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Back to Browse



a b c d e f
 g h i j k l
 m n o p q r
 s t u v w x
 y z 1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8 9 0

- (3) Di-Rector's Cut
- (4) New Years + E-Sports +4N6
- (5) Tet Celebration
- (6-7) Winter Carnival
- (8) SNL + Superbowl Parties
- (9) Hamilton Trip
- (10) Sargento Trip + Shakespeare
- (11) Chilton Animal Shelter



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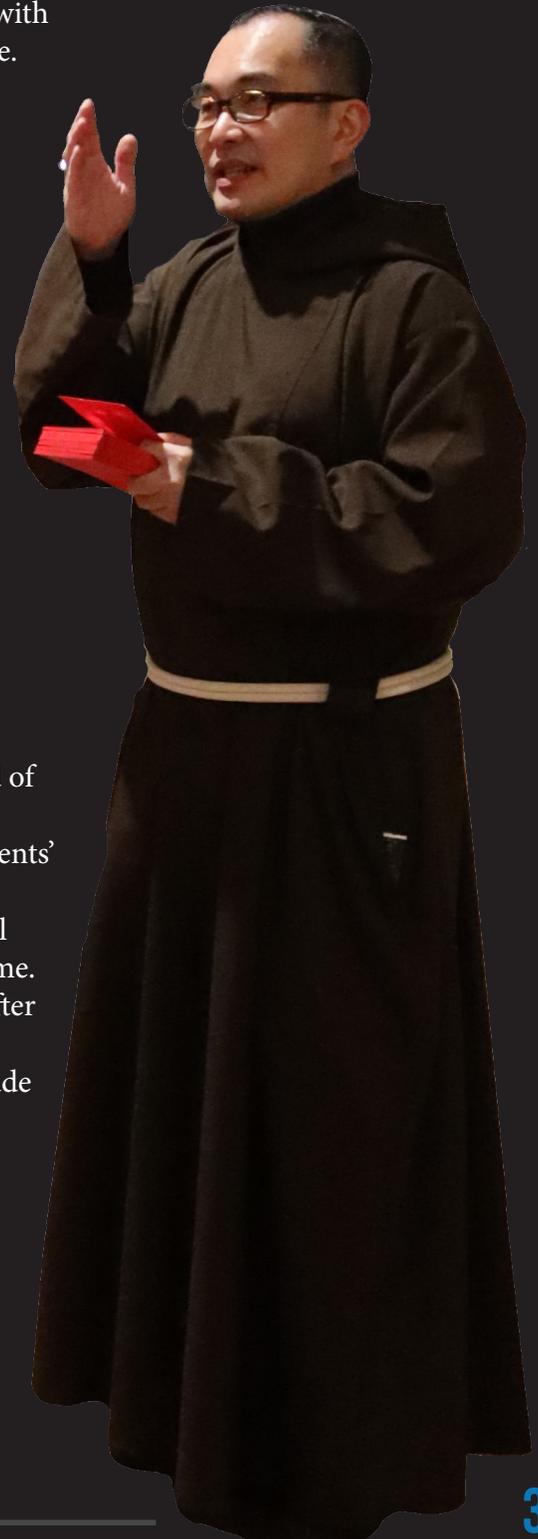
“BACK IN THEATERS!”

By: Father Zoy Garibay

Last month, *The Lord of the Rings* returned to select movie theaters nationwide. I saw the trilogy when it was first released in 2001, 2002, and 2003. The first time I saw them, I was engrossed in the story, astonished by the visual effects, and captivated by the emotional journey. These movies are now embedded in my memory and among my favorite films of all time. I had the opportunity to see *The Lord of the Rings* on the big screen again during its recent re-release. Revival screenings of classic films, like *The Lord of the Rings*, remind us why we love great movies that tell a good story, astonish us with visual effects, and take us on an unforgettable adventure. They rekindle nostalgia among loyal fans, bring people together, and introduce films to a new generation of moviegoers.

Last month, our students returned from their 3-week Christmas break. Being back on campus after such a long absence is, in a way, like revisiting a favorite film. It signals a return to the familiar, a reconnection with the community, and an opportunity for newcomers to discover something new. The third quarter at SLS is marked by two significant events: Winter Carnival and Catholic Schools Week. Winter Carnival was established 53 years ago by Capuchin friar Br. Dismas Seward. This annual event aims to dispel the winter blues and bring students together. Catholic Schools Week reminds us of the value of Catholic education and the role that Catholic schools play in educating and forming students in the faith, preparing them for a life of service, commitment, and self-sacrifice for a higher purpose, for the sake of others, and for the good of all.

As it was for Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin, our students' journey into the second semester will be an adventure where they will face myriad challenges, their mettle will be tested, and their limits will be stretched to the extreme. Time will fly by, and students will “fight” one “battle” after another. But in that same adventure, fellowship will be forged, towers will be overcome, and victory will be made possible, like a king's return, with the aid and support of teachers, mentors, advisors, caregivers, and spiritual directors, who, like Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and Boromir, accompany them on their journey. And when winter blues creep in, I would offer for reflection the wise words of Gandalf the Grey: “*So do all who live to see such times . . . All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.*” Gandalf would say that is an encouraging thought. And I do agree wholeheartedly.



READY FOR THE NEXT ACT!

By: Jonah Lim ('26)

As students return from their long Christmas break, the SLS campus is once again full of energy for the new year. For many, the start of a new semester means new classes or a renewed commitment for personal growth. For 2026, students are locking in on their goals and approaching the new year with a strong mindset to grow spiritually, academically, and physically.

Miguel Herrera ('26) prepares for the upcoming Solo & Ensemble competition. Academically, he hopes to finish his senior year strong by studying collaboratively with friends.

Elijah Bolick ('29) has a personal goal of beating the video game Doom on its notoriously difficult Nightmare mode.

Phun Hmung ('28) is determined to earn at least five victories as he wraps up his first wrestling season.

Nathan Reyes ('27) plans to push himself physically by reaching a 200-pound bench press while also preparing for his Confirmation and the big ACT test, both taking place in April.

SPEECH MAKES A RETURN

By: Donovan Blattner ('28)



Saint Lawrence Seminary places a strong emphasis on the art of speech and has proudly sustained a competitive forensics team for decades. This year, the team launches its long anticipated season with renewed focus, well prepared voices, and determination to secure wins. The team shows great promise, with a mix of newcomers and returning veteran speakers taking the stage. Jayden Ahorukomeye ('29), a newcomer to forensics, shared his hopes for the season, saying, "I wish to improve my speaking skills and enjoy time with my friends, deepening my connection with them." While the experience may be entirely new for some, for others it marks a welcome return. Veteran team member, Dang Nguyen ('27) stated, "I want to power through and really give it my all at every meet."



Of course, no team is complete without a dedicated coach. Mr. Martin Vu introduces students to the sport and guides them as they grow in their ability to articulate effectively. Mr. Vu also has his own expectations for the team, saying, "I have big hopes for this season, especially since the team is balanced with students from all four grade levels. We have many new students who bring new fresh talent, and previous speakers who have the experience and confidence to lead the team." Whether newcomers or returning competitors, every student brings something unique to the stage, and this year's team does not disappoint.

By: Yubal Vazquez Cenil ('28)

Many people can say they've played a video game at least once, but only a select few have experienced playing on an organized gaming team. For a few years, Hilltopper students have had the opportunity to join the Esports team. This sport requires ultimate knowledge of gaming mechanics, which explains why only a select few can be successful at it.

Last Fall the team participated in a well-known game called Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. This winter, however, the athletes face a new challenge: competing in Rocket League, a fast-paced game that blends high-speed racing with the excitement of soccer. Despite the overwhelming events in the game, athletes find it to be memorable, with TJ Ruiz ('27) explaining, "I don't mind that the game is hard; I love the team aspect of the game and the opportunity to play with my friends." Coach, Mr. Joseph Donohue, is happy about their season so far, adding that, "This team, through their hard work, makes me proud." Without a doubt, the SLS Hilltoppers seem to always want to "level up" to seek a challenge.

E-SPORTS - TAKE TWO





WASN'T IT JUST NEW YEARS?

By: Khan Nguyen ('27)

It's NEW YEARS... again?! Lunar New Year marks the beginning of a new year using the Chinese lunar calendar—this year being the year of the horse. The event, known to Vietnamese as Tet and to Koreans as Seollal, celebrates the arrival of spring, though it's a little different on the Hill. St. Lawrence's version is a celebration crafted by the hard work of some of the Vietnamese and Korean students alongside their parents. Under the guidance of the Dean of Students and Activities

Director, Mr. Nguyen, the Vietnamese and Korean seniors prepared Mi Xao (stir-fried egg noodles), Haemul Pajeon (Korean seafood pancakes), and fried rice. Seamus McCarthy ('26) said, "The Mi Xao was succulent and the fried rice was amazing." Following the banquet, Fr. Zoy, Rector, handed out the traditional red envelopes filled with money, a tradition that signifies good luck and prosperity for the coming year. Finally, some Vietnamese students performed a dragon dance in the chapel that led outside to an ending filled with fireworks. Alex Garcia ('27) mentions, "I liked how each dragon had its own personality clearly shown by each of their unique movements." Nathan Nguyen ('27) adds, "Tet was pretty fun. The food was good, and I'm glad that people actually care about our culture." From a plethora of mouthwatering food to the traditional dragon dance, the 2026 TET celebration brought great joy to the students.



ORIGINAL AIN'T NO CARNIVAL...

JANUARY 2025

By: Conner Mills ('27)

▶ PLAY

+ MY LIST

To break up the monotony of the long, quiet winter, the SLS Student Council organized the 53rd annual “Winter Carnival,” a tradition that seemed to warm one of the coldest days of the year and also brought the community back to life. It’s a day filled with the kind of good-natured competition that has long brought SLS’s fraternities together, a reminder of the spirited traditions that have shaped the community over the years. Leonel Vera ('27) defines Winter Carnival as “an event dedicated to forming fun memories with my fraternity.”

It all began on an extremely cold Wednesday morning, when Fr. Baudry announced the details of the competitions and Alex Regalado ('26), the Student Council Vice President, led the student body out of the chapel carrying a flaming torch. The morning activities included: ultimate frisbee, football, soccer, and broomball. The competitions were all outdoors in various areas of the campus. The handball court was iced over making for hilarious broomball matches. At the conclusion of the morning games the students proceeded to the refectory for lunch.

The afternoon began with the student vs. staff volleyball game. There was a guest appearance from Jesus Christ (*Issac Ehlenbeck ('27) in costume*), playing for the students, who went on to win handily over the faculty 2 games to 1. The rest of the afternoon consisted of indoor games and competitions which included a Spelling Bee, and a Super Smash Bros tournament, 3 vs 3 basketball tournament, 3-point contest and the always famous Rat Race. These events were held in Mr. Lou’s classroom, the gym and Tony’s Place.

The day concluded with the all-important scavenger hunt, the linchpin event for any fraternity hoping to secure enough points for victory. Students raced around campus searching for answers to the hunt’s trivia questions. Once all the points were tallied and the students had gathered in the chapel for evening prayer, it was announced that Fraternity 6 were the champions.



1. SOCCER

Winter Carnival begins and many games follow suit. Soccer is played on the tennis courts.



2. BROOM BALL

Students keep their balance on the slippery ice, trying to broom the ball into the goal.



3. INDOOR ACTIVITIES

Inside, the fun continues with ping pong, along with cup pong, the spelling bee, Smash Bros, and more!



4. STUDENTS VS. STAFF

The students compete against the SLS staff in a game of volleyball and win.



H IN THEATRES SATURDAY NIGHT

By: Joshua Choi ('26)

Some Saturday nights, St. Fidelis Hall livens up with activity with what the students refer to as Saturday Night Live (SNL). Students cheered on teams in the gym as they competed in a handball tournament. The rivalry was very intense; every team battled hard for the first-place prize: Jet's pizza. In the canteen, students gathered around tables, eating canteen food and playing board games. The canteen special that night was chopped cheese sandwich. Francis Lisboa '26 commented, "I liked the chopped cheese sandwich; the way the cheese blended with the meat and melted in my mouth was exquisite!" In the bowling alley, competition was just as fierce as in the main gym as students bowled for a pizza as well. These special nights of fun, however, wouldn't be possible without our student council. The student council organizes the SNLs and makes sure the night runs smoothly, picking out referees for the sports and serving specials in the canteen. They also choose which sports are played and which food items are served. With each student council member bringing ideas to the table and voting on the best ones, the event was a success, and many students are already looking forward to the next one.



SUPERBOWL SPIRIT

By: Luke Joseph ('27)

A tradition at SLS is the annual Super Bowl parties hosted separately by class in their dorm's lobby. These gatherings bring students together by sparking a friendly rivalry and bonding between students who support different teams. Typically, the SLS Super Bowl parties consist of plenty of food, drinks, and even some debate. This year, the students prepared walking tacos and enjoyed root beer floats for dessert.

The two teams that competed in Super Bowl LX were the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriots. William King ('26) commented, "Unlike past Superbowls, this year's game was very defense oriented." The first touchdown did not occur until the fourth quarter, making it a game of field goals. It ended in a resounding win for the Seahawks with a score of 29-13. Khan Nguyen ('27), being a Seattle fan, stated, "It was very fun to watch the Seahawks dominate the Patriots alongside my classmates. The experience was quite enjoyable."

Beyond the action on the field, the halftime show by Bad Bunny also captured national attention. Many had mixed reactions to his performance due to political and racial controversies. As a result, an alternate halftime show, The All-American Halftime Show, was hosted by Turning Point USA.

This year's SLS Super Bowl parties once again showed why the tradition is so meaningful to students. The combination of good food, friendly rivalry, and shared excitement created a memorable experience for everyone involved. Whether students were cheering for the Seahawks or the Patriots, the event brought people together and strengthened the sense of community on campus. With enthusiastic reactions, and the discussions surrounding the halftime show, the Super Bowl gatherings offered something enjoyable for everyone. Traditions like this continue to make SLS a fun and connected place to be.

SHINING SO BRIGHT HAMILTON IS ON TONIGHT!

By: Tam Tran ('28)

Stars are people who excel in their specific fields and shine brighter than anyone around them. We all dream of being stars; however, some stars shine centuries beyond their time. On Friday, February 13th, students and staff at Saint Lawrence witnessed the story of one of the most influential, controversial, and ambitious figures in US history – Alexander Hamilton. Performing at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in Appleton, Saint Lawrence students attended the award-winning musical *Hamilton* and experienced what it is like to sit in a professional theater. When asked about the experience, Pee Ku Htee ('28) said, “The music was one of the things that stood out to me. Seeing the actors and musicians play the whole time was impressive.”

One philosophy that is consistently emphasized at SLS is the importance of being open-minded, meaning the Hilltoppers are encouraged to take every experience as an opportunity to learn something new. While watching *Hamilton*, students gained a deeper understanding of what the world of performing arts is really like. For many of our Hilltoppers, this was their first musical, so they learned proper theater etiquette and gained a newfound respect for those in the entertainment industry.

On the topic of why SLS goes on these types of trips, Fr. Zoy explained, “Learning in a classroom setting with proper instruction and guidance is extremely important for the lives of young men of faith; however, applying their classroom knowledge to the real world is just as, if not more, important.

Hamilton is an exhilarating play that allow students to apply their classroom knowledge of American history and performing arts to the real world to understand the importance of a classroom environment.”

As the performance concluded, students may have left with a feeling of amazement about the life of Alexander Hamilton, realizing that one day, they could possibly shine brighter than the stars that came before.

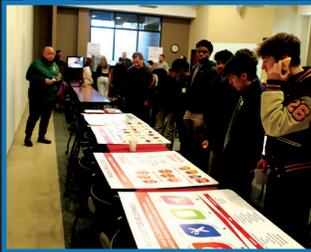


PHILLY CHEESE TRIP

By: Ethan Thomas ('26)

Things are getting cheesy!! A group of SLS students, accompanied by Mr. Vanissaveth and Mr. McCabe, recently visited the Sargento cheese factory for Career Day — and yes, they did taste some cheese. Sargento strives to be the “most innovative, best-loved, real food company,” and seeing everything firsthand, that goal makes sense. Students had exposure to several departments, including marketing and sales, engineering and maintenance, research and development, and data analytics. Ugo Osuala ('26) shares, “I saw the crucial departments needed to run a big establishment as big as Sargento. I took interest in the data analysis department and the marketing department. In data analysis the team took big masses of data and simplified them into a graph displaying the crucial tendencies of consumers.” Each department demonstrated how its role contributes to the bigger picture.

The group also viewed the automated assembly lines inside the factory, where they watched the process of slicing and packaging cheese right before their eyes. Watching the machinery moving so quickly and smoothly was impressive, which helped the students understand what goes into something as simple as a bag of cheese. Sargento also proudly partners with Wisconsin's Packers, Bucks, and Brewers. Overall, it was an amazing opportunity for students to experience firsthand how teamwork and innovation come together to create something people love every day.



BACK INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

By: Christian Casilla ('26)

On January 15, 2026, 11 students competed in the annual SLS Shakespeare competition. The competition requires each student to memorize and act out a monologue written by William Shakespeare. With the assistance of Mr. Anthony Van Asten ('01) and Mr. Martin Vu ('17), the participating students rehearsed acting, pronunciation, and interpretation of their Shakespeare monologues. They performed their piece in the auditorium in front of their peers and the judges: Mr. Bryce Gassner, Mr. Martin Vu, and Mr. Lou Wappel. The students competed to advance to the state level, where they could further advance to the national level in New York. Only the first and second place finishers advance. This year, the winner of the competition was Christian Casilla ('26) and the runner-up, Jonah Lim ('26). Both traveled to Brookfield, WI to compete at the state level against students from other Wisconsin schools. Although neither student advance to the national level to compete in New York, Mr. Lou believes there is potential for growth, saying, “This year’s Shakespeare competition brought out the best among the students, I thought. There were fewer forgotten lines this year, and there was some good acting along with reciting the words. If the momentum continues, I predict that next year’s contestants will build on what has gone before, and we’re going to have even more Shakespearean actors here at St. Lawrence Seminary.”



RECONNECTING WITH GOD'S CREATURES



By: Christopher Vu ('26)

When the students returned from Christmas break, an exciting new ministry opportunity was offered: volunteering at the Eastshore Humane Association, also known as the Chilton Animal Shelter. Dr. Michael Donahou, senior theology teacher and SLS's ministry director explained, "I have read stories about St. Francis preaching to animals and talking to, and probably listening to, animals. But when we were reading The Wolf of Gubbio story in Senior Theology, I began to think, we should also include animals in our ministry program." So, Dr. Donahou reached out to the Chilton Animal Shelter.

Beginning on Saturday, January 17th, several students gathered and drove to the Chilton Animal Shelter to begin their day of ministry. There, students were able to choose from a variety of volunteer activities. Some students helped clean the cat cages by refilling food and water bowls and wiping down the cages. Others spent time in the "funky cat room," where they played with and socialized cats awaiting adoption. James Avalos Prendota ('26) said, "My favorite was the room with the mother cats and their kittens. They let you hold them and I really liked that."

Students also volunteered in the puppy room, where they played with and socialized with the sheltered dogs, in addition to helping outdoors. Outside, students ran and used dog toys to entertain and exercise the adult dogs. Wah Shee Gay ('26) explained, "I liked playing outside with the dogs. Cupcake knocked over Emmanuel Esson; it was funny." Overall, the new animal shelter ministry gives students the opportunity to follow in the values of St. Francis embracing compassion, gentleness, and reverence for all of God's creation.



