



THE GUARDIAN

Vol. XVI No. 4

Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

December 2014

We have now finished the month of November, the month specially dedicated to assisting the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Let us hope that we have freed many souls from their torments so that they may pray to God on our behalf. Once in Paradise contemplating the Beatific Vision in everlasting bliss, these souls can act as very helpful intercessors for us.

November has been for us, with a few exceptions, relatively uninterrupted, academically speaking. While that seems a bit “humdrum,” we have kept quite busy just with our studies, work and, most importantly, our daily prayers. We also went on a much-appreciated, mini vacation to the home of a generous couple who are parishioners of our church. While preoccupied with all these things, we scarcely noticed how fast the time was going. Before we knew it, Thanksgiving, the last Thursday of November, was upon us. This also served as a little refreshing oasis after a month of repetitive studying and labor.

But, as I was saying, the month of November has come and gone. It is now time to focus on Advent — the annual preparation for the coming of Christ. This season has been instituted to remind us of the suffering, sorrow and longing that the chosen people endured before the promised Redeemer arrived, and also to help us prepare for a blessed Christmas. We all know well that this season includes penance, restraining from decorating our homes until we get closer to Christmas. During Advent we light four candles, surrounded at the base by a wreath, together with the accompanying prayers. Of the four candles, three are purple to represent

penance and waiting, and one is pink to represent joy as the Birth of Christ approaches. If we participate well in these beautiful practices, God will grant us a happy and holy Christmas.

— a seminarian

Persecution and perseverance

by Mark Vincent, gr. 10

Sometimes we as humans just start thinking about something that has never really presented itself in our minds. Our guardian angel and the devil have pillow fights inside our conscience all the time. The devil throws in the bad thoughts and the guardian angel throws in the good thoughts. Recently, my guardian angel happened to be throwing in his good thoughts. They directed me to think about St. Philomena the Wonder Worker.

Our story begins in the reign of Emperor Diocletian, a fierce persecutor of the Christian religion. Philomena was a Grecian princess of the age of 13, and the emperor was threatening war on her father’s kingdom. The father of Philomena begged for peace. In response, the tyrant told him that if he gave him his daughter’s hand in marriage, he would withdraw all threat of invasion. The parents were thrilled at this proposal and begged her to accept. She, however, would not give in to this worldly request since she had made a vow of virginity to Christ at an early age. The emperor would not cease to ask

December calendar

- 2 — Basketball game
- 4 — Mid-quarter
- 8 — Immaculate Conception BVM; Holyday of Obligation; no classes
- 9 — Basketball game
- 12 — Our Lady of Guadalupe; special observances in honor of Our Lady
- 16 — Basketball game; Novena for Christmas begins
- 19 — Christmas Vacation begins after classes

her to marry him. Finally, his anger was so violent that he cast her into the dungeon.

He visited her often, renewing his request. The Blessed Virgin appeared to her and told her that on the fortieth day of imprisonment, she would be taken from that cage and put under cruel torture. It happened just as was promised. On the fortieth day, the emperor ordered that she be brought to him. After asking her again if her mind

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The seminarians rehearsed the music before singing a Requiem High Mass.

Persecution and perseverance

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had changed, and receiving a “no,” he had her scourged much to the likeness of Christ’s scourging. Then she was cast into prison to die of her wounds.

During the night angels came and poured a heavenly balm on her wounds which totally cured her and made her more beautiful than ever. When the emperor heard this, he ordered her to be shot with arrows. As the flight of the arrows drew near her, they fell harmlessly to the ground. At this he ordered that the points be heated. An even more terrible thing happened this time. The arrows turned back and killed the archers instead. Much enraged at this, Diocletian had an anchor tied about her neck and cast her into the sea. Before she touched the water, two angels came and carried her back to land without a drop of water on her body. Diocletian had run out of patience and had her beheaded.

The reason she is called the Wonder Worker is that many cures have taken place at her shrines around the world. We should all invoke her in time of persecution as our advocate. Let us all strive to lead a life similar to this saint. That life is the true path to heaven. During this month of December, let us try to make a warm bed for Jesus through our prayers and mortifications as St. Philomena did in a heroic way.

Common men; great faith

by Joseph Prado, gr. 8

Heroic faith is considered now as a bygone virtue by modern Catholics. Saints are considered demi-gods and their acts of piety are looked upon as impossible in today’s world. But we can even look for heroism to the men of bygone times who were not saints, men who placed their religion above every passion and goal of this life. How could the men of the Middle Ages cross the parching steppes of Asia Minor and fight a reckless foe without a single sketch or map showing where they were going? It is something unheard of in the modern world. Rich lords, leaving their estates, abandoned their fiefs for the sake of fulfilling their divine Master’s summons.

In 1095 AD, Pope Urban II received a letter requesting aid from Emperor Alexis of Byzantium. The Emperor’s kingdom was under serious threat of destruction by the Seljuk Turks, a Middle Eastern people whose God was Allah and whose goal was the conquest of all unbelievers. With wild religious fanaticism they surged against the Byzantium Empire, taking Palestine, a great portion of present day Turkey and much of Syria. They pillaged the holy places and killed thousands of Christians, and the Empire was in a desperate position to hold.

The Holy Father proclaimed a Crusade against the Muslim invaders; its mission was to retake Jerusalem (and all of Palestine) and aid Byzantium. Godfrey of Bouillon and Bohemund, both Christian lords, prepared the Crusade, and with the words “God wills it” on their lips they set out on the only successful crusade. After a useless and foolish quarrel of

pride with Emperor Alexis, the two noblemen and their captains made it into what was once no man’s land, but now was under their adversaries’ power. Their inexorable hardships and battles were won only by their fervor and fighting skill. The pilgrim warriors wore on, through sieges and with the fierce enemy always mercilessly striking them, but they always conquered, they always were on top.

By 1099, prayers and God’s will found the indomitable iron-clad men on top of the Turks. Jerusalem was before them. After a bloody siege and hours of ferocious fighting, the crusaders scaled the walls of the city, and their quest was complete. The conquerors knelt down in prayer in the many relieved churches and chapels, thanking and praising God for their victory and safety. The objectives of the Crusade had been achieved: Palestine was recovered and Byzantium had been saved from a miserable fate. Thus began the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

All these men left their families and homes because of their great faith. The Pope had called them and he was a representative of God. God had willed it through him, and they had cooperated. We all can learn from these indomitable men, these men of courageous, unstoppable faith.

Abide by the Cradle

by Dominic Pulliam, gr. 12

What do we think when Christmas comes around? Maybe we like to think about all the gifts we are going to receive, or we might think of what food is going to be served or even what parties we are going to attend. All that is really fun to think about, but what else should we think of? Well, we should remind ourselves that Christmas is also the time when the Savior was born into this world for our salvation, and that really should be our reason for being so excited for this wondrous feast.

Let’s back up a bit and put ourselves at the scene of the Nativity. We would probably see a stable full of different animals, a trough full of hay with a Babe lying in it, and a group of special people. But who are these people? They are our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, some shepherds and the Three Wise Men. But why were they all there?

Well, the Blessed Mother was there because she was the one who carried Jesus in her womb for nine months and who was about to give to the world Jesus by a miraculous Birth. St. Joseph was there because he was the foster father of Our Lord and was also the one who helped find a place to stay. The shepherds were there because an angel of God told them about the Savior being born in a stable. Then there were the Three Wise Men. The names of these men were Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, of whom I am very fond. It’s amazing how they were led by a star from such faraway places and how they met up with each other for the same purpose, following the same star, in order to see the Savior of the world.

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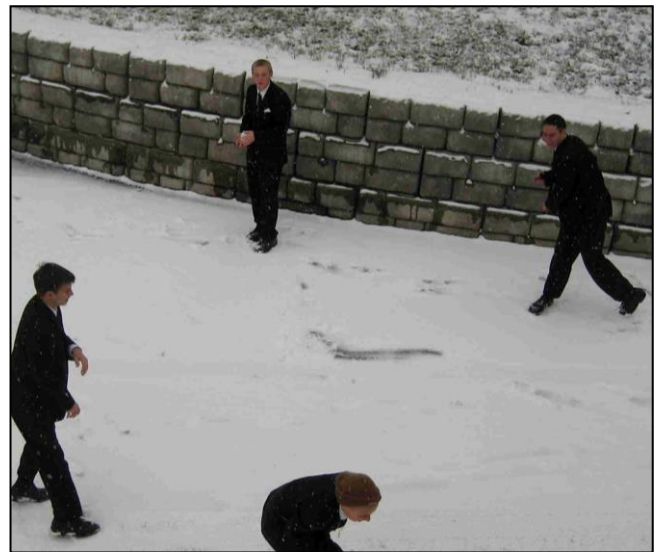
Mr. Vern Slater is a great cook. Thanks, Mr. and Mrs. Slater for your hospitality!



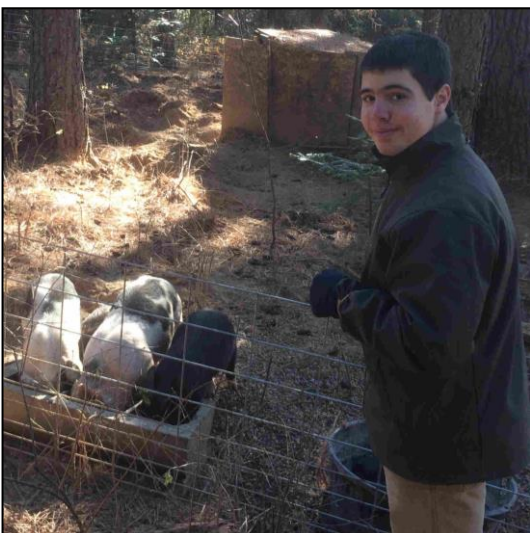
Recreation is an important part of the seminary schedule.



This past month we started basketball practice in preparation for the season.



The seminarians couldn't resist throwing snowballs after the first small snowfall.



Daniel observes the three little pigs enjoying their meal.



One recent project was the digging of a trench for a propane line to the seminary.

Abide by the Cradle

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So, dear friends, we should meditate on these few but significant things that happened so many years ago, which we call to mind on what is one of the greatest feasts of the Church. We should be thankful that Our Lord was born for our salvation, for if He had not been born, we would be without redemption.

Overflowing love of the Sacred Heart

by Daniel Maurel, gr. 9

Love, wonder of wonders, will and can never be contained so brilliantly as in Our Lord's own Heart. God Our Savior does not give a day without thinking of us, and will not abandon us, giving so many signs of His love. His Heart throbs at seeing us in any affliction or overwhelming pain, which He sends us. If He loved us less, He would allow it to depart instantly before we were able to have a chance to gain a better understanding of what He really wants for us. He will comfort us in our deepest depressions for He knows that His consolation is the buttress of our life and a pillar of salvation. Our crosses are our greatest gifts, and moreover, He will be there to assist us, especially when the cross we take up frequently breaks the evil inclinations of the flesh. How many could be saved from losing their God by devotion in prayer to the Most Holy Heart of Jesus Christ.

Imagine what this Heart is suffering from our hideous resistance to Him and His truth. "I will satisfy all the desires of your heart, for it is I who gave you those desires." After an enemy of God has exhaled his last breath, Jesus will stand before him, point to His Body on the Cross, and exclaim: "Look at the Heart of one you crucified! See the pains you have inflicted upon It! What better things have I not given you! You have wasted your life. Thus you lose all My happiness, all My joy, all My love because you have hardened your heart against Me and struck Me in the Face. I shall not hear your cries of pain; I will not caress you in your misery. Leave Me!" The sinner will crumble like an imploding building at His Feet.

We finally understand, and we finally love Him. Our Redeemer longs for us unceasingly. He showed this love through His Death on the Cross, where His Heart was pierced at the fact that so little affection is given for His affection.

"Why have you pieced My Hands that showed so much charity?" Contemplating these touching words, we should weep at the thought of being so ungrateful to such a truly unselfish lover, who is Goodness Himself! We should seek to console, choose, and devote ourselves to His bleeding Heart as He wished us to do. His love is unexplainable. "*Jesus meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thine.*"

The voice in the desert

During Advent Holy Mother Church places before us the example of St. John the Baptist. He prepared the people for the public life of Christ, much as we now prepare during Advent to celebrate His Birth. What is incredible about this saint is his utter devotion to God. At the tender age of three years he left home and family and took up his abode in the desert. Finally, after more than 25 years of penance, he came forth under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to preach contrition for sin and amendment of life.

Although his public mission was brief, the Baptist had an astounding effect upon his hearers who flocked from the cities to be baptized by him. We do not read of even one miracle performed by him, yet the people were drawn by his obvious sanctity, his detachment from the world and his single-minded devotion to a life of service of God.

St. John is a good model for seminarians and a reminder of the importance of seminary training. Note that the Holy Ghost did not call this great man forth from his retreat until after many years of penance and prayer. In much the same way, a young man called to the priesthood must first prepare by years of separation from the world spent in study and prayer. God knows how much harm has been caused by ill-formed priests! Better to have a few priests who are well-formed and who live lives of detachment from the world, than many priests who are of the world!

That is why the work of seminaries is so important. We ask for your prayers for the young men, both in our minor seminary and our major seminary, who are preparing to fulfill God's will in their lives. May they become good and holy priests one day, for the world is much in need of such men! We thank you for your support and assure you of a daily remembrance in our prayers. May you have a blessed Advent and a most joyous Christmas.

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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