

Necessities

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [November 3, 2009](#) issue

My house burned down a month ago, so today I walked to the bookstore and bought myself a dictionary, a Bible, and a calendar.

What else does one need, really? For Malvolio, in that dark cell, it was candle, paper, and ink. That was his sacred trinity by which he could be sane again—or at least be proven so.

Me, I need to make sure of the meanings of words, then to invest them with holiness, and then to know when I might use them (or *utilize* them, as an administrator would say).

On Monday, February 2, I plan to employ *perspicacious*. Then, on Easter, *resurrection* is scheduled for its grand debut. And so on. I'm saving *horror* for Halloween, and *thanksgiving* for Thanksgiving.

Among poets of old, this was known as *decorum*. Proper words in proper places. On the anniversary of the fire, I will simply say, *damn*.