



Two of the great challenges we have faced during our stay in Valencia are a lack of sun and cold temperatures which have been sorely felt by everyone. But in the past two weeks the sun has finally been man enough to show himself, and with him has come a renewal of energy in the house and, on the more practical side, efforts to clean the pool. Formerly filled with a mixture of stagnant water, plant matter, and a staggering array of critters, we had somewhat of a primordial soup on our hands. No doubt it would have evolved something interesting had we a few millions years to spare, but as it is they were swept away by the superior organisms. We've made good progress, and though we still have more to do, we hope to finish in time for hotter weather.



Being separated from the other half of the community in Madrid, we have had to rely quite a bit on Skype. And seeing as how the year must go on, several events have been held through that medium which provided for some very unique experiences. The first was a Filandon (an event where every member of the community performs a poem, song, or speech based on a theme) which went, unexpectedly, without a hitch. The second was a rite of passage for the novices. We prayed Vespers via Skype with Madrid and then Joe, José Louis, and Leonardo took a promise of chastity for the next six



months. We ask you to pray for them as they start this new phase of their novitiate.



Personally, my favorite day of these weeks was the 29th for the completely unselfish reason that it was my

birthday. However, as I was looking forward to a day of rest and relaxation, the others had no such plans. The first inkling I had of their nefarious designs was when I woke up that morning to a trumpet blast loud enough to kick off judgment day and a horde of Americans bursting into my room banging pot and pans and shouting "This is Sparta!" The trumpet courtesy of Calvin, of course. That was the first of a few pranks that day, all well planned and all good natured. A few days after we were again given the chance to exercise our mischievous side with the arrive of April Fool's day. The most notable prank is easier shown than told. (See photos below.)

