

HILTOPICS

Saint Lawrence Seminary

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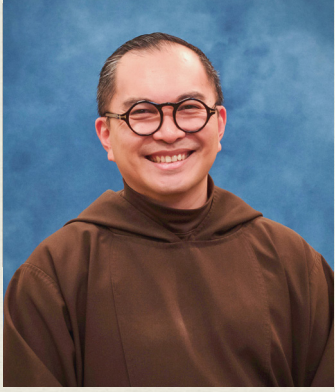
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Spiritual Message



Bells can mean many things to many people. In the context of the Church, for example, the sound of church bells signify a call to worship. When church bells ring, they become like the voice of heaven calling the faithful on earth to come to church and worship the Lord. Church bells toll to announce the arrival of a deceased person to the church in order to be commended to God, its creator, before being laid to its final resting place. In light of the recent conclave, the bells in St. Peter's Basilica ring as the new Pope makes his first appearance to the public on the balcony of the basilica and gives his solemn blessing "*urbi et orbi*" (to the city and the world). In the context of school, the sound of a school bell marks the beginning and the end of the school day, of every class period, and of many school activities. In residential schools, such as St. Lawrence Seminary, the sound of school bell early in the morning beckons the students to rise from their beds and be ready for the day's activities: meal, prayer, study, work, recreation, and others. But bells are just an announcement. They are merely a call to action. *Beyond the bells* are activities, events, and other possibilities waiting to be realized, experienced, and relished. Those are things to look forward to and are reasons to be excited. Bells have the capacity to move people into action and direct them to places where they need to be at a particular point in time. In many ways, bells add shape and bring structure to our lives. Bells help ensure, as the Book of Ecclesiastes exhorts, that "there is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens" (Ecc 3:1). Bells help us to live an ordered life. They help us to live a holistic life. They also remind us to be present and to live in the moment *beyond the bells*.

-Fr. Joy Garribay



From Ostbevern to the Hill

By: Diego Sofo ('25)

St. Lawrence Seminary recently welcomed some very special guests to Hill. A group of thirteen students and two chaperones from Ostbevern, Germany, came to experience life as Hilltoppers. SLS has maintained an exchange program with Die Loburg since 1989, offering students a unique opportunity to connect with peers from across the globe and immerse themselves in each other's culture.

The German group's trip began in Chicago, where they spent a few days exploring the city. On Saturday, April 12th, they arrived at SLS and were immediately welcomed with one of the students' favorite traditions: Saturday Night Live (SNL). This SNL featured a volleyball tournament, which the German students had a blast playing alongside their Hilltopper hosts. Johanna Sendker shared, "I really enjoy the activities here, especially SNL. It's so cool to see how connected you guys are as a community." The evening was a huge success, setting the tone for a warm and memorable visit.

Throughout the week, the German students experienced more of Wisconsin. They visited the Fox River Mall in Appleton and traveled to the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Refuge. Louis Szafranski remarked, "I enjoyed the marsh. In general, I really like nature, so going to this place was something I connected with right away. Also, I like the location of St. Lawrence, being on that hill surrounded by beautiful fields is just amazing." Another highlight of the trip was attending a home Milwaukee Brewers baseball game versus the Detroit Tigers at American Family Field. Since baseball is not widely played in Germany, it was an exciting cultural experience. Luckily, the game was exciting, with two home runs in a single inning, and the Brewers won!

To wrap up their time in the U.S., visitors reflected on the differences between Germany and America, specifically the school environment. Elisa Lackmann noted, "The students are very close with each other, and also close with the teachers. The food is different, and every teacher here has their own room, so students move around throughout the day. In Germany, the teachers move to different classrooms." Paul Bolte added, "The food is a lot different, better, and the portions here are bigger. The class schedule is different too; in Germany, we have certain classes only on certain days, but here, students follow the same schedule every day." After their time on campus, the Germans stayed with SLS host families over the Easter break and experienced family life in the U.S.

Overall, the exchange was a success. It was a meaningful opportunity for both the German and SLS students to learn from each other, celebrate their differences, and form lasting friendships. It is through programs like this that the partnership between Die Loburg and St. Lawrence continues to grow stronger, one shared experience at a time.



The Flavors of Home

By: ThienHanh Mai ('25)



As a boarding school, SLS serves as a second home for people from all around the world. The unique blending of cultures in this brotherly community helps students learn more about different countries and their respective cultures. On Saturday April 26, SLS held its annual Cultural Heritage Festival. Students shared a taste of their homes with others. Student groups came together and prepared native dishes that represent their native countries. They then served their creations to those willing to experience the different cultures. The groups split into two meal times: lunch at noon and the dinner meal at six, where there were different cultures represented at each meal.

Fr. Truong's group, representing Vietnam, prepared amazing food. Their main dish was Ca Vien Chien-fried fish balls with garlic sauce, and their dessert was Che Khuc Bach, a sweet milk, cheese, and jelly soup. The student group leader, Tony Nguyen ('25) said, "My group had a lot of fun planning and preparing the food that represents our culture. It reminded me so much of home." Another group, supervised by Mr. Sy Vanissaveth, prepared food from the Thai culture. They prepared a festival of flavors and spices with Thai green curry, lettuce-wrapped chicken, and for dessert, Tub Tim Krob, diced water chestnuts coated in tapioca starch, resembling rubies, served in fragrant coconut milk called Thai Red Ruby. The International Club, supervised by Mr. Jeff Krieg, decided to share the culture of Sweden and served Swedish Meatballs & Hasselback potatoes with a non-alcoholic version of Glogg, which is a spiced fruit drink related to mulled wine. The International Club, especially, has worked all year to spread cultural awareness of countries all over the world, even the smaller countries.

The Cultural Heritage Festival is an event that allows students to highlight their culture to others, which promotes diversity for the whole SLS community. It is also a great way for students to familiarize themselves with cultures from across the world. The event was not only about the food; it was also a celebration. It was a representation of our students, willing to share and familiarize other to cultures they may not otherwise experience. The Festival incorporates all of the beautiful cultures and creates a great sense of community and diversity at SLS.



BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

By: Christian Casilla ('26)



As the school year winds down, many students are waiting for the last few weeks of school to pass them by. Although for the students involved in the school play, *Bringing Down the House*, there is still a lot of work ahead of them. The cast and crew are preparing for their first performance, the first weekend of May. They are putting in long hours rehearsing their lines in the auditorium after study hall, sometimes right up until bedtime.

There is something special about this year's cast. Mrs. Andrea School, the director of the play, explains, "A fun fact about this year's cast, for half of them, this is their first time acting in an SLS stage production. This means that a lot of effort has gone into helping students learn how to create a character and deliver an applause-worthy performance." Despite the challenges, everything seems to be moving in the right direction. Mrs. School continues, "With only a few weeks of rehearsal left before the first performance, things are starting to come together: actors are working on memorizing their lines, crew members are learning their roles, and the big job of who gets what microphone at which point in the story is all taking shape."



While it may seem like a lot of work from the outside, not all students feel the same pressure. Leonel Vera ('27) shares, "I enjoy practice because I get to act out a character that isn't like me. Seeing my friends also act out characters not like them can lead to some funny scenarios, which can make practice really fun and entertaining." However, with the positives come some challenges. Mrs. School anticipates issues due to the late timing of Easter this year. "As Easter falls very late this year, it leaves the cast without rehearsal at a time that is usually critical to the performance." With Easter break only two weeks before opening night, it may slightly delay progress. Still Mrs. School remains optimistic. "It's shaping up to be another great year for theater. I hope everyone is ready to enjoy the talent this school has!" she adds. Regardless, of the obstacles, she expects everything to run smoothly.

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TEACHER TAKEOVER

By: Joshua Choi ('26)



For teachers, the most important thing is for their students to learn. Although many of the teachers at SLS achieve this goal by teaching in class, some take a different approach- teaching “Beyond the Bells” by ensuring students are still learning outside the classroom. Mr. Tim Schultz has a unique teaching style with assignments that help students stay learning even outside the classroom.

Many may identify Mr. Schultz from his spray bottle or his tennis balls, which he uses to jolt sleepy students awake. Maybe they recognize him by his bright personality. However, one thing that is definitely associated with Mr. Schultz is the current events assignments. This weekly assignment requires a student to detail a current article related to politics, public opinion, government, etc. The assignment is an easy way for a student to boost their grade, and it encourages learning beyond the classroom, as students explore articles of current significance and learn more about what is happening in the world around them. Mr. Schultz shared that, “the current events assignments help students connect the past with the present and encourage them to stay e informed, while developing critical thinking skills. It makes learning more engaging and, hopefully, more relevant.” In this way, Mr. Schultz leads students to perform better in his classes through his teaching style that goes “Beyond the Bells.”

Math teachers, Mrs. Jenny Tabbert and Ms. Jamie Stephanie, invite any students with an interest in mathematics to participate in the Math Club and join the competitive team. In Math Club, students work problems that increase in difficulty and range from topics like geometry to probability. Students learn and review math concepts in preparation for two major math meets: one hosted for SLS students, and the other, the Flyway Conference math meet.

For twelve consecutive years now, the first math team from SLS has won the conference math meet. Since Mrs. Stephanie’s arrival in the math department, the team has consistently earned 1st Team All-Conference honors. “I didn’t do anything different from last year because our team is always excellent,” Ms. Stephanie shared.



Academic Weapons

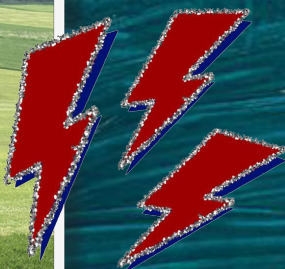
By: Christopher Vu ('26)

Two eight-person teams are selected from the top scorers of the in-house math meet, hosted by Ms. Stephanie and Mrs. Tabbert. The four-team leaders are chosen from last year’s highest scoring juniors, now-seniors. During the SLS math meet, students take four fifteen-minute individual tests and then eight students collaborate on a twenty-minute team test. The team scores are calculated by summing the four individual tests, and the team test; and, the top scorers are grouped into two competitive teams.

Math Club allows students to pursue their interest in mathematics beyond their standard math classes. Whether in Algebra I or Calculus, every participant walks away greater mathematical knowledge.

SLS GAME ON

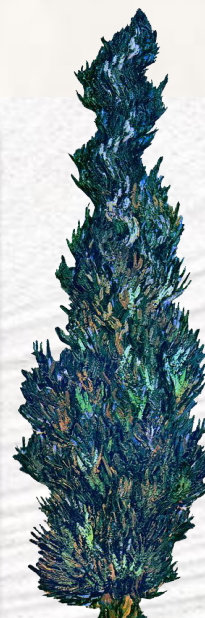
By: Max Trinh ('25)



As the trees start to blossom and the flowers begin to bloom, two spring sports kick off: Golf and Tennis. For both sports, tryouts were held on Monday, March 31st. Golf is a relatively new sport here at SLS, it was established only two years ago. The team's head coach is Mr. Chad Dowland and the assistant coach is Mr. Noel Sippel. "The team is looking good! There's a variety of talent," stated Coach Dowland, "and this season, we're aiming to be more competitive at our meets." Returning varsity golfer, Thomas Kim ('25) said, "My personal goal for this season is to shoot in the 80's on an 18-hole golf course." The team practices on the grounds around St. Fidelis Hall. The team uses the golf simulators in the school's game room for putting practice.

The nets are back up and the rackets strung as the Tennis season starts again. Head coach Mr. Saynousone Vanissaveth along with assistant coach Mr. Tre Waldren are ready to guide the players. Coach V. is optimistic for this season. The tennis team had their first game at home on April 8th. "The first match, like any match, is an opportunity for learning and growing skills, as well as building mental toughness," said Coach V. "The goal for me is to have each player say, 'Yes! I've improved a lot,' – to recognize their improvement, develop a love for the sport that keeps them playing, even after the season ends, and to have fun."

One can say that the players from both golf and tennis are prepared to take on the season, but to do so would be an understatement; they are ecstatic! Only time will show the true potential of what both teams have in store for the season, but one thing's for sure: both coaches and student team members are looking forward to what the season brings. They are all ready to face challenges, be competitive, dream the impossible dream, and most importantly, to have fun.



SENIOR SPILL

By: Said Villa ('25) & Cristian Cruz ('25)

"Be a kind person and always try to spread positivity. Remember the greatest thing you can give to someone is your time."

- Edgar Regalado ('25)

"On this Hill, I learned to get involved with sports, to socialize with friends and always keep an open mind."

- Sal Gonzalez ('25)

"Do not procrastinate in your homework and follow the rules. You can always mess up so just follow the rules and enjoy your time here."

- Anh Le ('25)

"Do your homework on time, it's easy to slack off but, if you do it on time you can have free time at night."

- Will Nguyen ('25)

"Attention underclassmen, always stay focused on schoolwork, hit them books, don't fall behind!"

- Da Ksoe ('25)

Counselor's Advice

By: Mr. Sy Vanissaveth

Are you familiar with Pavlov's classical conditioning experiment? Pavlov noticed that dogs salivate when food is present, but he also noticed that they would salivate with anything that meant them getting to eat. Therefore, he paired a bell with food and the dogs would salivate, and eventually they salivated whenever they would hear the bell without the food. In the end, the dogs were conditioned to salivate, believing food is coming, when they heard the bell.

Similarly, you've been conditioned to recognize the bells at SLS as it kept you on track of the daily schedule. For example, once you hear that first bell ring at 6:20 a.m., you recognize that you have 25 minutes before breakfast and decide if you should slip in a few more minutes of sleep or get up and get ready for the day. The five-minute bell is the one that puts you into fight or flight mode to make sure you get to the refectory on time, and then the final bell is either a sound of relief or panic whether or not you are on time or late for breakfast.

Students, especially seniors, I hope you continue to use a bell of some kind help you navigate your life schedule outside of SLS. Set a bell to remind you of your work hours, college classes, important meetings, fun events, medications, paying bills, but most importantly, time between you and God—time to pray and study God's Word. "I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5, NASB tr.)



Trending Pixels

By: Alan Mora ('26)

For years, people have been advocating for a movie about Minecraft, a popular sandbox video game released in 2009. The video game Minecraft has been, and continues to be, a part of the lives of many teenagers and adults today, including many SLS students. The much-awaited movie release came on April 4th, 2025. A Minecraft Movie premiered in the U.S., and millions of people stormed theaters, in costume and character, like the Gentle Minions trend in 2022, where many people dressed up in suits to watch The Rise of Gru. This trend provided much exposure to the movie. Sometimes, due to loud disruptions and cheering during movie screenings, the police had to get involved. Social media apps featuring memes made from movie clips began to spread, with phrases like 'chicken jockey' and 'flint and steel' becoming widely popular.

The movie A Minecraft Movie is a kid-friendly, live-action adaptation of the game, featuring well-known actors such as Jack Black, Jason Momoa, Emma Myers, Jennifer Coolidge, Sebastian Hansen, and Danielle Brooks. While it received mixed reviews from critics, audiences loved it. The film also exceeded box office expectations, grossing \$162.75 million domestically on its opening weekend.

What drove the movie's massive popularity was its advertising campaign. For example, McDonald's released a Minecraft-themed Happy Meal, which sold out at many locations. In addition, the movie was heavily promoted through social media reels on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. These short videos, filled with jokes and nostalgic memories, quickly went viral and raised many people's expectations for the movie. This digital buzz highlighted the powerful influence of social media on the movie's success. Many began to reminisce about the game they used to play and the videos of when they watched during their childhood. It awakened the inner child in many and reminded them of some fond memories. This wave of nostalgia rekindled the love for Minecraft and deepen the appreciation for the movie.



The Legacy Left Behind

By: Justin Tran ('25)

Each year, Mrs. Sippel is tasked with choosing two creative and talented students to take on the role of *Editor-in-Chief* of *Hilltopics*. It is a process that she and the administrators discuss and determine who is deserving of the important positions for the next school year. This job is not always as prestigious as it may sound. To learn the *InDesign* program is challenging and it may take some time to master. In addition, the two young men must be responsible enough to balance their academics, sports, extra-curricular activities and the job of Editor in order to meet all deadlines.

This year, I would like to congratulate Alan Mora ('26) and Christian Casilla ('26), the 2025-2026 Editors for Volume LXI of *Hilltopics*. When asked about their new roles on *Hilltopics*, Christian stated, "Although it will be a challenge, I'm looking forward to not only working with Mrs. Sippel, but also with Alan Mora and the rest of the staff." Along with Christian, Alan also said, "I am extremely excited to discover how challenging Indesign is."

Once again, congrats to Alan and Christian. We are extremely curious to see what they will do with next year *Hilltopics*.



Farewell



To be the *Editor-in-Chief* of *Hilltopics* this last school year was an honor. It was a huge challenge for me to be able to create every issue with good quality and creativity, along with schoolwork and other activities at SLS. However, in the end, when I see all the work that I have done along with the contribution of Mrs. Sippel, Thomas, and the *Hilltopics* Staff Members, I am extremely proud and happy to receive compliments from the final product. This farewell is not my final goodbye to SLS, but rather a transition to my new journey, carrying with me the lessons, friendships, and memories at SLS that have shaped who I am today.

- Justin Tran ('25)



At the time, I am writing this, there are 19 days left until graduation. A part of me cannot wait for this moment but the other part fills me with sadness. This could be the last time I ever see my classmates. I have spent my four years of high school on the Hill, and I am glad for it. Before I leave, I would like to thank Justin Tran ('25) for carrying me through this year with *Hilltopics*. However, most of all, I want to thank my classmates; you guys have been my second family for the past four years. We have done everything together and I am grateful for every one of you. Goodbye SLS, and best of luck.

- Thomas Kim ('25)

HILLTOPICS

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The final bell of high school, to think about the idea alone is such a surreal moment for most seniors. As soon as that final bell rings, it marks the end of four hard long years of writing papers, clutching up assignments, and staying up at night to study for tests and quizzes. There is no longer bedtime rules or overly restrictive regulations. There is no longer punishments for wearing crocs or slides in the winter or wearing anything with a zipper inside buildings. Although, being liberated from these rules is exhilarating, the final bell also means something else at SLS: daily life with our brothers is ending.

When every Hilltopper graduates, they will have to face the harsh reality that they may never see their brothers again. While this idea is heart wrenching, we must all come to terms with there is more to life than SLS. What is it? I cannot answer that question. However, I can tell you how to find it. After SLS if you continue to break your limits, show your true self, make memories, continue to dream the impossible dream, and to perform when duty calls, you will find this "more" in life. Good luck Hilltoppers and like a wise English teacher once told me; "but wait"...

BEYOND THE BELLS

*This issue's postcard artwork
is contributed by Justin Tran ('25)*