



THE GUARDIAN

Already we are preparing for Christmas, although it seems the school year has just recently started. The season of Advent is very important at the seminary. During this time we make extra sacrifices and recite Advent prayers. The daily lighting of the Advent wreath reminds us of our joyful expectation for the celebration of Our Lord's birth. We know that our joy at His birth will be in proportion to our preparation.

The weather here has gradually been getting colder, although we are still waiting for the first real snowfall. We received a couple inches of snow two weeks ago — enough to make a small snowman, but it didn't last long. You probably already know by now that seminarians like snow, and lots of it. We'll have to wait and see what this winter brings.

We hope that you will spend your Advent well. So many people think of nothing during the weeks before Christmas but of shopping and partying. How far this way of life is from a truly Catholic spiritual preparation. May we all prepare well for Christmas, for Christ truly is the Light of the world, which needs Him now more than ever.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord”

by Robert Prado, gr. 12

There is a time: A time that we experience every year without fail. A time of massive importance and significance. A time of prayer and penance. A time of fasting and preparation. A time of longing and hope, of yearning and expectation.

A specific time. An extraordinary time. It is called *Advent*.

We are now in this season of Advent, preparing for the great feast of Christmas. We fast and make offerings or sacrifices during this time getting ourselves ready and preparing our souls for the coming of Christ. Just the very fact that the Church has designated a specific time for Advent shows the importance of the feast of Christmas and the importance to be ready to receive Our Lord. It is after this time that He wishes to be born into our souls once more and He expects us to be pure and ready for His coming.

Thus we must receive Him with the purest of hearts and the sweetest of intentions, with a soul that has been decorated not with the festivities of the world but with the rigors and fruits of a good Advent.

Since Advent comes every year, we get used to it and fall into the fault of not trying as hard as we should. This is a very important time and we must realize it anew every year as such. Never should we think of it as just another Advent, but instead, let us think of it as the preparation for the coming of Our Lord Himself, the Creator of the world, and the Creator of us, into our homes and families, and more importantly into our souls.

So let us use this Advent, this precious time, to its fullest, not only to await His coming but also to *prepare* for His coming. And let us with heartfelt determination make this our best Advent ever by

December calendar

- 4 — Mid-quarter; basketball game
- 6 — Feast of St. Nicholas
- 8 — Feast of the Immaculate Conception BVM; day of recollection; no classes
- 12 — Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 18 — Christmas vacation begins after classes

living the words *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.”* (Luke 3:4)

An epic stroll

by Forrest Nguyen, gr. 11

As a new moon's resolution for the month of the Holy Souls, I decided to make the daily climb to the cemetery. The early snowfall made our November seem more like December. But don't worry: the cemetery is only a 15-minute trudge uphill through the snow and ice. All in all — snow, ice, cold and all — the daily climb was quite . . . dramatic.

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The seminarians have the opportunity to occasionally serve at a Solemn High Mass.

An epic stroll

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So, everyday after the night's study hall, Juan, my steadfast associate, and I challenged our resolution to the critical incline of the mountain. The night of the full moon was particularly eventful. Our beloved earth, yester-month's treading's ease, lay bespattered beneath the blanket of encroaching winter. Regardless, stalwart, our resolve resolute, we stole past the cemetery gate—the impending peril unbeknown.

Each and every footstep renewed the aches in our lower appendages. A step taken: within, the silent burn of muscle. A second step: without, the resounding chill of the ice beneath, in crooks and cringes and creaks, mingles unceremoniously with our shouts and shrieks.

A rustle—"What was that?" Peering through the enshrouding night by the light of the full moon, there was not a thing. A lingering sentiment of youth's terror, added to the frost biting at our digits, bore our hallucination on the mountain. "Where are we?"—on a one-lane road. "Why don't we go back?" The insanity held its grip tighter still and opened that question to shaded possibilities. Racing down those darkened tangents, "Yes! We should. We will!" Half-cursing our earlier devotion, our resolutions made a sorry revolution. Down, downhill, darker, deeper, down again, we plunged.

Then, "Wait!" In reclaimed words of wisdom, "Halfway to heaven is hell." Renewed, replenished, resolute in our devotion, we charged up the mountain. Silencing our ears to the ambience of cringes and creaks, heartbeats became our marching cadence. Higher and higher into the loft of the cemetery mountain, the rhythmic pulse drove us on and up.

Until—silence. There, nestled behind the corner of foliage, lay the cemetery. In all solemnity we said our prayers: our devotion like a drug. And just as Juan and I had turned to resume our downhill plunge, there was the full moon. We were really lunatics that night.

OK, so that was all an exaggeration. There was no "insanity". None of the "quotes" were actually quotes. And there were only two inches of snow. I exaggerate to spice the topic of "walks to the cemetery" beyond "we walked there, we prayed there, we walked back here." But Juan and I really did go up to the cemetery every night and the full moon was really out. Our trips up the mountain were real, just a little less . . . dramatic.

Beloved St. Nicholas

by Juan Garcia, gr. 12

St. Nicholas, Bishop and Confessor, was a native of Asia Minor. He is both patron saint of children and of Russia. He has always been honored with great veneration in the Latin and Greek Churches. Known for doing copious penances since his childhood, St. Nicholas consecrated his

life to God and entered the monastery of Holy Sion in Myra. Ordained and appointed abbot of the monastery, he became known for his charity to the poor.

Once he heard that a poor man was considering leading his three dowerless daughters to a life of misery and sin. Determined, if possible, to save their innocence, he went out by night, and taking a bag of golden coins flung it into the window of the sleeping father and hurried off. With this the father dowered his oldest daughter. And so St. Nicholas did this thrice, but the third time the father, who was watching, overtook him and kissing his feet said: "Nicholas, why dost thou conceal thyself from me? Thou art my helper and he who has delivered my soul and my daughters from hell." St. Nicholas worked numerous miracles and was loved by many. He died in Myra in the year 342.

This holy bishop was very much loved throughout Europe. Vikings dedicated cathedrals in his honor. Soon traditions and customs rose up in his name, such as placing nuts, apples, and sweets in shoes before the hearth. Early settlers brought these traditions to the New World. The Dutch, who settled New York, brought to America their love of St. Nicholas.

We should have a special devotion to St. Nicholas whose name has been corrupted by the fictitious "Santa Claus" of modern times. Let us pray to St. Nicholas to help us in our daily struggle against the temptations of the world.

The creation of Dorian

by Martin Concepcion, gr. 8

Every year the seminarians have a contest to see who can guess the first snowfall of the season. The rules are that it has to be at least two inches and last for at least 24 hours. We all competed (including Mrs. Salgado and Fr. Benedict), and I won. I guessed the earliest date (November 15). The first snowfall was November 13.

I like snow. When it snows it seems like you're in a totally different place. One moment it's bright and sunny. The next moment it's dark and blistering cold and the world outside is covered in a layer of white. After school on November 13, I ran outside to bask in the snow and to wage a snowball "war" that lasted for almost an hour. Each seminarian came outside, packed some snowballs, and threw them with great accuracy. I came back with some good ones too. I remember getting hit twice in the jaw (I couldn't feel it for 5 minutes). The gigantic battle of snow ended when we had to pack up and hop into the van with Fr. Benedict to drive off to the Slaters' residence.

When we finally reached our destination, we all got a great big warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Slater. They have a magnificent home and so much open land. They served an absolutely awesome dinner and we played "count to 99" and other games. And last but not least, I created my first snowman ever! Mrs. Slater asked me what I would name him. So now I have conceived the thought of naming him Dorian, because it is a unique name for a unique snowman with a cowboy hat.



The seminarians assist with the chanting of the Gospel at a Solemn High Mass.



The final class period every Tuesday and Thursday is choir.



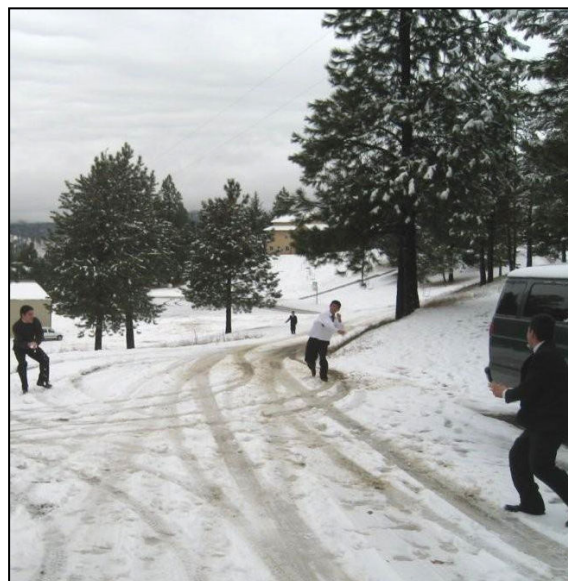
The seminarians helped Mr. Cornel Strain install the new altar for our Sacred Heart shrine.



The crane delivered a 3,000-pound outdoor altar to the seminary grounds.



Typical fall cleanup includes burning old dead tree branches and pine needles that have accumulated.



The first snow of the year led to the typical outdoor snowball skirmish.



Marty and Juan pose with their new friend Dorian.

When death comes

by Zachary Odom, gr. 11

“*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” These words of Our Lord should inspire the greatest devotion to God and the greatest fear of offending Him. These words are simple in meaning: if we truly love God we will strive not to offend Him, even by the smallest of faults.

We should strive to do this, first because even the smallest sin offends God immensely. Look to the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve the simple command to not eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree. They disobeyed Him, and this sin cost them the loss of their supernatural gifts. They were driven out of the Garden, and their descendants’ seed was implanted with the same original sin on their soul, a sin that can only be washed away through Baptism. And second, if we do not strive to rid ourselves of venial sins they inevitably will lead to mortal sins, which indubitably lead to hell.

If sin, even the smallest of faults, is abhorrent to God, why do we keep offending Him? If we truly love God, then sin would be repulsive to us as well. God never permits us to be tested beyond our strength. If He does not let this happen, then we are able to overcome any temptation of the enemy. Can we truly say that we make a gallant effort to overcome our sins? Can we truly say that we are honestly sorry for them? Or are we lukewarm? Do we go day-by-day, month-by-month, and even year-by-year, not caring about our faults and not even striving to overcome them? If we go by this path, we will truly descend to hell, for Our Lord has said: “*The lukewarm I will vomit out of My mouth.*” (*Apocalypse 3:16*)

A wise friend once told me, “*To live life just for heaven is worth losing it to death.*” I was struck by these words, and understood them to mean that if we live our life, cautious of avoiding sin, we will not worry about death because we will be ready for it. We must be ready for death, because it is fast approaching. What good works will we have to show God when he calls us? Take care to use the time you have to avoid sin and to be sure to be ready *when death comes*.

Who’s on dishes tonight?

The formation of a seminarian entails a lot more than prayers and classes. We seek to form Christ in these young men. Among other Christ-like qualities that a future priest must have is that of responsibility. A priest has many responsibilities on his shoulders and they are weighty indeed,

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as they concern the salvation of souls. Thus, a future priest must be trained to be a disciplined, responsible man.

In the seminary we work on this in various ways. There are house rules, such as keeping one’s room clean and in good order. There are also daily chores assigned to individual seminarians. When these young men fail to fulfill their various responsibilities, we assign them a penance. (I prefer *penance* to the more odious term *punishment*. A punishment only punishes, a penance teaches.) Sometimes, the penance for an infraction is a decade of the Rosary for the Poor Souls. At other times, it is the washing of dishes.

As a matter of fact, the washing of the nightly dishes, normally done by an assigned crew, has become so routinely done in expiation of infractions, that it seems they already know who is going to be on dishes that night. Each seminarian knows when he has failed in an area, and he also knows that the eagle eye of Fr. Benedict doesn’t miss much. Of course, those who otherwise would be doing the dishes don’t mind the fact that other seminarians are taking care of their evening chore.

A wise person learns by his mistakes. Let’s just say that some of our seminarians are not wise yet – and their dishwasher hands are testimony to that. Oh well, some people learn the hard way. I eagerly look forward to the day when there is but a rare infraction. In the meantime, however, it seems that the question “Who is on dishes tonight?” regularly leads to a few unnamed seminarians raising their hands and heading for the kitchen.

Again, we thank you, our kind benefactors, from our hearts. Let us all continue to pray daily for vocations. Pray that those whom the Master calls will respond generously, and that those who have already heeded the call will follow through. We wish you all a blessed Advent season and we assure you of our daily prayers for you and your loved ones.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI

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