

HILLTOPICS

Saint Lawrence Seminary

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The Spiritual Message

*To dream the impossible dream; to fight the unbeatable foe;
To bear with unbearable sorrow; to run where the brave dare not go;
To right the unrightable wrong; to love pure and chaste from afar;
To try when your arms are too weary; to reach the unreachable star.*

*This is my quest: to follow that star, no matter how hopeless, no matter how far;
To fight for the right without question or pause;
To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause.
And I know, if I'll only be true to this glorious quest,
That my heart will lie peaceful and calm when I'm laid to my rest.
And the world will be better for this, that one man, scorned and covered with
scars,
Still strove with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable star!*

The above lyrics is of the song, "The Impossible Dream," from Man of La Mancha, a musical inspired by the 17th century novel, Don Quixote, by the Spanish novelist, playwright, and poet, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616). In the scene where this musical number takes place, Don Quixote, explains to Aldonza, his lover, the ideals that he follows and the quest that he is on. It is a very powerful song that, when sung with vocal skill and dramatic conviction, never fails to stir the heart and uplift the spirit.

For this issue of the *Hilltopics*, the editors chose "Dare to Dream" as the theme. It hearkens to the song aforementioned. It challenges us to be audacious, bold, and courageous in imagining a desired end, a brighter future, or lofty goal for ourselves, for our family, or for our community. At SLS, our students are in a safe, nurturing, and conducive environment where they can dare to dream and begin to work their way towards making their dream a reality. But that alone is not enough. We also challenge our students to align their dreams to God's will for them. We may have lofty dreams for ourselves, but God's will for each and every one of us is loftier and far greater than we can ever imagine or even dare to dream. So, dare to dream, alright. But align that dream with God's will. Let that be our quest. Only then can we truly reach the unreachable star!

-Fr. Jey Garribay

New Year, New Me

By: Alan Mora ('26)

For thousands of years, Asian cultures have celebrated Tết, otherwise known as the Lunar New Year. It is considered one of the most anticipated holidays in Asian culture, and we here at SLS, celebrate as well.

The Lunar New Year is similar to New Years Day, however, it follows a different calendar. The cultures that celebrate Tết are those that have historically used the lunar calendar to track time before the global switch to the calendar we use today. The lunar calendar is based on the moon's cycles. The celebration takes place on the first new moon of the year, which usually occurs between January 21st and February 20th. The calendar aligns with a 12-year cycle, with each year signified by its own animal. This year is the Year of the Snake. The snake symbolizes a period of renewal and transformation. With the shedding of its skin, a snake embodies the idea of rebirth- a new year with endless possibilities, where we can dare to dream. Minh Nguyen ('27) says, "The most important aspect of this event is the new age and the possibility of new and unforeseen chances. We leave the past year and embrace the change and challenges that the New Year brings."

At SLS the Tết celebration began with a banquet in the refectory. Students and staff enjoyed an authentic meal prepared by Dean of Students and Activities Director, Mr. Quan Nguyen, the Vietnamese seniors, and all of the Korean students. The Vietnamese students cooked up pork chops with rice and vegetables while the Koreans made SoTteok-SoTteok, which are skewered sausages and rice cakes. Fr. Zoy Garibay handed out the traditional red envelopes to each students, these are a staple of the Lunar New Year celebration, and signifies good luck and prosperity. Lastly, some of the Vietnamese students performed a dragon dance in the chapel. At the end, the students exited and head outside to watch some fireworks. Emmanuel Esson ('26) said, "The fireworks were absolutely immaculate." Teacher and junior dorm supervisor, Mr. Bryce Gassner added, "I think that it is a beautiful opportunity for some of the students to share their culture with the rest of the school. You can't really go wrong with some good food, some fireworks, and even some lucky money to top it off." Thus, the celebration came to an end, and the year of the snake began.



Sunday, February 9, 2025, Super Bowl LIX took place at the Caesars Super Dome in New Orleans, featuring an intense matchup between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs. To celebrate, each class held individual parties and prepared different foods: the freshmen made pizzas, the sophomores created walking tacos, the juniors grilled burgers and hot dogs, and while the seniors served wings and fried rice. The game itself was exciting, but for many students, the halftime show featuring Kendrick Lamar was the highlight. The performance garnered a lot of attention, as Kendrick is a popular artist among young people. Hoa Duong ('25) shared, "My favorite part was watching Kendrick Lamar perform during halftime and eating the wings." In the end, the Eagles dominated the Chiefs, winning 40-22; many of the students seem to enjoy seeing Kansas City lose. The night was a perfect mix of football, food, and fun, making it a memorable experience for everyone.

SUPERBOWL

By: Said Villa ('25)



ReUNION GAME

By: Diego Soto ('25)

Saturday, February 1st, SLS hosted the Annual 3-on-3 Alumni Tournament. After the JV and varsity basketball teams great victories, the SLS alumni, from thirteen classes, came together to compete against other in a tournament. The oldest class to participate was the Class of 2000, which included varsity soccer coach Sebastian Vervack. The youngest class was the recently graduated Class of 2024.

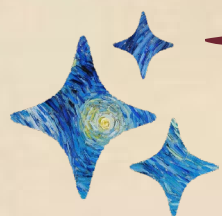
The competition on the court was fierce, and it seemed that many of the alumnus hadn't lost their touch for basketball. The championship game featured the Class of 2023 against the Class of 2003. After 12 hard-fought minutes, the Class of 2023 emerged victorious. Following the win, Eugenio Tinoco ('23) said, "It was an amazing experience watching my team win with a buzzer-beating basket. I enjoyed coming back to the Hill and reuniting with my brothers." Aidan Arredondo ('23) added, "It's great to come back and give it your all with your former teammates. There were moments of nostalgia and intensity. I only hope we have more championship wins than the Class of 2008."

To conclude the event, all were invited to a pizza social in the canteen, where everyone could bond and catch up. None of this would have been possible without Mr. Francisco Saucedo ('02) running the brackets or the awesome alumni turnout. The tournament is a fantastic way to bring alumni together and to show their talent on the court.



WOW!





Teacher Takeover

By: *Jonah Lim ('26)*

Br. Jerry Cornish has stepped in to teach Freshman Religion and Art, replacing retired Br. Neal Plale. With his cheerful and optimistic character, Br. Jerry brings a unique and adventurous teaching style to his classes. He practices student-centered learning, which enables students to engage with learning and aspire them to learn even more. Furthermore, he believes that his students should "be comfortable in the classroom and know that what they say won't be made fun of." As a religion teacher, Br. Jerry provides students with time to reflect on how God is working in their daily lives and how they can express their experiences. Critical thinking, active learning, and real-world experiences are key points that Br. Jerry emphasizes with his students. To make class enjoyable, Br. Jerry incorporates humor that enlightens the minds of the new freshmen. Not only does Br. Jerry teach, but he also supervises the gym, canteen, and library evenings and weekends. Most students are delighted to hear his one-liners, "Hey, how are you doing, man?" Being active around campus allows him to get to know the students and to share God's love to others.



New Staff

By: *Cristian Cruz ('25)*

Saint Lawrence Seminary started off the New Year with new additions to the SLS community, with the introduction of new staff members, Fr. Birhanu Lema Syouem and Mr. Nathaniel Hartwig. Fr. Birhanu has joined the student supervisor team and will assist with student spiritual direction. He was ordained eight years ago and previously worked at St. Mary High School in Ethiopia. A fun fact about Fr. Birhanu, he has traveled to many places around the world and is fluent in multiple languages, including his native language, Amharic (which is similar to Hebrew) as well as Hebrew, English, French, and Italian. Fr. Birhanu said, "This is a new experience for me. My goal is to guide everyone and to help out in any way possible." He also mentioned, "The weather is a surprise for me, coming from Ethiopia, where there is no snow."

Occasionally, on weekends, the Hilltoppers are supervised by extra staff. Mr. Nathaniel Hartwig has been discerning the priesthood and believed that SLS would be a great opportunity for him. He learned about the school from Mr. Bryce Gassner. His first impression of SLS was fantastic, and he said, "I have always heard that the Church was universal, and attending Fr. Baudry's ordination truly confirmed that." May God continue to guide Fr. Birhanu as he leads the Hilltoppers, and may Mr. Hartwig's journey be one of deep understanding so his dreams come true.



Fr. Birhanu Syouem



Mr. Nathaniel Hartwig

Called by Christ

By: ThienHanh Mai ('25)



Dare to dream, and to have the courage to pursue your goals, even when they seem impossible. Brother Baudry Metangmo has done just that, he has accomplished his dream of becoming a priest. Brother, now Father, Baudry was ordained into the priesthood on January 25th, and held his first Mass that very day, at Holy Cross Church, in Mt. Calvary. The Mass of Ordination was a great celebration, and people from all over the world gathered to witness his ordination. It was the perfect cultural blend of religion and celebration. The choir sang Cameroonian songs, as well as, a French psalm, making the Mass come alive with energy and spirit.

Father Baudry had a spark for religious life as a child, but that spark faded for a time before being reignited when he came to America to attend college. While in college, he found himself "sharing his faith with many others on campus." This is when he felt a calling to the priesthood, as well as a special calling to the deep brotherhood of the Capuchins. He felt a profound need to chase the "sense of brotherhood and the mission of serving the Church." He began his formal theological studies in 2018.

However, a journey like this does not come without challenges. Father Baudry explained, he felt he disappointed his family by sacrificing married life and instead pursuing a life of total detachment. Contrary to what he believed, his family supported his dream and even encouraged him to pursue religious life. Father Baudry also had many mentors that encouraged him to push through his struggles. One of his mentors, Father Truong, remarked that when Fr. Baudry hugged his family and thanked the Archbishop, "time froze; it was so beautiful and heartwarming."

Father Baudry also has a deep passion in music, which played a huge role in his vocation and discernment. He met people in church choirs and barbershop groups that helped him express his love for God in a prayerful way. The SLS choir performed one of his original compositions, "In the Cross of Christ," arranged by Mr. Daniel Matthew. Father Baudry said, "Music was always a way for me to express my love, joys, and sorrows to the Lord. I continue to write music as part of my service to the Church."

Father Baudry has worked long and hard on this journey, and the fruits of his labor paid off. He stated, "I know my own inadequacies and weaknesses, and dread wasting such an amazing gift from God." After many sacrifices and hardships, Father Baudry finally reached his dream. He said, "What are you looking for?" as a reminder to pursue your dreams, and to keep God at the center of all your plans.







On a chilly winter Wednesday, exclamations of victory and groans of defeat were heard around campus, but most of all, shouts of laughter filled the air as the SLS students competed in the 52nd Annual Winter Carnival. During the morning competitions, fraternities competed against each other in soccer, football, ultimate Frisbee, and, most anticipated of all, broomball. Thanks to the hard work and efforts of the maintenance staff, the arena for broom ball was frozen and ready for the students to slip and slide around on. Other events that morning included cup pong and the beanbag toss, with students showing off their throwing accuracy.

After an amazing lunch, the students faced off against the staff in a volleyball tournament, where every year the intense but friendly rivalry was rekindled and burned throughout the gym. This year, the students were finally able to taste victory against the staff, after many years of defeat. Next up was 3 vs. 3 basketball ensued, followed by knockout and the 3-point contest with students showing off their “ball” game in these competitions. Simultaneously, other students showed off their gaming prowess in Super Smash Bros. and Switch games, while others tested their intellectual abilities in a spelling bee. The afternoon concluded in the gym with Rat Race.

Fraternity 8 was able to snag first place by 4 points, followed by Frat 3 and frat 12, one point away from each other, making it a very close fight. Cristian Cruz, a senior of the winning fraternity shared his experience, “My favorite event this year was Ultimate Frisbee, because it was a tough competition and the points for our team just kept coming. My favorite part overall was definitely winning first place over all the other frats. Seeing my frat come together and show great teamwork really lit that fire in me.” Another student, Alan Mora commented, “The Winter Carnival, as always, was a wonderful experience. My favorite event was...hmm... dinner! Those ribs were amazing!” Overall, this year’s 52nd Winter Carnival was a great success among the students, and even though we did not have snow, the spirit of the Winter Carnival was alive in the hearts of all the students.

Winter Carnival

By: Joshua Choi ('26)



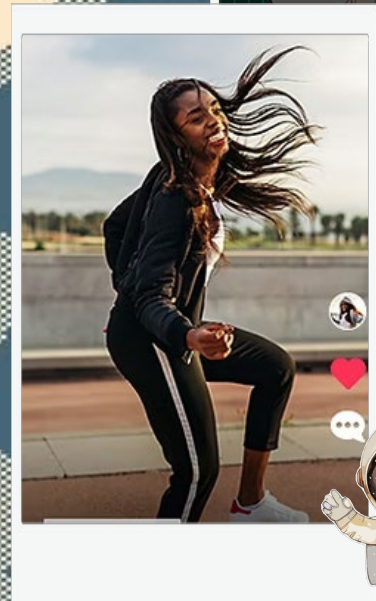
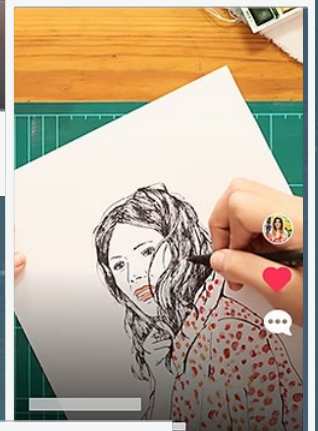
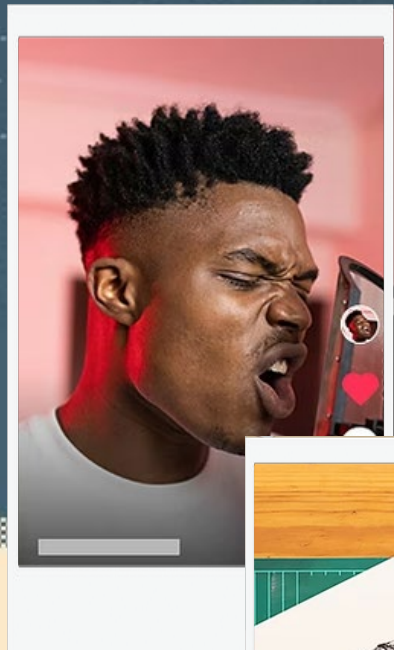


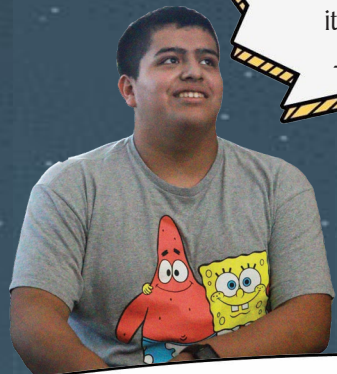
LIVING THE NAME

By: Max Trinh ('25)

With everything going on in the world right now, 2025 seems to bring an unpredictable future for us all. Social media is a great way to discover and learn about what's happening around the globe. Among the younger generation, social media is the number one way to obtain news. However, what happens if social media suddenly cannot provide the news or any kind of entertainment? TikTok, one of the most commercially marketed social media platforms in recent years, was briefly banned from users across the United States. On January 19th, users were no longer able to access the app or install the TikTok app. However, in less than 24 hours after the ban was initiated, it was lifted, and users were able to return to their carefree entertainment. Despite the lifted use ban TikTok still cannot be installed on devices from the app store. As a result, phones with TikTok still installed on them are listed on eBay for tens of thousands of dollars. The absurdity of the situation seems to stem from TikTok's recent portrayal as a national security threat, with one source even referring to it as a "vehicle for espionage".

TikTok is not the only app currently unavailable for installation. TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, owns another popular app, CapCut, the beloved video editing software used by many of the students at SLS. Like TikTok, it can still be accessed by users who already have it installed, but it can no longer be downloaded due to legal restrictions. For now, newly inaugurated 47th President of the United States, Donald Trump, has postponed the ban. The whole situation has sparked chaos across many social media platforms. Only time will tell what will happen to the future of TikTok, CapCut, and many other apps facing similar limitations. What's trending on social media today may ultimately lead to the downfall of some of the most popular platforms, but with anticipation comes patience. As we embrace this virtue, we can reflect all the wonderful things these platforms have bestowed upon us and acknowledge, with gratitude, the entertainment, efficiency, and joy they have brought to many.





• "My dream was to bench two plates and make it to Dean's List."

- Jerry Escamila ('25)



"When I was a freshman, I dreamed of being a doctor when I grew up."

- Thienhanh Mai ('25)



"I want to bench 135, squat 255, and be a conference placer for wrestling."

- Thomas Kim ('25)

SENIOR SPILL

By: Christopher Vu ('26)

"I want to become a dentist and get rich."

- Khoa Nguyen ('25)



• "My dream as a freshman was to be a police officer and become rich."

- Shane Sequeira ('25)



Counselor's Advice

By: Mr. Sy Vanissaveth



During my long drive back from Florida over Christmas break, a song called *Champion* by Carrie Underwood, featuring Ludacris popped into my Pandora playlist. The part I enjoyed was the rap bridge by Luda himself:

"The C is for the courage I possess through the trauma. H is for the hurt, but it's all for the honor. A is for my attitude working through the patience. Money comes and goes, so the M is for motivation. Gotta stay consistent, the P is for persevere. The I is for integrity, innovative career. The O is optimistic, open and never shut. And the N is necessary 'cause I'm never givin' up" (Underwood & Ludacris, 2018).

If you ask any successful entrepreneur, athlete, singer, and more about their secret to success, they would almost always have an answer that includes dreaming big and working hard.

At SLS, we want to give you the tools so that you can DARE TO DREAM. The academic workload, extracurricular activities, ministry opportunities, dormitory living, diverse cultural community, and spiritual life guidance are all building blocks to dreaming big, working hard, and being a champion.

When you dare to dream, you aim beyond expectations. Acting on expectations leads to self-fulfilling outcomes; it's like failing a test you didn't study for because you knew you would fail anyway. On the other hand, acting on the outcome you want is when you truly dare to dream because you are hopeful of the results; and if it doesn't go your way, you remain resilient, and optimistic, and try again or try something different to achieve your dream.

As you dare to dream, remember to keep God at the forefront: "The mind of a person plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9, NASB tr.).

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DARE TO DREAM

What is the point of life? Why do we even bother to get up, brush our teeth, eat breakfast, and drag ourselves through the motions of another day? Whether you agree or not, the reason why we continue to wake up and put up with the hardships of life, is because of our hopes and dreams. Each and every one of us has a dream, which holds enough weight to make us continue to strive for success. Without dreams our lives might feel like an endless cycle of hollow existence. So, dare to dream.

As teenagers, our dreams are often dismissed as naive or foolish. While true, what some fail to realize is that, without that foolishness to continue dreaming, our lives may lack purpose. As *Hilltopics* editors, we urge you to never let go of that spark, however naive or foolish it might appear, hold on to your dreams and tenacity. So, to all the Hilltoppers, continue to chase your hopes and dream and persevere. Dare to dream.

from Justin & Thomas



Submit your artwork to
hilltopics@stlawrence.edu
to be on our next Issue's
postcard!

This issue's postcard artwork
is contributed by Will Nguyen ('25)

