



THE GUARDIAN

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Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

March 2010

As is our custom at the seminary, the annual retreat takes place at the beginning of Lent. This year's retreat begins in just a few days. The silence is difficult at first, but then you get adjusted to it, and the retreat becomes a joy. The all-night vigil of adoration on the first night of the retreat is especially a time of grace. We will tell you about this year's retreat in our next newsletter.

Spring is also the time for outdoor clean-up work. For a long time Father has planned on having us clean the hillside between the church and the cemetery. Right now you can't see the cemetery from the church, due to all the brush on the hill. So that will be a major project that should keep us busy for awhile.

This is also the time of year when we pray more earnestly to St. Joseph for vocations to our seminary. One of the seminarians came up with the idea to pray a novena for vocations, so we have been doing that recently. We all go into chapel together after evening study hall and pray for this intention. We ask you also to pray for vocations to our seminary.

We hope that you will all experience a spiritually blessed Lent. We ask your prayers for us, for our seminary, and for more vocations. We also will pray for you.

Dissertation on kissing the Crucifix

by Forrest Nguyen, gr. 11

In my many and multitudinous travels from my ancestral San Francisco, I have come across yet another most diverting spectacle as the anatomy of a rooster or the lakeside lunacy localized

to the region of Coeur d'Alene. And though it rivals no other such spectacle in any definite length or width, size or magnitude, it merits a certain uniqueness in the *depth* that it implies. The spectacle itself is unspectacular: it appears to be an obscure mixture of absurdity and devotion. Just as from the outside peeking in, all Catholicism appears to be an organized mysticism. But within, once immersed in its practice, Catholicism is found to be the very Hand of God. But I digress, and ramble, and will continue to ramble as I discuss the spiritual spectacle of "Kissing the Crucifix."

In a certain seminary, in a certain massif of mountains, in a certain state known mostly for potatoes, I first observed this phenomenon. A life-sized Crucifix hangs unceremoniously from the wall of the hall of this seminary. (Sadly, it hangs upstairs and cloistered, so few behold it, except for Good Friday, when it is brought to the church.) Here, though, a certain seminarian, strolling just as unceremoniously down the hallway, stops to stoop and adore with the pomp of a prince the bloodstained Feet of his Crucified God — with his very lips!

The absurdity of it all! That a rational being would stoop to the level of an inanimate statue and even go so far as to touch his 'kisser' to its Toes. And yet, . . . the devotion of it all!

I chanced to observe this phenomenon become a series of phenomena,

March calendar

- 14 — Annual seminary-sponsored parish breakfast in honor of St. Joseph and St. Patrick
- 19 — Feast of St. Joseph, seminary patron; no classes; High Mass
- 25 — Feast of the Annunciation BVM; chanted Vespers; renewal of Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary
- 24–26 — Third Quarter Exams
- 26 — Feast of Our Mother of Sorrows; chanted Vespers; end of Third Quarter
- 28 — Palm Sunday
- 29 — Fourth Quarter begins

as every time this seminarian passed he made a point of stopping, and stooping, and adoring with a kiss his God's Feet. I was even blessed to observe these phenomena spread to other seminarians — and now myself!

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Father prepares to distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday.

An Olympic challenge

by Robert Prado, gr. 12

Every four years, the finest athletes from nearly every country of the world compete in what we call the Winter Olympics. Skiing, skating, bobsledding; snowmobile, luge, and hockey, these Olympians of our age are at their finest, in top condition, every muscle tuned and tense, every bit of their minds consumed in their quest. Nothing can distract them from their one focus, their one goal — the gold medal.

They have prepared for this great Olympic moment throughout their lives. They have sacrificed their entire bodies and minds for that moment of glory, the attainment of their goal; giving everything, and holding nothing back; molding their skills and talents, with constant practice into pure perfection. Sure they have fallen, yet they battle through injury, sickness, and fatigue, persevering unswervingly on their path to glory. They will obtain their goal only if they have given all and persevered.

In a far greater way each of us faces a challenge — that of attaining our eternal goal — everlasting glory, heaven itself. Like the Olympian our minds must be consumed by our quest, our focus constant, our soul in top condition for that one moment which will decide whether it is glory or destruction. We must dedicate ourselves completely, giving ourselves entirely and without restraint to the will of God. We must mold ourselves in His image, perfecting our whole beings, by the practice of prayer, mortification, and self-sacrifice.

When we fall by committing sin we must pick ourselves up without hesitation and rid ourselves of it's sickness, forever persevering. The Olympian perseveres and gains his ambition, and so shall we if we follow unwaveringly on the path to our everlasting goal. Furthermore, we must be greater than any Olympian, for our heavenly goal is far greater, our beatific reward infinitely superior to any gold medal.

So let us ask God for the grace to have the resilience of Olympians on our path to heaven, and to persevere in the salvation of our souls. Yes, we must have the strength of Olympians, in this, the greatest of all challenges.

Our mountain slopes

by Juan Garcia, gr. 12

As you may know, this northwest part of the country has been affected by the El Niño current; hence the dry, warmer weather for this year. If I remember correctly, we had only one day on which we went sledding with about 3 inches of snow; one day on which we made a snowman; one day with my snowsuit outside; one day having a snowball fight; and no days shoveling roofs, which was awesome. Other than that, there have been few if any white flakes. The mountains however have a good amount of snow for a nice ski day.

Every year, for the past several years, we have gone to Mt. Spokane for skiing; but for whatever the circumstances were, we did not go there this year. Instead, we went to Silver

Mountain in Idaho. This was my first time there. It was also my first time on a gondola. (The gondola up to Silver Mountain is the longest in the world.) Riding up to the lodge was fun — it was amazing to see the beautiful range of the Rocky Mountains with their white-covered conifers and the sun shining on them. While riding up the base of the mountain, there was little or no snow, so that I wondered how it would be on the top. On arriving there, we found that it was not too bad, with plenty of snow to ski on.

I have now been there three times. The first time was during Christmas vacation; I went with some of the students and we had an enjoyable time — a couple falls but no broken bones. The second time I was having fun racing with Robert. He always beat me, but we will see next time. This last time was the ski day for the school children. I was assigned to help the younger children. They all did so well, that I was able to go take some runs on the steeper slopes. We are hoping for one more chance this winter, before all the snow is gone.

A unique gift

by Martin Concepcion, gr. 8

On February 13 we received a gift from a family in our parish — a rooster! It was the first time I have ever seen one up close: he had magnificent colors, strong feet, a funny looking head, and every so often he would crow like Peter Pan. He did not seem like an angry or agitated animal. I fed him some pizza even though we only had him for an hour, before it was time to butcher him.

So when we decided to do the awful deed, we let him out of the cage and he strode out with his waddle, his head held high as though he were a king hosting a royal ball and we were just his peasants. It looked quite ridiculous, because he looked so proud and mighty. So then we got on to the fun part — trying to catch the little bugger! After five whole minutes I saw why he looked so proud — he made us look like idiots running around our property and running into each other with boxes trying to throw them over him so that we could trap him. Finally, one of the seminarians just tackled that bad boy and pinned him to the ground. (I was wishing he would somehow lose his grip and we would have to chase the rooster some more!)

Now the final part of the whole scenario was to kill the rooster. I was the one who had to cut while someone else held him still. They instructed me to cut away at the neck and so I tried to do, but without being very successful. Then the same seminarian that brutally tackled the kind animal snatched the knife right out of my hands and chopped the head off like a carrot. Then it was time for the part I hate the most: cleaning/de-feathering that poor thing. We had to first dip the body of the fallen, valiant warrior in boiling water and strip him of his feathers, which makes the whole building smell less than pleasant. Secondly, we had to gut and clean the carcass. So in remembrance of the fallen war veteran I close with “Cock-a-Doodle-Do.”



Juan prepares for another run down the slopes.



Stella spends a lot of time at her favorite spot, at the foot of the big Crucifix in the upstairs hallway.



The seminarians lately have enjoyed working on jigsaw puzzles.



Although this rooster does not know it, we have plans for him . . .



. . . but first we have to catch him . . .



. . . in order to complete the deed.

On kissing the Crucifix

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It is not much to stop and adore, and yet how much devotion it demands to perform! In this lies the *depth* of the spectacle: that a man would love his Creator, his *Savior*, so much as to kiss His sacred Feet. In that does rational absurdity transcend reason and rise into devotion: in that is an unceremonious statue made the grand spectacle we call the Crucifix. So, please, find a statue, and venerate it with a kiss: perchance you can spread the spectacle.

“Singing in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16)

Lent is all about penance and reflection on the Passion. But it is also the time of amendment. It would be absurd to think that we can do penance for our sins during Lent, and then after the season return to the same sins! No, true sorrow contains the determination not to sin again, for we realize that it was sin that crucified the Son of God.

These thoughts of the Passion and of amendment are forcibly brought to our minds by the Lenten hymns we sing. Every season of the year has its hymns with their own peculiar characteristics. Just as Christmas hymns have a note of joy and Easter hymns of glory, so the Lenten hymns we sing and have grown to love convey a note of deep sorrow. Their haunting melodies touch the soul, while the words inspire contrition and love.

In the seminary we sing the various Lenten hymns, and each has its own beauty. We sing hymns in chapel and before some of the classes, recalling that singing is praying twice. If only we allow them, the melodies and words become a source of meditation that nothing else quite equals. God uses many means to convey His graces to us, and certainly hymns are one of them.

So choose a hymn or two that appeal to you. Learn the words and hum the melody to yourself, as you reflect on the words. You will find this a helpful means to really understand what Lent is all about: to obtain true sorrow and the purpose of amendment.

May God grant each of you to have a holy Lent. 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

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.



The ceremony of the blessing of candles was held on Candlemas Day.

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**