

# HILTOPICS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** A Spiritual Message
- 4** Forensics
- 5** Introduce the Play  
National Honor Society
- 6** Solo & Ensemble
- 7** Talent Show
- 8** Spring Sports  
Teacher Takeover
- 9** Peru Trip
- 1**  Senior Spill
- 11** What's Hot on Social Media?  
Counselor's Advice

**2**



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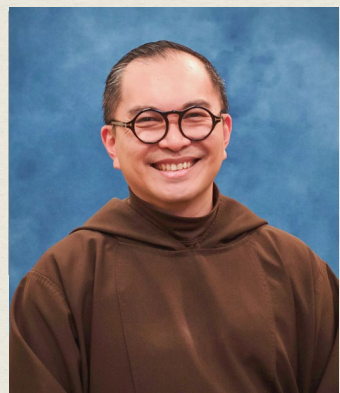
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# Spiritual Message

Earlier this month, members of the faculty and supervisory staff gathered for the third quarter evaluation of the students. Students are evaluated eight times during the school year: at the middle and then at the end of each quarter. During the evaluation, the teachers and dorm supervisors, go through the list of students from the freshmen to the seniors. As the names of the students are called, the faculty and staff would share their observations and make their comments. They would highlight areas wherein the student has shown progress and/or underscore areas in which the student needs improvement. It is a meticulous process but a necessary one, nonetheless, because it is one way of ascertaining the student's growth or lack thereof.

By the time this issue of *Hilltopics* is published, we will already be in the penultimate (fourth) week of Lent. The following week would be Holy Week. Perhaps it is time that we do our own evaluation. Perhaps we need to take a moment to look back to the beginning of Lent and make our own observation on our prayer (both public and private) and penitential practices (fasting, abstinence, alms giving). Perhaps, we need to probe our heart and examine our conscience and be honest in answering questions, such as: Have I truly turned away from sin and bore the fruits of repentance? Have I been steadfast in resisting temptations? Have I have shown progress in my spiritual life, strengthened in my faith with God, and increased my charity towards my neighbor? If the answer is "Yes," well done! However, if the answer is "No," fear not! It's never too late.

The Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent-Year C (Luke 13: 1-9) reminds us that God is a God of patience, a God of mercy, and a God of second chances. Like the gardener in the parable, who did not hasten to cut the fig tree that does not bear fruit but was willing to examine the soil on which the fig tree was planted, fertilize the ground and cultivate it, God does not give up on us. God gives us another chance to make things right and to produce the fruits of repentance. Let us not take those chances for granted. If God does not give up on us, then neither should we give up on God, nor on others, nor on ourselves.

-Fr. Zoy Garribay





# FOUR 'N SIX?

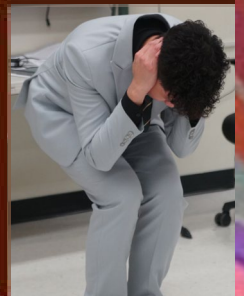
*By: Christian Casilla ('26)*



Since mid-February, the Forensics team has been busy attending competitions every other Saturday and Monday. Each team member, whether working with a group in the group interpretation category, or going solo in poetry, prose, or farrago, practices every week to improve and to progress into the top four or five in their category. Mr. Martin Vu ('17), the Forensics coach, commented, "With the Forensics season more than halfway through, I am happy with my team's performance. We knew coming into the season, we were already way behind, however, even with the delayed start, I am very proud of how far the students have come."

Forensics is a growing activity at SLS, as more and more underclassmen are starting to gain interest. Tam Tran ('28), a new member stated, "To me, Forensics is a way for me to improve my orating in a way that is enjoyable." Some students have thrived in their respective categories such as Prose, Solo Acting, Group Interpretation...etc. Justin Tran ('25), the Forensics team captain said, "I'm proud to see how each of the members on our team are improving as speakers, even though many of them are new to Forensics this year."

Currently, the team is preparing for the state festival in Madison and increasing their practice times. Mr. Vu said, "As for State, we have until April, but I am confident we will have two or more entries make it to the final rounds. I look forward to helping the seniors finish off their year strong and pushing the other three classes to grow as speakers." Forensics is not just waking up at 6 am on a Saturday to "yap" about problems, it is an opportunity to develop public speaking skills. In addition, it provides a chance to gain confidence in front of an audience and do your best for the judges.





# UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

*By: Max Trinh ('25)*



One of the most anticipated events every spring at SLS is the play, performed by students. The play is coordinated by Mrs. Andrea School and Mr. Martin Vu ('17). This year's play features a particularly interesting type of performance – a musical without music. The comedy, *Bringing Down the House*, by Todd Wallinger, is about an abandoned theater in lower Manhattan and an up-and-coming musical team of people who are trying to keep it from being demolished.

The play will be performed on Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, through Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. Auditions to find and choose the performers took place in January, and practice began in mid-February. Mrs. School stated, "Since we have many new students this year, we started the first two weeks of play practice with acting classes."

My favorite thing about doing a play or musical is seeing the transformation that students go through. This is what I experienced in high school, so I want to share that experience with others." The student actors put a lot of effort into preparing and executing the performance in the most successful and entertaining way. ThienHanh Mai ('25), the lead actor, said, "I'm looking forward to having fun with the underclassmen. This is a promising bunch." Whether it is helping with sound design, operating the lights and curtains, keeping things running smoothly backstage, or undertaking the roles in the spotlight, the students dedicate themselves passionately, sharing in the enthusiasm and having plenty of fun!

# SCHOLARS SOCIETY

*By: Said Villa ('25)*

The National Honor Society (NHS) is a prestigious organization that recognizes high school junior and senior students who demonstrate excellence in scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Saint Lawrence recently held its annual NHS induction ceremony, where staff and students gathered to celebrate and honor eleven new members induction into this distinguished organization. Among the inductees was Jonah Lim ('26), who expressed his enthusiasm for the role, stating, "I hope to serve my underclassmen, peers and demonstrate responsibility in the upcoming school year."

As NHS members, students take on additional important responsibilities, including assisting underclassmen in study hall and tutoring those who need academic support. This year, Mr. Krieg delivered an inspiring speech about the significance of effort and how it is what drives us forward. His words encouraged students to apply dedication and perseverance in all aspects of life. Additionally, senior members shared speeches on the key attributes of an NHS member, reinforcing the values of leadership, integrity, and service.

Inductee, Alan Mora ('26) stated, "I hope to better myself for the service of my peers and for the improvement of the common good. The ceremony not only honored the achievements of the new inductees but also served as a reminder of the commitment and impact NHS members have within the school community."



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5



# Ya Gotta Know...

By: ThienHanh Mai ('25)

## HOW TO PERFORM!

The District Solo and Ensemble Festival is one of the most anticipated event for the music students at SLS. It allows an opportunity for students to display their musical talents, which are then judged and critiqued. Students may choose to either perform a solo or join a group performance, where multiple people can showcase their talents.

However, this year's competition was very different - Saint Lawrence Seminary hosted the competition, which brought 19 different school and 590 competitors to the Hill, as well as, countless directors, accompanists, and spectators. Behind the scenes, there was a lot of preparation from the Wisconsin School Music Association, Mr. Daniel Matthew, the SLS event organizer, and many student and staff volunteers. Mr. Matthew, the school's music director, did most of the work leading up to hosting the event, such as, assigning locations and times of each performance. Mr. Matthew stated, "Hosting the event this year, was definitely a challenge. The event's planning actually started last year. Many people helped with organizing and running the event, especially Mr. Van Asten, who stepped up in my absence, because of the birth of my son the week leading up to the competition. Despite all of the challenges, the event turned out very well, and I'm proud of the students for their hard work and their accomplishments at the competition."

The students must put in a lot of time and effort to prepare for their performances. The efforts paid off for the students of SLS; Twenty-two out of the 46 events performed by the Hilltoppers advanced to the state level. Vocalist Justin Tran ('25) advanced all five of his pieces to state, an extraordinary accomplishment! This year, there were a lot of performances from all genres and styles. A group of juniors performed a vocal ensemble of "Shenandoah" and qualified for the state competition. Alan Gonzalez ('26), a member of the group said, "Although the preparation was a huge struggle, we were consistently better each time, and the final performance reflected our hard work." Seniors Antonio Brand-Gonzalez, Said Villa, Cristian Cruz, and Jerry Escamilla joined together to perform a piece called, "Two Cuban Dances", a saxophone quartet. They also qualified for the state competition. Cristian said his group's performance was, "nerve-racking, but we eventually found the groove and performed as a group, rather than as individuals."

The Solo and Ensemble competition brought many new people to the Hill. The SLS community, which includes students, parent volunteers, as well as, teachers (who prepared their classrooms to be used as performance sites), helped the event come together. The students and volunteers worked hard to make the day successful and exciting.





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# LIGHTS, CAMERA, SHOWTIME!

By: Jonah Lim ('26)

It's that time of year again when SLS hosts its annual talent show! This year's event, held on March 29th, was organized by the senior class. Students had the opportunity to audition and showcase their unique and sometimes bizarre talents. These talents ranged from impressive musical performances and synchronized group dances to soccer ball dribbling and clever card tricks. Every year, the talent show has a theme, and this year's was inspired by the Korean TV series *Squid Game*. In the TV show, contestants play deadly games for a chance to win money in the end. However, in the SLS talent show, the performers competed for the grand prize of canteen money.

The hosts for this year's talent show were Diego Soto ('25) and Shane Sequeira ('25), who decided which performers would be eliminated from the game. Many musically talented students took the stage, including Chris Vu ('26) and Joshua Choi ('26), who impressed the audience with their upbeat piano duet. Both performed the same piece at Solo & Ensemble and noted, "This piece allowed us to have fun together and to share our musical talent with the SLS community." Another highlight of the night was Noah Nguyen ('28), who wowed the crowd with his famous yo-yo skills. He had previously performed the same routine at the 2024 Virginia State Yo-Yo Contest. All the performers hoped they would win the grand prize, making the night both thrilling and unforgettable, but only one of them walked away victorious: Noah Nguyen.



7



With spring approaching, the SLS students are gearing up for an exciting spring sports season, which includes baseball, track, tennis, and golf. The track and baseball teams, in particular, began practice on Monday, March 17th. Each coach has set some lofty goals for the season.

Baseball began after school on March 17th, with the first of nine games scheduled for April 1st. Coach Matthew Bahr stated, "I'm looking forward to seeing new faces on the team after losing players due to graduation. My goal is to increase our hits per game, by focusing on solid contact and getting on base more often through hits, rather than relying on walks and avoiding strikeouts." Track also started on March 17th, with six meets scheduled for the season. Coach Phil McCabe, alongside new assistant coach, Peter Hall, is focused on individual improvement. Coach McCabe said, "Track has many events, so there's something for everyone. Athletes can specialize in one event and excel. It's also a bonus to have so many teammates to practice against and to support each other during the meets."

Each player and coach have their own set of goals, but with hard work and determination, our athletes can rise to the demands of their sport while learning how to work together as a team. With both track and baseball, emphasizing teamwork and pushing each other to improve, this will be key to a successful season.

## SLS GAME ON!

*By: Christopher Vu ('26)*

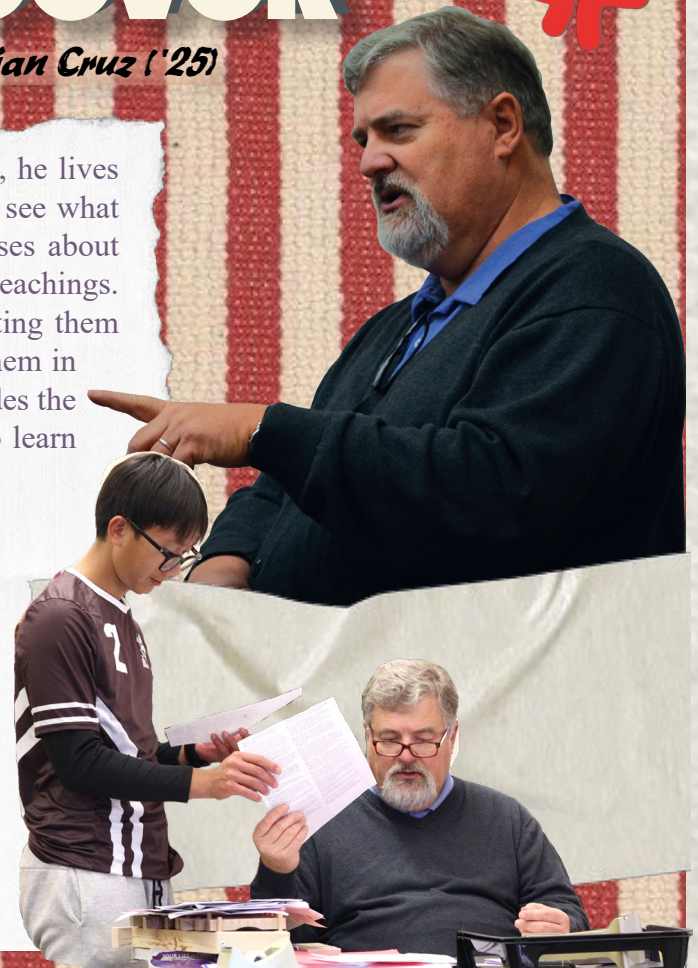


## TEACHER TAKEOVER

*By: Cristian Cruz ('25)*

Dr. Michael Donahou doesn't just teach religion here at SLS, he lives it. Upon entering the classroom, the Hilltoppers eagerly wait to see what he has planned for the class. As Dr. Donahou teaches his classes about morality and virtues, he incorporates pop culture to reflect Jesus' teachings. He often uses social media, playing movies or songs, and relating them to the lesson, asking students creative questions and engaging them in class. Dr. Donahou's doctorate degree in Biblical Studies, provides the students advanced opportunities to cover religious topics and to learn from a well-educated person.

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Donahou is well-known for his own ministry, helping others. His voluntary work in the wood shop has brought joy to many kids at Christmas time, from making airplanes to hippos. Dr. Donahou stated, "In my classroom I believe I bring creativity to help reach my students and make the course work real for them. As for woodworking, I try to think outside the box. I offer my ideas to Mr. Bartel and he is extremely good at bringing up the logistics so we can actually make the item." Through his passion for teaching, creativity in the classroom, and dedication to serving others, Dr. Donahou continues to inspire his students both academically and beyond.





# A Whole New World

By: Alan Mora ('26)

It has been six years since SLS students have participated in a week-long exchange program with Colegio Santa Ana and traveled to Lima, Perú. Mr. Francisco Saucedo and Mrs. Nicole Peterson Pollard accompanied eight students on the trip to Peru. The journey was no easy task. The SLS travelers woke up at 3 A.M. on Friday, March 7th, to catch their flight out of Chicago, O'Hare. From there, they flew to Miami, Florida and hurried to their connecting flight to Lima, Perú.

Initially, the thought of going to school during Winter Break didn't seem very appealing, but the opportunity of meeting new friends and experience an entirely new country made up for that. At 10 PM the SLS group was welcomed by their host families upon their arrival in Perú. This late arrival made for a long travel day, and everyone needed rest. Alex Regalado ('26) stated, "I was a bit nervous because I had never traveled outside of the U.S. before and was pleasantly surprised how welcoming everyone was." Over the weekend, some traveled to Punta Hermosa, one of 43 districts in the Province of Lima. Here, the main attraction were the beaches. Others visited Plaza San Miguel, a large mall with shops, food and entertainment.

While the SLS students had their own little adventures with their host families, they also traveled together to represent the SLS at Santa Ana. On their various excursions, they visited areas such as, the Historical Center of Lima and Barranco. There, they experienced the architecture and learned about the history of Perú. They also tried different foods, including Ceviche, Pollo a la Brasa (Rotisserie chicken), and churros.

During the week, the SLS students attended classes in different grades, and experienced the differences between the Peruvian and U.S. schools. In Perú, the teachers switch classrooms during the school day instead of the students. They have two recesses each day, along with optional lunch. While in Perú, the SLS students taught the Peruvians about the U.S. and American schools. The juniors gave presentations about the different U.S. regions, such as the Midwest, explaining historical sites and attractions, as well as a presentation on American sports. The seniors presented about SLS and the U.S. government. For fun, both soccer and volleyball tournaments were held between the SLS and Santa Ana students. Mrs. Peterson says, "They embraced us like family. When it was time to say goodbye, there were even a few symbolic tears. It was a truly an unforgettable experience, and now, the Hilltopper family feels a little bit bigger."





# SENIOR SPILL

*By: Diego Soto ('25)*



I've learned how to cut hair, from alumni and friends, throughout my journey at SLS. I've also learned that by being part of a community, you can make a lot of friends.

- Hoa Duong ('25)

In my years at SLS, I've learned how to make friends faster and how to create and maintain conversations. I've also learned how to manage my time better, with the homework we are given, while still having a great time outside of school.

- Tony Nguyen ('25)

I've learned how to deal with homesickness by staying busy, and SLS has helped me become neater. I would say these tips are very important for everyday life at SLS.

- Angel Guerro ('25)

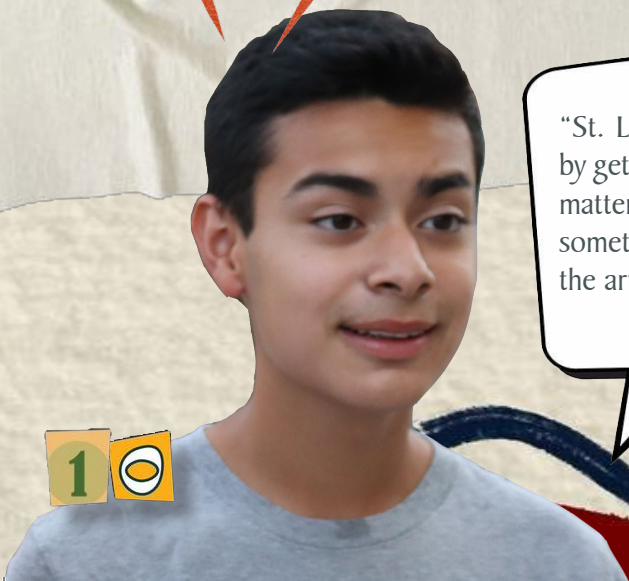
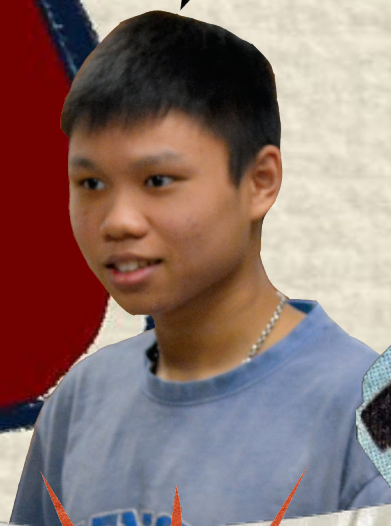


Staying on top of my work has helped me be more responsible. Here at SLS, I've learned about other cultures. My friends have even taught me some of their languages. I've also developed a new interest in sketching because of some of my classmates. I would encourage anyone to get out there, be ambitious, so you learn things outside of school that helps life beyond SLS.

- Max Trinh ('25)

"St. Lawrence has helped me create bonds by getting out of my comfort zone. It doesn't matter if you have experience or not; just try something new, like sports, band, or even the art club."

- Said Villa ('25)





# Again

By: Joshua Choi ('26)



The world keeps spinning, and so does the internet. Recently on a social media, there has been a resurgence of historical videos, with the challenge, to recreate these videos as closely as possible, and post them with titles like "That video's 99% accuracy". A newly trending video in this craze features a student from 2013, ranting to a teacher about how she does not care about the class and telling her not to just "hand out a friggin' packet, yo." This video has gone viral over the student's demeanor, as many can relate to it. Students have commented on social media agreeing with the student and validating reasons for his anger. This video draws more attention to the deteriorating school system and some teachers who don't care about students' education. Hopefully, there are still many teachers who do care, but right now, the focus is on the bad teachers that don't.

Something else that has seen a resurgence is the song *Again* by Fetty Wap. Influencers are using *Again* in random historical event videos, fantasizing about how these epochal events unfolded while this song plays in the background. Overall, the internet and social media can seem very absurd at times, but these absurdities ultimately connect us all together.

## Counselor's Advice

By: Mr. Sy Vanissaveth



"This is it! It's show time! Dear Lord, please don't let me mess up; let everything go well." Have you ever had something like this run through your head when it's time to perform on a test, at work, on game night, during solo ensemble, or on opening night for the school play or musical? Show Time is your moment when you transition into the limelight of life—ready to take on a fresh challenge, try something new, and perform. For my seniors, you will soon be transitioning into the next chapter of your life—college, workforce, and chasing your dreams. It can be a scary yet exciting time as you witness within yourself growth, strength, humility, courage, and faith.

Whether it's your first or fourth year at SLS, you've been preparing yourself through practice, mistakes, failures, successes, and soaking in the knowledge from your teachers, dorm supervisors, and coaches. Trust the work and effort you put into your skills and knowledge, but most importantly, trust that God will be there with you to help guide and keep you. Listen to what God has to say in Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified nor dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (NASB tr.).

With God by your side, take advantage of the preparation phase at SLS. Whether it's preparing for college, a sport, a test, or a play production, take steps to build your confidence, strengthen your skills, and trust that God has equipped you for your next journey. You will feel nervous, unsure, maybe even scared, and that's okay—it comes with the unknown territory. But remember, the stage is yours, and God is with you every step of the way.






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# SHOW TIME

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postcard!

This issue's postcard artwork  
is contributed by Bik Hmung ('26)



In life, everything has a good and/or a bad outcome. It's programmed into the very fabric of our existence. However, one of the most overlooked double-edged daggers in life is comfort. Ever since a young age, whenever we are presented with two options, our bodies and minds generally pick the easier option. While sometimes this may be the right choice, most of the time it is not. There is a reason we remember the 10-page essay we had to write in high school, but not the time when we bummed out on the couch after school and watched TV for the day. We usually remember the hard challenges in life because they put us in a position where we had the opportunity to shine. These challenges gave us the chance to be the "lead" role in the play called "Life" and show our potential. It is only through these experiences that we can grow as people. These small moments of "show time" are what cause us to become better, smarter, and stronger individuals. Seize these moments when they crash upon us, for if we don't grow into better people, this divided world that we live in will only continue to be divided.

*from Justin & Thomas*

