

# Hiltopics

*Saint Lawrence Seminary*

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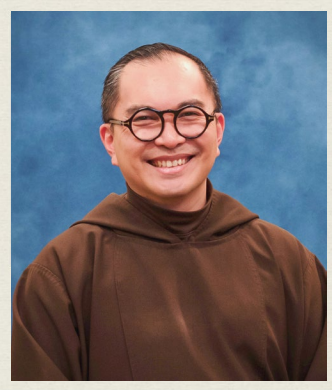
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# The Spiritual Message



Advent is one of the four seasons in the Church's calendar. It is a season of prayerful waiting for the coming of the Lord. The great motto for Advent is "Maranatha"—an Aramaic word which means, "Come, Lord." When we utter that phrase, we are inviting Jesus to come into our hearts and into our lives. But before we invite Jesus to come into

our hearts and into our lives, first we need to make some preparations. The Gospel from Luke on the First Sunday of Advent, warns the faithful to "beware that your hearts do not become drowsy . . . but be vigilant at all times . . . and pray that you may have the strength to escape the tribulations . . . and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk 21: 34, 36) This passage gives us a clue on how we can prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming, that is, to be alert; to be ready to welcome the master, who may come at any time; to be watchful; and to be eager for his return.

Advent is a season of hope, and the Gospel passage from Luke makes clear that our hope must be active. It cannot be passive. Hope is an activity. It is not inactivity. Hope behooves us to move, not to remain idle. If you recall, hope is one of the three theological virtues along with faith and charity. And like those two other virtues, hope requires action. Hope is a desire—a longing—for some future, higher, and more enduring form of happiness. Ultimately, hope is a longing for nothing less than the return of our Lord Christ and our eternal union with him. This is the kind of attitude that the readings throughout this season of Advent encourage us to develop. It is not right for us to wait passively—or idly—for the Lord's coming. We should instead wait actively, looking out for the Master, eagerly anticipating his return. This means that, as Christians, during this Advent season we must be fully alive and fully engaged. We must be active in our homes, communities, and parishes, looking forward to Jesus' coming. We must be people of hope. The Gospel behooves us also to be vigilant, alert, and prayerful. How vigilant, alert, and prayerful are you? Is your heart filled with hope?

*-Fr. Joy Garribay*



# Praise the Lord With Song!

*By: Christian Casilla ('26)*

This holiday season, Mr. Danny Matthew, SLS Music instructor will continue the tradition of the annual Christmas concert. Having already introduced the music pieces for the concert in early October, the choir and band students practice during their respective periods, 5th and 9th. According to Mr. Matthew, "Both groups have been working hard, and we expect to finish learning the songs in a few weeks to perfect them by December." Choir member Alan Gonzales ('26) agreed, adding, "Choir is going well. The freshmen, in particular, are starting to find their voices and gain the confidence to sing." For Mr. Matthew, it's not just about getting it done. His goal is to, "not only give the freshmen a memorable first Christmas concert, but also a memorable final Christmas concert for the seniors." Senior band member, Daniel Pizana ('25) said, "The band will always need work to truly become the best it can be, but it is certainly improving, especially among all the new talent and first-time band players." The annual Christmas concert is always held on the last Friday night before Christmas break, which this year is December 20th. It is certain the concert will create some memorable moments to end the first semester of the 2024-2025 school year.



# GOD'S ELVES

By: Alan Mora ('26)



Each year, during the holiday season, SLS students and staff participate in the Angel Tree Project ministry. The Project aims to help the children whose parents are incarcerated by gifting them Christmas presents. By doing this, parents can still show their love for their children while being away. This year marks the 27th time SLS has participated in the event, helping over 100 children each year. Students at SLS contribute to this effort, with each grade playing a unique role in the ministry. First, the juniors receive a list of the children's needs and wishes. They then shop for two presents per child. Next, the sophomores box and wrap the gifts. Afterward, the freshmen write notes or messages from the child's parent on angel ornaments which are attached to the gift. Finally, the seniors, with the help of adult volunteer drivers, deliver the gifts to the children and witness firsthand the joy and happiness on their faces. SLS's involvement and support truly makes their Christmases memorable.

The faculty who organize this ministry are Dr. Michael Donahou, Mrs. Karin Laska, and Mrs. Kelly Potratz. Dr. Donahou coordinates the student volunteers, while Mrs. Laska handles logistics and Mrs. Potratz uses her computer expertise to ensure the project runs smoothly. Dr. Donahou explained why the school participates in the project, stating, "To whom much is given, much is expected. (Luke 12:48). This verse speaks to the obligation we have been given to help those in need, whose situations—for whatever reason—are less positive than our own."



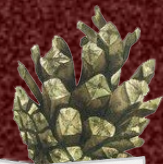
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# TEACHER TAKEOVER

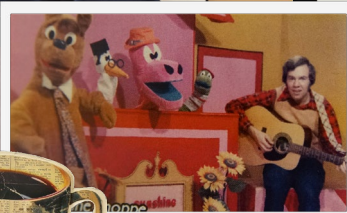
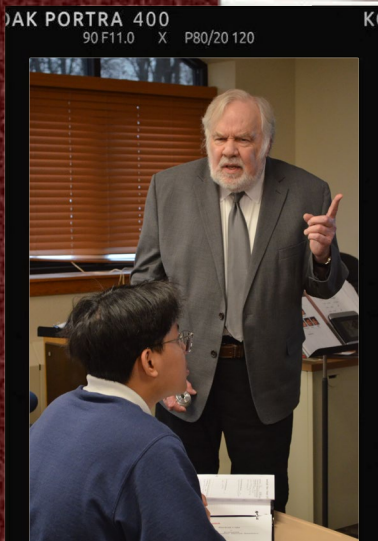
By: Christopher Vu ('26)

Teachers play a significant role in students' lives as they grow and learn about who they are. After graduating many students will often remember teachers for their interesting lessons or memorable personalities. One teacher who has remained a memorable figure at SLS for more than 30 years is Mr. Lou Wappel, known for being the Senior English teacher and for his legendary line: "But wait, there's more!" However, there is more to Mr. Lou's story than his famous one liners.

Mr. Lou's legend began during his first year at SLS, as the freshmen dorm supervisor. He decided to call the freshmen parents and asked them if they had any questions about dorm life. As Mr. Lou got to one student's mother, he asked if she had any questions. Mr. Lou remembered her saying, "As a matter of fact, seven of his brothers graduated before him. He will be number eight." Mr. Lou replied to the mother, "Well then, since it's my first year at SLS, I should be asking you questions about freshmen dorm life." Mr. Lou continued, "It was a very comical situation, as she clearly knew more than I did." Through his indelible character, Mr. Lou is a legend, bringing both laughter and fond memories to current students and alumni who reminisce about their time at SLS.



**But WAIT! There's more...**



# Sacred Memories

By: Jonah Lim ('26)

As November began, each class embarked on a retreat to take a break from the busy work of school. The SLS retreats are provided to all students so they can deepen their relationships with each other, and especially with God.

The seniors departed early Wednesday morning for a seven hour bus ride to the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington, MI near Detroit. While there, they visited the Blessed Solanus Casey Center, attended a Blessing of the Sick Mass at St. Bonaventure Monastery, and volunteered at a local soup kitchen. Tony Nguyen ('25) said, "I learned how to maintain my relationship with God with other people around me. I was able to meditate on God's word, talk to him, and listen to His voice. Moreover, this retreat made me realize the importance of my relationship with my family, friends, and even with the community."

The juniors left, on a bus, Thursday after a full day of classes and arrived at Mt. Morris Retreat Center. Guided by Father Nathan Linton, the juniors engaged in discussions on discernment and shared stories that they hope will become part of their legacy. Alan Gonzalez ('26) said, "During the retreat, my faith and bond with classmates grew immensely because of the experiences we had together, both spiritually and physically. We also reflected on what we needed to work on as a class. This memorable trip will not be forgotten."

Meanwhile, the freshmen and sophomores remained on campus, where they were guided by a team from Spiritus. They participated in games and listened to talks about their relationship with God. Throughout these retreats, each class celebrated Mass together. The retreat strengthened their bonds with one another and as a class that will provide a lifetime of cherished memories.



KODAK 400

▶ 43

KODAK 400

▶ 42



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# SLS Game On!

By: Joshua Choi ('26)

As the days get colder, the winter sports season approaches. Varsity basketball will be coached by Mr. Quan Nguyen, while JV basketball coaches will be Mr. Peter Hall and Mr. Matthew Mattes. Wrestling is coached by Mr. Phil McCabe and Mr. Dan Stephanie. Returning wrestler, Sebastian Montemayor ('25), shared, "This wrestling season I'm really excited and confident that I will be able to succeed. My goal for this season is to make it to sectionals. As long as I put in that hard work, I think it's possible for me to achieve."

A new sport, bowling, has made its way onto the Hill. Mr. Chad Dowland and Mr. Matthew Bahr are coaching the newly introduced sport. The bowling season has already started and head coach, Mr. Dowland, shared, "Since it is a new sport, I don't expect too much of the players. The two main goals I have for us is to be competitive and to have fun." The coaches aren't the only ones with the new sports season on their minds, Ethan Thomas ('26), a varsity bowler shared, "Being on the bowling team has been a fantastic experience so far, and I really enjoy contributing to our team's success and morale. My goal this season is to be able to beat my dad back home and, hopefully, breaking a bowling score of 220."

The students seem excited and ready to put in the blood sweat and tears that it takes to be successful. The bowling season is sure to spark some new and exciting memories, being it's the inaugural season.



...for ducks are simple at...  
...They are built thin and...  
...comfortable, and have no fat...  
...together whatever a duck is...  
...not need the...  
...warm home...

LUCKS

# From Tepeyac to the World

By: Diego Soto ('25)

On December 8th, the Hispanic student families gathered on the Hill to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and treated the SLS community to a great time. Traditionally, a Hispanic parent of a senior student leads the event. This year, Ms. Lily Juarez, the mother of Salvador-Diego Gonzalez ('25), took the lead and did an outstanding job. She, along with other Hispanic families, prepared food and encouraged the students to attend the event in traditional Hispanic clothing, a new idea introduced by Ms. Juarez. She explained that she wanted everyone to feel welcome and reminded students that the feast day is celebrated around the world, though the traditions vary from culture to culture.

To kick off the amazing night, students led the school in the rosary and a blessing for a new statue of the Blessed Mother, which was gifted by Sebastian Montemayor's ('25) parents. Prayers were offered in both English and Spanish. "This was my favorite part," said Christian De La Fuente ('25). "Praying in Spanish brings out the Hispanic culture, which is dear to my heart. Spanish is the common language in my house and my first language, so it made me feel closer to home."

Ms. Lily Juarez and her team of other volunteers prepared a delicious meal, featuring traditional Mexican dishes such as tamales and gorditas. Gorditas are tortillas with a pocket in the middle, typically stuffed with steak, lettuce, tomatoes, and other condiments. They also served tamales as an appetizer, explaining that in Mexico, tamales are not typically eaten as a main dish, but rather as an appetizer. To top off the meal, students were served traditional Mexican street tacos. To conclude the evening, Francisco Valezquez's ('26) family performed a dance to a mix of traditional and modern Mexican music, all while wearing traditional Mexican clothing.

None of this would have been possible without the students leading the prayers and the support of the Hispanic students' families. We are thankful for the many gifts, the meal, and the entertainment provided by the families. This was truly a memorable night for the Hilltoppers and a wonderful way to celebrate the feast of La Guadalupana.





# MORE THAN A HOBBY

*By: Max Trinh ('25)*

Saint Lawrence Seminary offers numerous clubs for students to be involved in. The clubs cover a wide range of interests and encourage student interaction. The International Club is popular. Usually held every other Friday, students gather to learn about the culture of different countries. Mr. Krieg mentors the club and the students give the presentations. One of the regular presenters, Said Villa ('25) states, "It's really interesting to learn about foreign places and different cultures."

Two new clubs introduced this year, the CAD Club and the Art Club. The Computer Aided Design (CAD) Club propose and design solutions to a real problem or challenge through means, such as 3D printing. It is led by Patrick Donohue ('25) and Mr. Bahr. "We've only had one meeting, but we're hoping to help people learn the basics of CAD," stated Patrick. The Art Club, supervised by Br. Jerry Cornish, is for those who love art and encourages them to express their artistic talents. Sal Gonzalez ('25) stated, "Life is like a canvas; you can paint it how you want."

Students are encouraged to create clubs, which must be approved by SLS's Principal, Mr. Bartel and must have an adult supervisor. The students have vast opportunities to participate in different clubs hoping they may discover new interests that they will enjoy for a lifetime.



# SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE

*By: Cristian Cruz ('25)*

On a typical Saturday night at SLS, you will find students watching a movie, hanging out in the gym or doing homework. To spice things up, the student council organized a "Saturday Night Live" (SNL) event for the Hilltoppers. When you hear SNL, what pops into your mind? The show? NOPE! SNL at SLS is an all-school activity, more like a party.

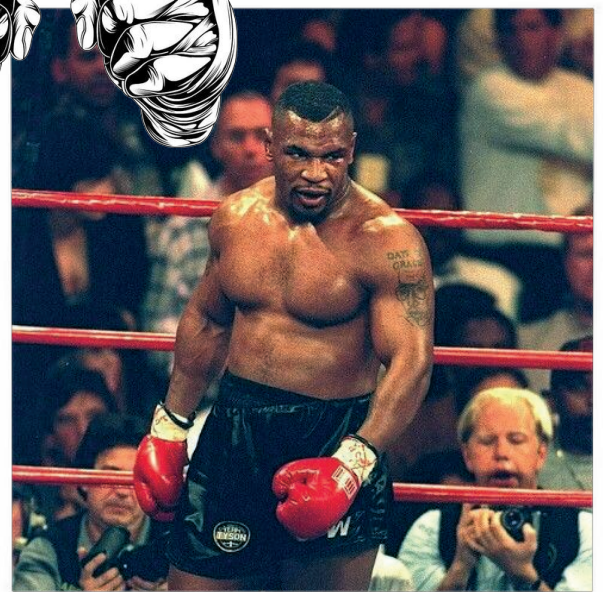
On Friday, October 5th, the Hilltoppers participated in one of the best SNL's yet, with the theme, Badminton! One of the teams, "The One-Man Team" consisted of Alvin Nguyen ('28) and Noah Nguyen ('28), showed everyone their competitive personalities by making it far into the tournament. Alvin and Noah stated, "Tough competition! Especially when we lost to the notorious Jae-Seoung Hong ('25) and ThienHanh Mai ('25)."

This special night also featured special deals. The canteen was packed with people ordering the two secret items: the sundae and walking tacos. Lawrence Gonzalez ('25), a canteen worker stated, "The Dorito walking tacos tasted like heaven, along with my free Slushie." The SNL party was filled with events. Special events like SNL create memorable moments, it also brings out the true character and competitive nature, in some students. On other occasions the Student Council organize ordinary tournaments, like the handball tournament during second quarter! Many Hilltoppers, faculty and staff support these activities, as it changes things up once and a while. These events bring the community together, bring out all kinds of personality and can be very memorable.



# To the Ring

By: Said Villa ('25)

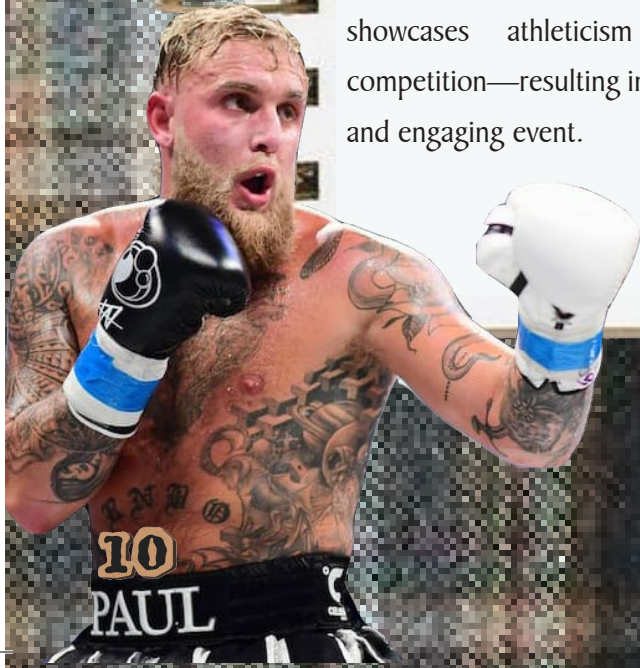


The hot trend on social media right now is influencer boxing events. These are where content creators and other famous personalities step into the ring to compete in boxing matches. The events generate a lot of drama and excitement for teenagers and have gained significant attention in recent years, attracting fans of all ages. They often sell out arenas, and many people pay to watch them on their devices.

Influencer boxing started with events like YouTube boxing matches, where influencers like KSI, Logan Paul, and Jake Paul began fighting in real boxing bouts. These events attract younger audiences who are familiar with these personalities through their social media videos and feel a sense of connection to them.

One highly anticipated fight was Jake Paul vs. Mike Tyson. It took place on February 15th at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington. Many fans were excited to see Tyson, one of the best fighters in the world return to the ring. Many people hoped to see Jake Paul lose because of his arrogant attitude. The outcome of the fight disappointed many. Although most people expected Jake Paul to win, they anticipated Mike Tyson would put up a stronger fight. This was not the case, leaving fans frustrated and disappointed.

Influencer boxing has become the new trend. It combines the intensity of boxing with popular influencers in the ring, creating a fresh genre of entertainment that showcases athleticism and competition—resulting in a fun and engaging event.





"My favorite memory is from my sophomore year when almost the entire student body had a snowball fight with the senior Class of 2023 on the Upper Ball Diamond."

- Patrick Donohue ('25)

*Down  
Memory  
Lane...*

"My favorite memory is when I tried out for a musical for the first time. I was completely new to theatre, but I had so much fun performing in Little Shop of Horrors."

- Justin Tran ('25)

"My favorite memory is when we had a half-day of school due to a snowstorm. It was the only time we ever snow day."

- Antonio Brand-Gonzalez ('25)

"My favorite memory is seeing my classmate Max Trinh fall out of bed in the middle of the night while sleep talking."

-Sebastian Montemayor ('25)

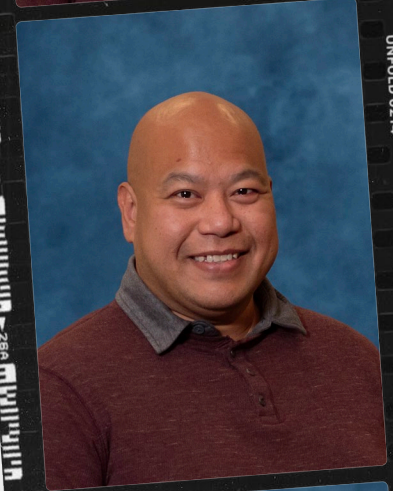


# SENIOR SPILL

By: ThienHanh Mai ('25)

## Counselor's Advice

By: Mr. Sy Vanissaveth



Take a moment to think about why you remember what you do. Why are certain events more memorable than others? According to a study by Qasim, Mohan, Stein, et al. (2023), your most memorable memories are often created from events that involve strong emotions. If you want to get scientific about it, the stronger the emotions, the stronger the connections between your amygdala and hippocampus. For example, I don't remember much of my early elementary years, but a memory that sticks out is drowning. I can vividly remember the sequence of events and even more so the strong emotions such as panic, fear, relief, embarrassment, shame, regret, and gratitude.

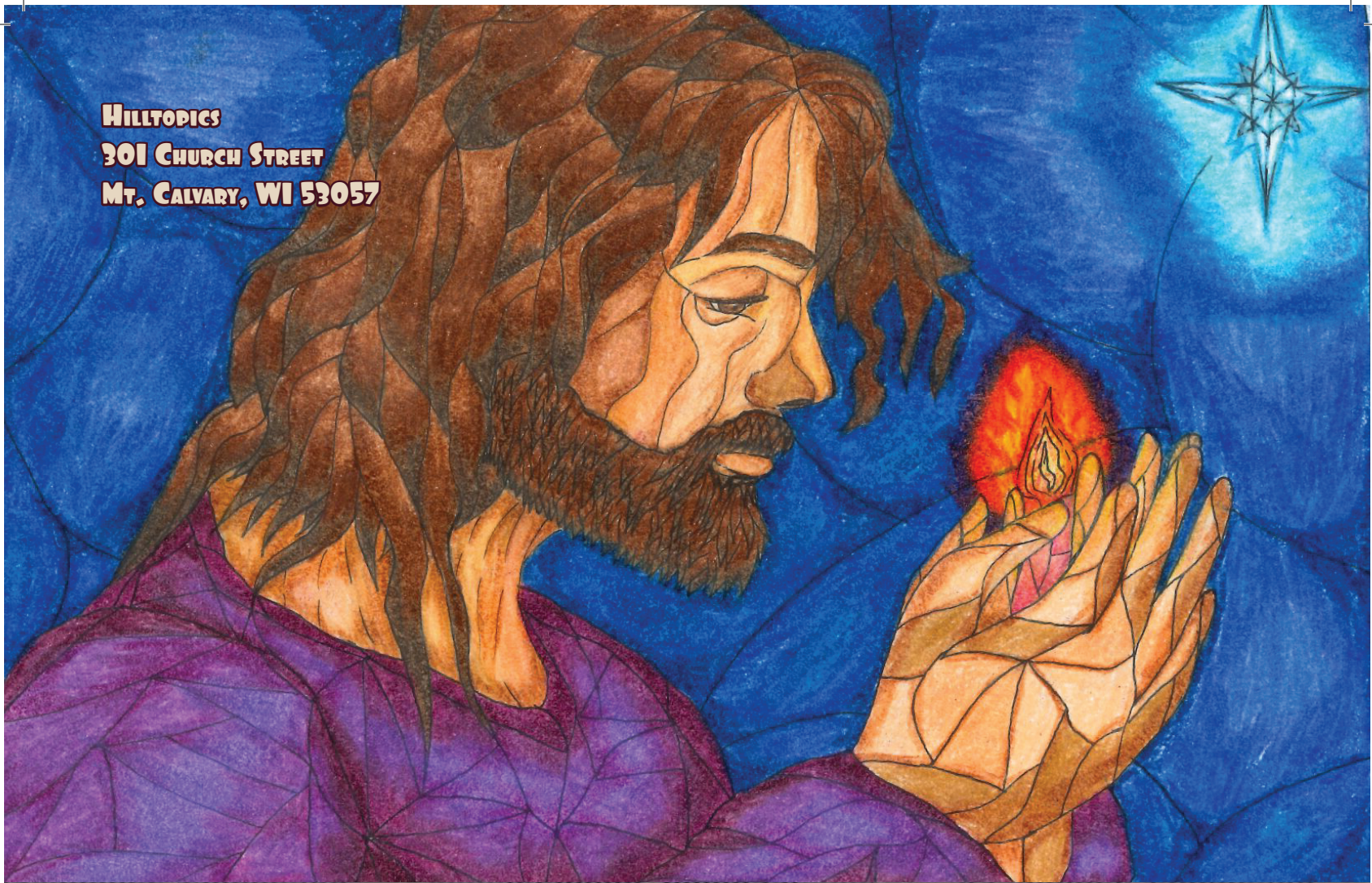
The memories we create assist us in daily living. They can protect us, help us learn, shape our views, and guide our behaviors. Unfortunately, I think we tend to dwell on bad memories or focus on the negatives because it's a natural safeguard from threat and danger, but that often leads to strong negative feelings.

Therefore, as you continue through your time at SLS, I encourage you to actively make good, positive memories. And who better to imitate in making meaningful memories than the Blessed Virgin Mary herself? The gospel of Luke gives us a glimpse of how she does it after being visited by the shepherds, "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19)."

Remember your good times with your SLS brothers and make more good, fun, and positive memories with them. Commit to pondering on God's goodness and the blessings you have through him. Eventually, these are the memories that will be a source of happiness, strength, and comfort when you're feeling the worst for yourself.

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As Christmas approaches and we prepare to return to our families and loved ones, I ask everyone who reads this to take what I am about to say into consideration. One day-whether it be in 20, 30, 40, or even 50 years-the laughter, the chaos, the warmth, the very aspects of what gives our lives meaning, will fade away forever. The only comfort we will have to help us endure the dullness of our new lives will be the memories we hold. They will whisper to us, reminding us of the times when we were embraced by the warmth of happiness with friends and family that who are no longer around to share in our tomorrows. It is these moments that make life beautiful, these memories that give life meaning.

Do not let life pass you by. Cherish each moment with your friends, family, and loved ones, for someday, the people you hold close now may become stories you tell your children or names whispered in your mind as you reflect. Take the time to create memories-big or small-because they will be the stories you treasure when everything else fades away. As we embark on our journeys back home keep in mind that memories, although some may cause tears, will be all we have left in this world - and yet they will be everything.

*from Justin & Thomas*

Submit your artwork to [hilltopics@stlawrence.edu](mailto:hilltopics@stlawrence.edu) to be on our next Issue's postcard!

2 PLAYLIST  
 BLACKWOOD ORIGINAL

This issue's postcard artwork contributed by Alan Gonzalez ('26)