord or string with seven knots at one end, signifying the seven joys and seven sorrows of St. Joseph. It is worn around the waist, and that is it. The ease of its construction was extremely fortunate for us seminarians, since we had *only* a few hundred to tie.

So please, either purchase or make a St. Joseph Cord for yourself and have it properly blessed by a priest so as to obtain these phenomenal benefits. In doing so, you will give honor to St. Joseph and, in return, reap the benefits.

Repainted and refreshed

by Zachary Odom, gr. 11

School, of itself, is fun. If you attend a class for just a day you would find it either fun or, at least, bearable. But if you take that same class for a month or two, you find that it can become tedious. This routine happened to me. I went through the same day-in, day-out schedule of classes and I was tired. I needed a break, so that I could be refreshed and jump into the fresh onslaught of classes again.

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The military ceremony for our deceased veteran followed the liturgical ceremony.



Many parishioners attended the graveside services for Mr. Kenneth Strain.



The seminarians made a lot of St. Joseph Cords recently.



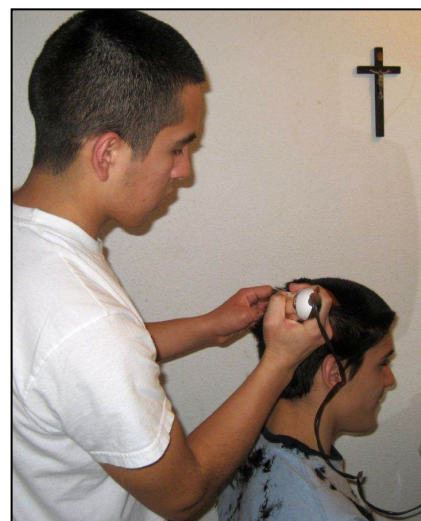
The blessing of St. Joseph Cords is one of the very few that require incense.



There has been plenty of spring cleaning to be done on our grounds.



Forrest assists in covering the statues and pictures for Passiontide.



Juan, our seminary barber, has become quite proficient.

Repainted and refreshed

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Fortunately, I received my wish when another seminarian and I were told by Fr. Benedict that we would have to help Fr. Bernard remove the statues of Our Lord and Our Lady from the seminary chapel and take them to a parishioner at Mt. St. Michael for repainting. We had to take the statues in the van so our first order of business was to remove a couple of seats from the vehicle so that we could lay the statues down. Second, we had to grab a couple of old mattresses from the seminary basement to place under the statues. Once this was done and the statues were put on the mattresses we had to cushion the statues with blankets so that they would not roll around or break. After we finished this we had to take two other statues of Our Lord and Our Lady from our classroom and put them in the chapel as a temporary replacement.

When all these things were done we were finally on our way, and once we arrived at the Mount, we helped Fr. Bernard carefully remove the statues from the van and put them where they needed to be. This was about all we were required to do, and saying our farewells, we left for home.

About three weeks later the statues were finished and Fr. Bernard, Robert and I had to go to the Mount to retrieve them. The same precautions were taken again and when we arrived we were surprised to see the statues. They looked so bright, so vibrant and colorful, that they seemed as though they would come to life; whereas before they were faded and chipped.

When we got back to the seminary and the statues had been put back into the chapel, I noticed that in a way I was like the repainted statues. I was refreshed and ready for classes, whereas before I was dull from fatigue. I give thanks for having this little break from classes, and I hope it will happen again soon.

Dies bona

The Requiem Mass contains one of the most stirring hymns in the Church — the *Dies Irae*, in which the day of death is referred to as *dies magna et amara valde* (a day great and exceedingly bitter). Well, for us, the feast of St. Joseph was a great day and *dulcis valde* (very sweet).

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.

It began with an all-night vigil of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, in which each of the seminarians took his turn for an hour with Our Lord. The quiet hours of the night, when one is alone with Jesus in the chapel, are sweet moments indeed. After morning prayers and benediction we continued making St. Joseph cords for the parishioners, as we had done the previous day. Stations of the Cross were followed by the blessing of the cords and a high Mass. Finally, there was extra recreation as classes were dispensed for the day.

Our celebration of St. Joseph's Feastday reminded me of what is said about some of the mystics, who experienced Our Lord's sufferings during Lent: they were given a reprieve on the feast of St. Joseph. Our Lenten observance is also aided and strengthened in the midst of penance by such a joyful respite, itself a harbinger of the happiness of heaven.

May God grant each of you and your families the blessings of this Holy Week and Easter! We thank you for your prayers and support and assure you of our daily remembrance for all our benefactors. May the good God reward you abundantly.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI

The Guardian is published monthly for the enjoyment of our benefactors and for the family members of our seminarians. This newsletter is free upon request.

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