



THE GUARDIAN

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Monthly newsletter of St. Joseph Seminary

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Since returning from vacation on the first weekend of January, we have had a busy month. First, we celebrated the Epiphany with an exchange of gifts for one another. We also hosted the bishop and priests for dinner during their annual winter meeting. Our cooks and parish volunteers provided an excellent meal for the occasion. It was a real thrill to meet so many priests and to learn where they are stationed and what they do.

We all agree, however, that the highlight of the month was our ski trip to Silver Mountain in northern Idaho, a 50-minute drive from our seminary. Since there had been a large snowfall a couple of days before, the conditions were excellent. For two of the seminarians, this was a first-ever experience, while others had gone skiing before. We all agreed that the day was a great success, and we hope to be able to go skiing again this winter.

Now, as we enter the month of February, we are renewing our efforts to do well in our classes. The First Semester has concluded and we are expecting to get our grade cards any day. This semester report will tell us how we have been doing in our academics and will remind us what we need to improve. Please pray for us, that we will do well in this Second Semester. And thank you for reading our newsletter.

Why Is February So Short?

by William Davis, gr. 8

A common saying is: "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November; but all the rest have thirty-one, except for February alone which has twenty-eight days clear and twenty-nine each leap year." That is still the only reason that I know how many days each month contains. Many people ask, though, why is the month of February so short?

In the year 1582 in the month of

October, Pope Gregory XIII made a significant change to the outdated Julian calendar.

That calendar was so far off, that over the centuries it had gained ten days. So Pope Gregory XIII made up a new calendar, the Gregorian calendar. Thereby, he was able to fix the Julian calendar, since the average year is

February Calendar	
2	Purification BVM feastday; Candlemas ceremonies
9	Ski Day
11	Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes
20	Mid-quarter
20-28	Annual Pool Tournament

exactly 365.242 days long. To accommodate that he decided that the century years that are evenly divisible by 400, such as the year 2000, are leap years. If not, such as for 1700, 1800 and 1900, then they are not leap years. A leap year adds one extra day to the short month of February. (This is not the type of technical situations for a math hater.)

Many people, including myself do not particularly like the month of February for a few reasons: it is cold and wet, but not snowy. There might be piles of snow but you can't do a thing with it. Luckily for some of us, it isn't so. Thanks to Pope Gregory XIII for making February a special month, because every four years, except on a new century, another day is added to February. Sometimes I think of those poor people who are born on February twenty-ninth. They only get to celebrate their birthday once every four years.

Nothing that God makes is bad in any way, shape or form. So the month of February is not as bad as it seems.

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The Skiing Adventure is About to Begin!

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Why Is February Short?

You can ski in February. You can do almost any indoor sport. At the Minor Seminary we play pool and ping pong, chess, and board games. So February, although short, is really a good month.

Seminary Recreation

by Gabriel Davis, gr. 9

On one half of the recreation room the commotion of crashing billiard balls is heard echoing through the house. Meanwhile, the onlookers watch the physical ability of judging distances, angles, and speed that make up the main components of the noisy and sometimes reckless sport of billiards. On the other half of the room in a quiet corner, a seemingly peaceful game of skill, strategy and awareness is being played in thoughtful silence. This is the game of chess. One is a common pastime played in America and England, the other an international sport competitively played especially in Russia and Eastern Europe; both are commonly played during breaks and recreation during these cold winter days at the seminary.

Pool right now in the seminary is the most popular pastime, due to the fact that we have recently purchased a new pool table. Contrary to our former table that simply had basket pockets, this pool table works so that every

time a ball goes into a pocket, tracks that work together bring all the balls to a slot at the end of the table. This makes it convenient because each time you rack you don't have to go searching for all the balls. Since our arrival here at the Seminary every seminarian has become increasingly better at playing pool. That's good, because this month we will have the annual pool tournament.

Although pool is more commonly played during breaks, chess is also played especially on long uneventful Saturdays. The first known origins of the game of chess are believed to originate in India around

the seven hundreds. By the Middle Ages chess was a commonly played pastime, especially among the higher classes. Russians enjoy playing chess so much that from 1948 to 2000, the world champion was a Russian, except for a few years when Bobby Fischer, an American, claimed the title. I very much enjoy playing chess and I believe that everybody should at least try to learn to like this most relaxing game of strategy.

Many of you boys might not enjoy playing chess or billiards and that is okay—there are still countless ways to have fun up here in Idaho. For instance, in our gym there is basketball, hockey and volleyball. Outdoor activities are Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, handball and, best yet, skiing, sledding, snow ball fights and making snow forts during the winter. So don't worry about spending too much time on studies and routine. There is still much time to recreate and enjoy our time here at the seminary.

Skiing

by Gabriel Riley, gr. 9

One of the most fun sports I have ever learned was skiing. Recently, I went skiing in Wisconsin during Christmas vacation with my family and some of my favorite cousins. It is a nice thing to do on a special occasion, especially during Christmas time. I only like to go when snow is on the ground both in and outside the ski grounds. It makes me feel more proper to go skiing.

On the 25th of January we went skiing at Silver Mountain with some of the priests who came for the priests' meeting. I like to go in groups because there are so many people I could hang around. This year we were told to partner up with

somebody. I was able to ski with Fr. Molina, who is the missionary pastor in Wisconsin where I go to church.

Another one of my thoughts about skiing is that once I had learned how to steer and jump it is truly fun. I like to go with people who have positive attitudes, like the other seminarians. It makes the day go better always! I have so much fun when I go skiing, that I don't even realize that the time goes by so fast. I feel like I could ski for days.



The boys always appreciate the opportunity to meet new priests!



The seminarians joined the priests for Vespers from the Divine Office.



The seminarians enjoy board games for recreation.



The most recent snowfall was perfect for making snowmen.



Parents brought their children to the communion rail for the annual blessing of children during the Christmas season.



The blessing of Epiphany Water takes place each year on January 5.



The seminarians can't resist the temptation to throw a few snowballs in between classes.

Anniversary of a Fateful Battle

by Thiet Vincent Nguyen, gr. 9

In the history of the United States of America, there have been thousands of battles in twelve major wars that our soldiers fought to protect and secure our country's and many other countries' peace and freedom throughout the globe. One such battle happened in the month of January 51 years ago. This battle cost at least a hundred thousand deaths of men on both our side and the opposing side, and this battle shall never be forgotten.

The Tet Offensive (Uprising of Tet Mau Than) was one of the longest and bloodiest campaigns of the Vietnam War, considered in its length and the death toll of approximately 120,000. The term "Tet" means "New Year" in the Vietnamese language. At that time of the year, the South Vietnamese soldiers and military staff were celebrating what's called the Lunar New Year, the Vietnamese Traditional New Year.

The security in the border was mostly loosened because both Vietnamese and American troops were permitted a leave of absence during the Tet celebration. Taking that advantage, on an early morning at 3 o'clock in January, 1968, the North Vietnamese troops advanced to the border and launched simultaneous attacks on South Vietnamese cities, headquarters, government buildings, offices, and the U.S. Embassy in the capital Saigon.

Saigon was the main attack point of the offensive, but a total takeover of the capital was not intended or feasible. Because it was Tet, the sound of firecrackers exploding masked that of gunfire, giving an element of surprise to the Vietcong attacks.

Receiving the news from the front line, American and Vietnamese soldiers hastened to their duty. Many Vietcong were arrested by military police and were sent back to the North. The number of soldiers' deaths reached a thousand on that day of the Communist's attack. They also executed approximately 2,800 unarmed Hue civilians and foreigners they considered to be enemy spies on that same day. The number of deaths went up to tens of thousands in the following attacks, as the first series of attacks ended on March 28th. The second series of attacks were from May 15th to June 15th, 1968. The third attack started on August 19th and ended on September 23rd of the same year.

By the end of the offensive, the number of casualties and deaths reached the number of more than a hundred thousand. Hundreds of buildings were destroyed. Corpses

lay spread throughout South Vietnam. Many thousands of civilians were massacred by the Communists. The Vietcong's death went up to 100,000 men, with 20,000 deaths in the South Vietnamese and American armies.

In conclusion, I want to give thanks to many American Veterans in the Vietnam War, for their many heroic efforts to prevent the spread of Communism in my homeland. I would like to ask you to pray for the souls of the soldiers I mentioned above. I also ask you to pray for the souls of the Vietcong soldiers, for they were misled by their evil leaders, may God forgive them. I pray that soon, by all our faithful prayers, this world will be a safe and peaceful world under the Hands of Divine Providence.

Slow and Steady

We all recall the well-known fable of the tortoise and the hare. The slow tortoise challenges the nimble rabbit to a race. Thinking that he has the race already won, the thoughtless hare takes his time and frolics about, unaware of the slow, steady plodding of the turtle, who ends up winning. "Slow and steady wins the race."

This fable has important applications in life, including the spiritual life. We would all like to sanctify ourselves overnight. We don't want to spend the time in the daily grind of dying to self and adhering faithfully to resolutions made. We want to jump to the end of the contest—to get to the goal right now—without coveting the intervening track of life.

Similarly, the work of formation requires regular, daily application. In the seminary we superiors (like parents) must often repeat, over and over. We must remind our charges of their duties and of the rules. We must not grow tired of that daily role, "in season, out of season" as Saint Paul puts it, of admonishing, instructing, and encouraging the young men whom God has confided to us. Their character growth may even be imperceptible, but that must not deter us from fulfilling our important duty. Persistence will win the desired results.

So, as we commence the second half of the school year, we (both students and teachers) commit ourselves to making a fresh start. Please pray for us, that our seminary will accomplish its purpose of forming young men to become other Christ's, which is not the work of a day or even a year, but the work of a lifetime. We are most grateful for your support, and we pray that God will abundantly reward you.

Fr. Benedict Hughes, CMRI