



THE GUARDIAN

Vol. X, No. 4

Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

December 2008

After the beautiful fall weather this past month, we are ready for snow — just not as much as last year! So far, we have only had a small amount of snow mixed with rain. We like to sled and ski in the snow, but we especially like the snow because it is a beautiful creation of God, coating the trees and hillsides with a blanket of white — it reminds us of the purity of Mary.

As we reported in the last issue, one of the main events for us during November would be the High Masses for the departed. Not only did we sing the Requiem Mass often, we also sang two funerals. By far the most interesting was that of a parishioner in Great Falls, Montana. We enjoyed the trip and were glad to comfort the family of the deceased with our singing.

Finally, we are sorry to have to report the demise of Bosco, our seminary dog. Unfortunately, Bosco just couldn't resist getting into scrapes with others: neighbor dogs, cars, wild animals, etc. In the wee hours of the morning on the day he went missing, Bosco could be heard furiously barking at another animal. We figure he got into it with some wild animal who was too big for him. We greatly miss Bosco and are now looking for his replacement.

We hope that you will all have a good Advent. Here at the seminary we will perform our accustomed Advent sacrifices and prayers. May we all deserve to enjoy a blessed Christmas.

To see death and smile

by Forrest Nguyen, gr. 10

I can only plead ignorance. Once a sheltered Catholic, I was not versed in many, or any, Catholic ceremonies.

But since coming to the seminary, I have been overwhelmed by the multitude of ceremonies celebrated here. Ordinations, processions, even the simple joy of daily Mass — all combining to enthrall my old ignorance. But of all these, I have recently had the most personally awakening yet: a Catholic funeral.

My forethoughts on the ceremony were bleak and blank. Funerals were entirely alien to me and I wasn't looking forward to something as shaded in sorrow as death. But the evening preceding the ceremony, while praying the Rosary before the open casket, I saw the once-live body and saw the smile that she wore. I was saddened in seeing the death, but that smile remained in my mind. I couldn't free myself from it. It made me glad to see a person, though fully aware of death, smile at death. But what is so pleasant about death? And as bizarre to me as it was, it made me smile.

The next morning, I served the funeral Mass, as close to God and the corpse as I could be. I remembered that smile. And looking around, I saw more smiles on others' faces as well. Were they smiling at her death? I saw tears in many eyes, but in eyes that shone like smiles. Those eyes cried for the loss of their friend but shone as if she'd gained something more. I could only smile, but I still didn't know why.

Looking back, I now know. The smile on the corpse was a smile of a good death. A good death takes one to heaven. In heaven is perfect happiness. Happiness makes you smile. It made her smile and made everyone attending her funeral smile, including me!

December calendar

- 1 — Classes resume
- 7 — Basketball game
- 5 — Mid-quarter
- 8 — Immaculate Conception of BVM, no classes, day of recollection
- 20 — Christmas vacation begins

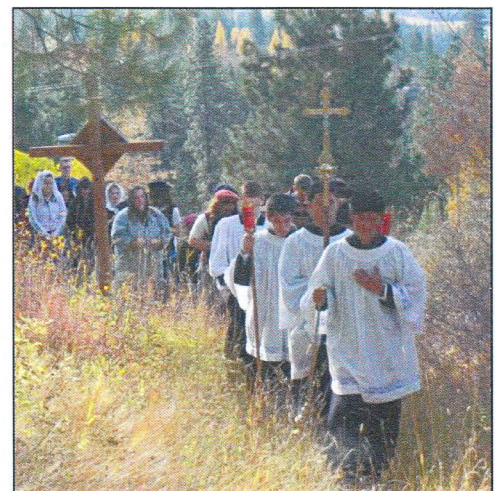
To live life just for heaven is worth losing it to death. But the life lost here is won again in heaven. So death isn't a loss — it is the gaining of heaven! That is what that blessed person saw. That is what everyone else at the funeral saw. And now, I have seen it, too.

It is always heard

by Angel Gamboa, gr. 11

Every week at St. Joseph Seminary we have a spiritual conference on Thursday morning. Our last conference

continued on page 2



Our uphill path to the cemetery is lined with the Stations of the Cross.

It is always heard

continued from page 1

was on prayer, so I thought it would be advantageous to share it with our benefactors.

There are two kinds of prayer: vocal and mental. Vocal prayer consists of two parts. There is a prescribed form of prayer written by someone (often a saint), and there is also the sentiment expressed toward God. Vocal prayer needs our attention. When we pray together we must pay attention to the letter and to the sense.

We should pay close attention in order to pray in unison and to say the proper pronunciation. Praying in unison means to hear others and ourselves and make sure we all sound like one voice. It often happens that when people recite some prayers in a group, some pray slower and some pray faster. It would be very edifying to go into a church and hear a group of people reciting the Rosary in perfect unison, so well united that you could not even distinguish the voice of anyone.

Attention to the 'sense' means to pay attention to the words that we are saying, or in the case of the Rosary, to the mystery on which we are meditating. We should not merely say the words without thinking of their meaning and sentiment. Mental prayer is, simply, prayer from the heart, like giving our day to God by means of little ejaculations or thoughts directed toward God.

We must always keep in mind that both mental and vocal prayer are but one thing: speaking to God. He is there every time we lift up our minds and hearts to Him. There is one more thing to keep in mind: never get discouraged if we have distractions. If we try our best to get rid of them every time they come, there is no reason that our prayers would not be pleasing to God and He would not hear them. If our petition is not granted, maybe what we are asking for is harmful for our eternal salvation. In that case, God will give us something better. There is no prayer that is not heard. We must persevere in praying and not give up.

Now that I have reminded you about prayer I sincerely ask you to please pray for us. We also pray for you all every day.

Our rustic fort

by Juan Garcia, gr. 11

Two years have now passed since we built Fr. Chabanel Fort. This is the name we gave it after filming the movie The Priest Who Failed. The movie is an amateur effort by the seminarians about the life of Fr. Chabanel, who worked with the American Indians and was martyred by them.

The fort is located up in the forest on the northeast side of the seminary, some 150 yards away. We built two forts. The first one is situated where our campfire is located.

Bro. Anthony and another seminarian started this one, but the lack of a good view was its major defect. Soon we abandoned the unfinished fort and looked for another place. We started building a new fort on a place surrounded by nice

trees — a gargantuan tree close to the left side and a beautiful view of the Selkirk Mountains all around. Our fort has two levels. Each of the stories is about 7 ft. high and our rectangular platform around 6 ft. x 5 ft. On the right side, to the north, is our ladder. The steps are 2 in. x 4 in. and fit perfectly on the tree. The second level was done before Bro. Anthony left for Omaha.

This year Marcellus, Forrest, and I decided to build a bridge. This connects the second level of the fort to the enormous tree. After the bridge was set Marcellus and I climbed the tree. This tree is around 150 ft. tall, and we are planning to make a platform high up in it. When I climbed the tree everything was going well. The view was getting more beautiful as I climbed. Close to the top I was getting nervous, as some of the branches were dead. It was very high, and I was afraid to step on one of the dead ones. Nevertheless, I did enjoy climbing up the tree, and I expect to climb it again once we build the platform.

Marcellus and I slept in this fort one slightly-cold night. It was fun and we are planning to sleep there again sometime during the winter.

Sleeping through class?

by José Castellanos, gr. 12

I want to tell you one of my little experiences. A few days ago I went to my room to do my math at 12:30 p.m. I was doing my math and for some reason I was especially tired, but I was still doing my homework as a good seminarian. When it was 1:05 p.m. I just leaned forward on my desk and said to myself, "Oh I'll just stay here until the bell rings; I'm sure I'll hear it." (We have a bell that rings five minutes before every class as well as when class starts.)

Then Alex came into his room, which is across from mine, and he saw me sleeping. He woke me and asked, "Were you dismissed early today?"

I said, "No, why, what time is it?"

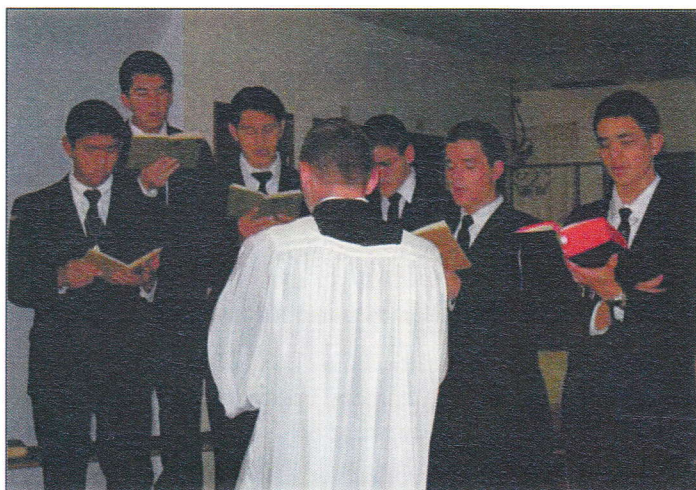
He said, "Look at your watch." I looked and it was 2:05 p.m. I said, "Wow, Fr. Gabriel is going to kill me because I just missed his chemistry class." Right after I said that I heard the bell for the end of chemistry class.

To top it off Fr. Benedict was coming and he asked me, "Jose, what's this skipping chemistry class?"

I said, "I'm sorry, Father, I fell asleep."

"Oh, that sounds like dishes tonight," he said.

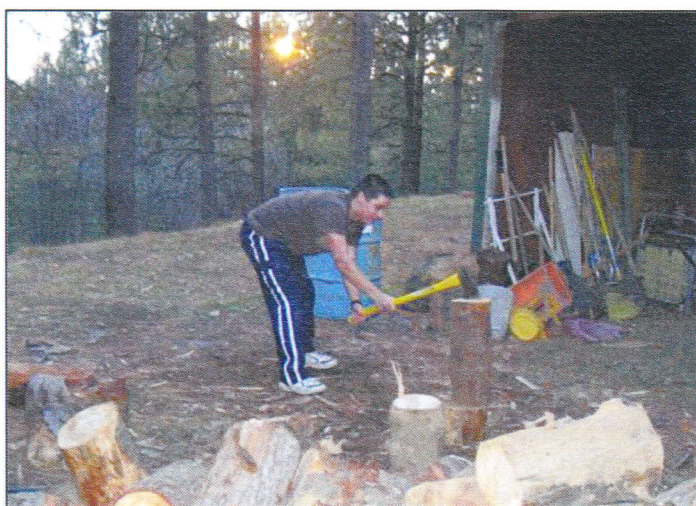
Then I went to Fr. Gabriel and said, "I'm sorry Father; I fell asleep through your class." He just assigned me what they did that day for homework. I did my homework plus I washed the dishes that night. I hope you liked this little experience of mine because I didn't — I mean washing the dishes; I didn't enjoy that.



The seminarians sang the Requiem Mass at two funerals in November.



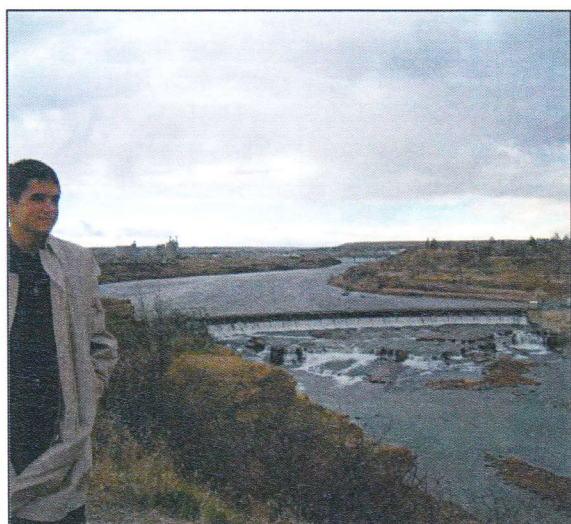
Fort Chabanel provides a refreshing escape from the rigors of academia.



An important chore in autumn is splitting firewood.



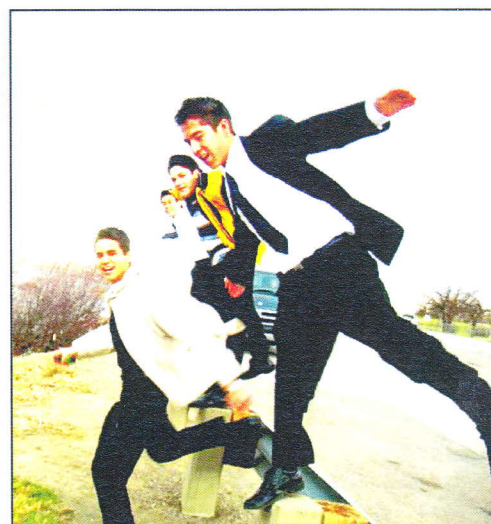
This would take a lot longer without a chainsaw!



The Great Falls of the Missouri River proved a difficult obstacle for Lewis and Clark on their epic journey.



We enjoyed our trip to Great Falls, Montana, despite the strong winds.



A visit

by Alex Odom, gr. 12

One day a man receives a phone call from his best friend. His friend tells him that he will be visiting in a few weeks and asks if he can stay with him. "Of course, come any time you want," is the reply, and his friend tells him when he will be in town.

In the days following, rather than prepare for his friend's visit, the man spends his time in leisure. His procrastination results in eventually forgetting about his friend's visit. He happens to be out for the day when his friend arrives in town and goes to his house. Finding it unlocked, the friend goes inside only to be greeted by a messy, unprepared, vacant house. He decides to wait; perhaps his friend is busy. Hours elapse and he is still alone.

He finally leaves the house of his best friend, utterly hurt. Later that night, the man arrives at his house and finds a note that reads: *"I took time out of my busy life to visit you, my best friend, and to give you a gift, but you were unprepared and apparently too busy to see me. Perhaps I can find someone else to stay with and I can visit you some other time when you are available and unoccupied. Love, your best friend."*

What pain he must have felt realizing that his best friend forgot his visit. And yet, so many people shut out Christ on Christmas because they don't prepare well for this great feast. Christ loves us more than any human being could love us and He yearns to come into our hearts, so he gave us the time of Advent especially as a preparation for Christmas. He wants, on His birthday, to be reborn in our hearts so as to inspire us to love Him more and to help us live holier lives. He wants to give Himself to us. And yet, He finds the hearts of many, who didn't use the time of Advent well, unprepared and empty on Christmas. He wants to help them and they shut him out. Offended, all He can do is leave a remnant of hope, hope that they will be prepared next time.

Let us use this Advent well and prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. May he find a warm welcome in our hearts on Christmas and may He give us the greatest gift we could receive: Himself.

"And His own received Him not."

In our theology class this year we are studying the life of Christ. After a review of the stories and prophecies of the

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.

Old Testament, we have now begun a study of the New Testament. What is truly amazing is that, despite the many miracles and blessings that the Son of God brought to the Jewish people, so many at last rejected Him.

On Christmas we read again the Gospel story of the birth of the Savior, as narrated by St. Luke. That beautiful tale of the midnight birth in a cave, of the humble shepherds, and of the singing angels never seems to get old. But let us not forget that other Christmas Gospel — the one read at the third Mass of Christmas day, and indeed for the last Gospel every day. And that is the prologue of St. John's Gospel. This evangelist tells us of the eternal Word made flesh who came "unto His own, and His own received Him not."

There are few other passages in scripture so poignant in their pathos. We recall the cry "Let Him be crucified" and others indicating the rejection of Our Lord by His own people, but this one carries a special note of sorrow, perhaps because it is read on this most joyful of feasts.

Dear fellow Catholics, may it never be able to be said of us, that He came to us and we did not receive Him. So many souls that should be "His own" choose the materialism and pleasures of the world over Christ. Pray God that we be not among their number.

Again, as always, we thank you for your prayers and support. We pray for you and your needs and intentions, and we especially pray that you will each experience a joyous Christmas. May the Christ Child come into your hearts to warm them with His love on Christmas Day!

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.

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