

Volume LVI



HILLTOPICS

News in Isolation

Issue Three

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To: Tyler Le



Hometown: Alexandria, VA

Ethnicity: Vietnamese

Favorite aspect of St. Lawrence? "I like the responsibility and trust given to us; it has made me independent."

What brought you to St. Lawrence? "My three brothers: Tommy, Timmy, and Teddy."

Hobbies: "I like to play video games. I normally play a lot of *League of Legends*."



To: Jonathon Prado

Hometown: Madison, WI

Ethnicity: Filipino

Favorite aspect of St. Lawrence? "I like the community and my classmates."

What brought you to St. Lawrence? "My brother Joshua Prado (Class of '20) introduced me to SLS."

Hobbies: "I love watching television shows on Netflix. My favorite shows are *Dynasty* and *Korra*."

To: Henry Vande Hey



Hometown: Kaukauna, WI

Ethnicity: German and Irish

Favorite aspect of St. Lawrence? "I like my classmates and the dorm life."

What brought you to St. Lawrence? "I learned about SLS when Mrs. School told me about it during a visit to my hometown."

Hobbies: "I enjoy disc golfing and playing the piano."

Rector's Corner



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Listening one morning to Irving Berlin's 1942 holiday classic, "White Christmas," I could not help but reminisce about Christmases of the years past when I would travel to Chicago to preside in a Simbang Gabi (Filipino Advent Novena Mass) at a parish in Hyde Park, or attend and sing along in a Do-It-Yourself Messiah concert at the Harris Theater in Millennium Park, or make a long drive to Michigan to celebrate Christmas with my family in the Detroit suburbs, and with the friars at St. Bonaventure Monastery.

Alas, I will not be able to do those things this year. Since the novel coronavirus became a global pandemic early this year, we have seen many events—for business or for leisure—canceled. We have also seen celebrations curtailed, gatherings restricted, and travels limited. Many of the customs or traditions which we hold dear and have done in particular ways in the past, we may not be able to do in like manner in the present because of safety restrictions that are in place and because of prevailing concerns for individual and public safety.

The situation, therefore, behooves us to re imagine those things. It also forces us to be creative and to find ways that would help us to navigate through the challenges of the present time and still allow us to carry on with life in a manner that is safe. With that in mind, we move forward. We carry on beloved customs and time-honored traditions, albeit in novel and innovative ways. Not being able to celebrate Christmas like we used to may not be a bad thing after all. If there is a silver lining in all of this, it is that like all other tragedies of the past, this too shall pass. We shall overcome this. We should, therefore, rise and walk with faith, look to the future with hope, and put our trust in our Lord, who promised to be with us always until the end of time. In the meantime, we do the best we can with what we have. We pray unceasingly. We hope boundlessly. We attend unsparingly.

Finally, I am reminded of the words that the presbyter says at Mass at the end of the Lord's Prayer:

"Deliver us Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."

Veni, Emmanuel! Come, Lord Jesus! ✨

Life at SLS is often very busy, with many activities, classes, sports, extracurricular, projects and assignments to work on. The annual retreats are a longstanding tradition at SLS, and they are always something the students look forward to. Each class spends their retreat together, and each class's retreat is different. The retreats act as a time for class bonding and learning more about one's faith.

The freshman class held its retreat on campus. The faculty led activities to give the freshmen a chance to explore new forms of prayer. They walked around campus and examined the various statues and paintings of saints, they meditated on their relationship with God, and they drew mandalas, symbolic drawings that originate from Hinduism. Henry Vande Hey said, "I really enjoyed the meditations with Fr. Kieth. His stories were hilarious and relaxing." The sophomores held their retreat on campus with Spiritus, a group of young Catholics hosting retreats across the country. Spiritus members had the sophomores reflect on their relationships with God and others, told personal stories about God's influence, held small group discussions about a wide variety of topics, and led a forgiveness circle for sophomores to open up and forgive anyone in their lives who has wronged them. Gunnar Stier said, "The forgiveness circle really helped me learn about my classmates and helped us grow as a community."

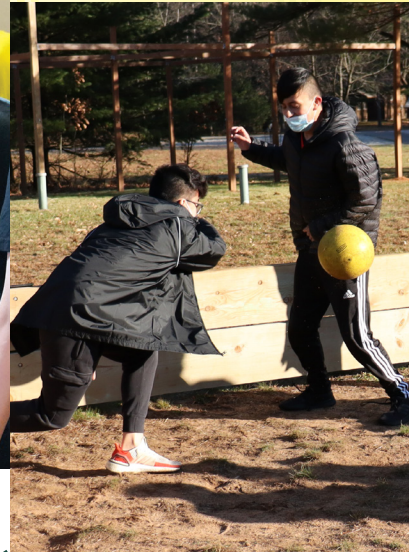
The junior class held its retreat at Mount Morris Retreat Center, in Wautoma, WI, lodging in cabins. The retreat was led by Dr. Michael Donohue and Dr. Rick Voell, leading discussions and presentations about the "spirit." They discussed not only the Holy Spirit, but also the spirit in everyday life. They discussed the importance of spirit and the role it plays in life and in one's relationship with God. Ian Le said, "I liked writing our burdens (on pieces of wood) and burning them. I liked that we got to see our classmates' burdens without knowing whose they were. We all saw that each one of us is dealing with something, even if it doesn't physically show."

Finally, the seniors held their retreat at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, WI. The retreat was led by Fr. Michael Joseph Groark, the St. Joseph Province Vocations Director, via Zoom meetings, focused on discerning one's vocation. Just as importantly, it also acted as a break for the seniors by giving them a lot of free time. The seniors discussed the saints and how they discovered their vocations. "It was our last retreat as a class, and I enjoyed being with my class," said Ellison Juern.

The retreats are a great opportunity for class bonding, developing a deeper relationship with God, and examining one's life. They also act as a break from the daily life at SLS and a time take a step back to relax. The retreats gave the students a much-needed rest so they could return to school and finish the last week before Thanksgiving break, fully energized and renewed. ★

A Step Back from SCHOOL, A Step Forward in Faith

Ricky Conlin ('22)



Zooming in on

Student's Lives *Earl D Souza ('22)*



At Saint Lawrence, parent-teacher conferences were held in the second quarter, to discuss students' performance. They are usually conducted in person here on campus. However, this year necessitated special arrangements, due to the coronavirus pandemic. In order to ensure the safety of staff members, students and parents, the school decided to conduct the conferences virtually, via Microsoft Teams. Parents were invited to schedule meetings in advance with the teachers they wanted to talk to. Mr. Jeffrey Krieg, who teaches History, said, "It was a unique experience. The meetings went very well, and I was able to talk to a lot of parents, including some who were overseas."

The meetings required a lot of technological preparation, due to the setup that was needed to make them happen. Mrs. Kelly Potratz, who works in the IT department, said, "As it is with most things, it was a group effort!" Mr. Bartel and Ms. Daane worked together to build an online scheduling tool and communicated with the parents. Mrs. Potratz created detailed instructions for the teachers, and had a short training session to get them acquainted with Microsoft Teams. She was also there on the day of the conferences to fix connection issues. Mrs. Potratz commented, "Luckily, everything went fine, and there were very few issues." This year, with the help of many, parent-teacher conferences went smoothly, despite them having to be conducted online due to the pandemic, thanks to a brilliant effort by the staff. ★

For what seems like an eternity now, the world entered a new normal. Daily routines include sanitizing and mask wearing. Ever since the pandemic broke out, scientists all over the world have been rushing to develop a vaccine to combat the virus. A few months later, it seems like an end is coming soon. On December 12, 2020, the FDA authorized the use of the Pfizer vaccine for emergency use. Pfizer, a pharmaceutical company, partnered with a German company, BioNTech to develop the vaccine. Pfizer organized a deal with the U.S. government to distribute 100 million doses of the vaccine. Other countries like Canada and Britain, have also authorized the use of the Pfizer vaccine.

The distribution of the Pfizer vaccine will be a massive coordinated effort between Pfizer, state and local officials, and private shipping companies. This will not be an easy task however, throughout production, distribution, and vaccinations, the vaccine will need to be kept at minus 80 degrees Celsius. That is as cold as the South Pole in the winter. In the beginning stage, the vaccines will be distributed to health care workers and residents of nursing homes. During the clinical trials, the Pfizer vaccine boasted a 95% effective rate. The world will watch as the first wave of vaccines is distributed. If the Pfizer vaccine works, this could finally be the end to the coronavirus pandemic. ★

A Panacean Christmas Gift

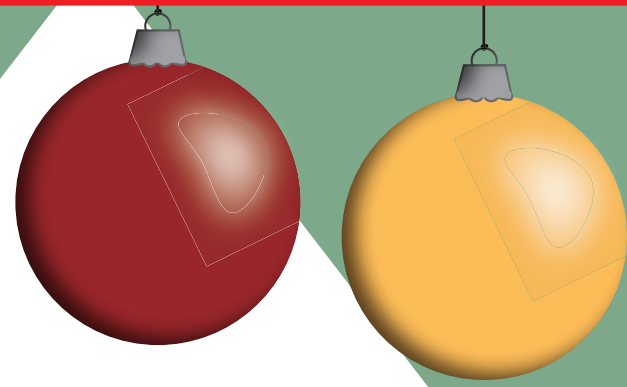
Andrew Fran ('21)



Tuning in To the Holidays

Peter Lim ('21)

Like most things in 2020, this year's choir and band practices and concerts looked pretty different due to Covid-19. Mr. Ahlstrom remarked, "The choir has been practicing concert material since early in the year. The band has been preparing only since October and they are both peeking at a good time." Some restraints were put in place, such as band members covering their instruments with elastic coverings and mandatory mask wearing for all musicians. The performance in the Chapel was also set up differently than previous years, but still the choir adjusted well to spacing out on the sanctuary. Benedict Wood, a senior choir member, stated, "I'm pretty excited with what we've done! We sounded fairly good singing while wearing masks and all the other Covid-19 restrictions." The SLS choir members shared an assortment of jolly tunes, including "A Christmas Festival," "Christmas Time is Here," and a few other favorites. Although the Christmas Concert was only performed to the students and residential staff on campus, families tuned in from across the world via a livestream link and enjoyed songs such as "A Visit from St. Nicholas," "Of the Father's Love Begotten" played by Caulodrino Williams on the violin, and "Sleigh Ride," the choir's traditional finale song. While many of the experiences were different for the band and choir this year, one thing that remained the same for the 2020 Christmas Concert was the joy it brought to performers and audience members alike. ★



Build Us A TABLE

Harvey Nguyen ('22)



Candles, harmony, and prayers are things commonly seen in Thanksgiving and Christmas banquets. At Saint Lawrence Seminary, these two banquets are always hosted the night before students leave to go home for a break. Due to Covid-19 the SLS banquets were a little different than other years.

One way the Thanksgiving banquet was somewhat unique was no faculty were in attendance. Before the meal, prayers were read by members of the student body and ended with a brief speech by Father Zoy. There was also a sense of excitement that filled the room—students were on campus longer than usual with the cancellation of Home Weekend, and everyone was looking forward to the coming break.

After their return from the week-long break, the students only had three short weeks of school before their next banquet and trip home for Christmas. Each year there is a cultural theme chosen for the Christmas banquet. "For the Christmas banquet this year, we will talk a little bit about Christmas traditions in India," Mrs. Buelow said. During the banquet, the youngest student at SLS announced the arrival of the Christmas star followed by the song, *O Come All Ye Faithful*. To conclude the banquet a traditional Christmas toast was given as all said Merry Christmas to one another.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are special in unique ways to each person. For SLS students, though, they are times of thankfulness and joy. Banquets that take place before these breaks are the time for students to say goodbye to one another for a period of time so that they can go and come back with a spirit that has been fulfilled. ★

WRESTLING With the PANDEMIC.

Joseph Hall ('22)



In a time when words like social distancing, pandemic, and masking were being used on a daily basis, no one expected to see the wrestling mats rolled out. And even if the impossible happened and the season ensued, how different would it be? But, as the wrestling season drew near, no word had been sent out to cancel it. The out-of-season contact days were scheduled to begin and the wrestling team couldn't believe that the season might actually continue, so when time for practice and preparation for the season commenced, everyone was thrilled.

On November 6th, Coach Phil McCabe set up the field for the first outdoor contact day. To get in shape for the season, the athletes ran around campus, dove over hurdles and sprinted through cones at top speed. In addition to conditioning, Coach McCabe began to teach the basics of wrestling, from takedowns to escapes. These contact days lasted from November 6th to the 11th. "It was great to have those days this year; it gave the wrestlers a chance to start the season earlier," said Coach McCabe. Normally, teams are only allowed to fulfill these contact days over the summer; the rise of the pandemic prevented that from happening this year. This was a rare luxury that Saint Lawrence wrestlers do not usually have.

The Monday after the students returned from Thanksgiving break was their first practice of the year. The wrestlers arrived at practice and were welcomed with a weightlifting routine and more conditioning. Then, the wrestlers were taught more basic technique and reviewed what they had learned during the contact days. Gael Palacios-Prieto commented, "These practices have really helped me become a better wrestler and get a lot stronger." With the pandemic still a very real threat, new cleaning and sanitation requirements were introduced this year. After each practice the walls of the wrestling room were wiped down and the mats were washed daily.

Because of the virus, this year's one scheduled meet was sure to be very different than what the wrestlers were used to. The wrestlers and team personnel were all required to wear masks upon arrival to the meet and the wrestlers had to wear them until the official warm ups began. Before the wrestlers were weighed in, they had their temperatures taken and remained socially distanced throughout the entire process. Once the actual wrestling meet began, the match advanced as normal, but the mat was wiped down after each match. The awards after the matches were also appropriately distanced.

This year's wrestling season has already been unique in many ways, and the changes are just beginning. From the positives, like the use of the contact days, to the negatives, like extra cleaning requirements, many things are different. While the alterations may seem large, the sport is still the same and the Saint Lawrence team considers itself lucky to have a season at all in the midst of the pandemic. ★



St. Lawrence Seminary has been called a “mini United Nations” by numerous people over the years. This is because it has such a diverse community of students who come from all parts of the globe. To achieve this, the Admissions Department has worked diligently to recruit future students to join the SLS community.

Hilltoppers are familiar with most of the admissions department staff. Mr. Francisco Saucedo has been working with St. Lawrence since 2003, now as the Director of Admissions and Recruitment. He has been to South Korea, Vietnam, and many other places to fulfill his long-term vision for SLS, “to provide a safe and multi-cultural environment for the students by helping them to learn about the different cultures that help make up the Catholic community.” Mr. Bryant Romero, one of the school’s Admissions Coordinators, spends most of his time in the Chicago area encouraging students to attend the weekend visits. His goal is to provide prospective students with the experience of living on campus via those visits. Mrs. Kristy Mathes, Administrative Assistant to Mr. Saucedo, takes part in the student registration process at the beginning of every school year and manages all the paperwork required of them, and Mrs. Andrea School manages the school’s marketing videos and social media as a Marketing and Admissions Coordinator. In addition, this year, SLS has welcomed a new member of the admissions department, Ms. Molly Moran. “My job is to recruit students from the Milwaukee area,” she said. Although having different jobs in the department, the department members daily live at St. Lawrence is quite similar.

When being asked what daily life is like, Mrs. Kristy Mathes claimed, “It is quite simple: I’m in charge of the school’s public relations, by managing the Facebook page, alumni relations, and registrar.” This year, due to the impact of Covid-19, it is more challenging for the admissions department to accomplish their work. For example, traditionally, those interested in studying at SLS come for a Thursday – Sunday visit to get a good feel for life on campus. This year, however, weekend visits in the fall of 2020 were limited to a Friday through Saturday visit. “Students and their parents are curious about the current situation of the world pandemic and thus our job is to make sure they feel safe and trust in our community,” said Mrs. Mathes. It is also more difficult for the staff to travel to other places for recruitment. With their enthusiasm, members of the admissions department are, step-by-step, getting their jobs done with adaptations.

The ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity at SLS helps make the St. Lawrence experience unique and creates for students one of the most memorable aspects of being a Hilltopper. The admissions department has helped to bring the community to campus. Thankfully, during this unprecedented time, the admissions department is still able to cope with all the challenges, so there will continue to be future classes of Hilltoppers. ★

The Headhunters

Kiet Do ('22)



Some students' favorite competition is basketball, others soccer, and some boxing, but to some of the Hilltopers, their favorite competition is Math meets. However, much like the rest of 2020, this year many math competitions were canceled due to Covid-19 precautions. At first, the students were disappointed to hear that their beloved math meets were canceled, until the intraschool meet was announced. The intraschool meet included five teams and a secret prize of Buffalo Wild Wings awarded by Mr. Dave Bartel. With such an encouraging prize, students were eager to sign up.

This year, the students were divided into teams, by the five highest scoring seniors, who would lead their Math Marvels into competition. The rest of the meet was as close to a regular meet as it could have been. The students were placed into rooms and, of course, socially distanced. Then, the problem sheets were handed out. After four rounds and the final team contest, the students were led to the refectory for an after-meet snack and awards. Awards were given out for the top three highest-scoring students in each grade, as well as the highest overall scoring team. The first place team was Team J, led by Ellison Juern. Senior Martin Pham said, "It was fun competing with and against my friends and I'm grateful for the experience, although we had to stay on campus." The first (of hopefully many math meets) of the school year was a big success for all those involved. It was a way to stay involved in a time when many activities and events have been canceled. The math meet was a fond and memorable experience in an unforgettable year. ★

6 Feet + ISOLATION
= Math Meet

Ellison Juern ('21)



Sons of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Andrew Tran ('21)



The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe is one well known by many Catholics. As the story goes, Juan Diego was walking up the hill of Tepeyac in the middle of winter when Mary appeared. Mary instructed Juan Diego to go to the bishop; she wanted a church built on the hill of Tepeyac. The bishop denied Juan Diego twice. Mary appeared to Juan Diego again and told him to open his cloak to the bishop. When he opened his cloak to the bishop, roses fell out and the cloak was imprinted with an image of Mary. The bishop recognized the miracle and ordered the construction of the church. The church still stands today as pilgrims visit to pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her feast day is celebrated on December 12th.

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is also celebrated at St. Lawrence Seminary. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the celebration was led by Mr. Francisco Saucedo and many Mexican students. When asked about celebrating the feast day differently, senior Osvaldo Gonzalez said, "It was an honor to really cook for this feast, but it was a shame to miss out with the parents. It's better to have home-cooked meals from our moms." The celebration began with prayer in the refectory. The rosary was recited in Spanish. After prayer, dinner was served. The students enjoyed tacos, rice, and beans. For dessert, concha was served with Abuelita, a warm chocolate drink. For many students, this was their first time celebrating the feast day at St. Lawrence. After eating the meal, freshman Xavier Saucedo said, "I really enjoyed the food. It felt like something I would have at home." This year, the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe may have been different, but the feast was something to remember. With the prayer and the food, St. Lawrence continues to celebrate our Blessed Mother. ★

Angelic Gifts FROM ON HIGH

Thomas Nguyen ('21)

One of the most beautiful ministries that St. Lawrence Seminary participates in is the Angel Tree Project. The Angel Tree Project is a program that allows incarcerated parents to give their children a gift during the Christmas season. This ministry program provides families the opportunity to reconnect and for everyone to share in the season of giving. Mrs. Buelow heads this project, and it is thanks to her that SLS can participate every year.

During the second quarter, the Sunday collection from Mass is used to fund the Angel Tree Project. The collection helps purchase the gifts that the children wish for during Christmas. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, Saint Lawrence was not able to have any visitors for Sunday Mass. It is through the efforts and participation of everyone in the community that makes this program a success every year. This year, SLS had to get creative to raise funds for the Angel Tree Project. The student council sponsored days like "jeans day" and even had an exciting raffle to "Shave Mr. Nguyen's Beard" to raise money. A parish from Sheboygan also generously helped Saint Lawrence Seminary raise enough money to fund the Angel Tree Project. Mrs. Buelow also stated, "The SLS staff has been very generous in donating to the cause as well."

Usually, freshmen and sophomores get the opportunity to wrap the presents, juniors purchase the gifts, and the seniors go door-to-door to the families and deliver the presents face-to-face. However, due to the global pandemic, things were different this year. The juniors could not go out and purchase the gifts this year, so a few of the staff members did all of the shopping. The freshmen and sophomores still had a wonderful time wrapping up and decorating the presents, and on December 13th the seniors were still able to distribute the gifts. To ensure everyone's safety, the drivers called the families ahead of time and put the gifts on the front porch to ensure "no contact delivery." In past years the students would also deliver fruit baskets to the families, but could not this year due to Covid-19. This year, SLS was able to deliver presents to 92 children from 44 families.

The Angel Tree Project is an unforgettable experience for all at Saint Lawrence Seminary. The student and staff participation and enthusiasm create a wonderful experience for everyone to share. Senior Martin Pham stated, "The experience was pretty eye opening. Seeing so many gifts brought for the children was really moving." This project allows for incarcerated parents to give their children a gift, despite the difficulties involving imprisonment and Covid-19. The Angel Tree Project is a beautiful ministry that helps all share in the season of hope and charity. One of the most impactful parts of the Angel Tree Project is when the children's parents write back the SLS community, thanking everyone for helping their family. Christmas is all about sharing the true meaning of love for others, and the Angel Tree Project helps all unite in the name of Christ to share and live a life of love. ★





- Joe Biden, after a series of lawsuits from Donald Trump and other Republicans, was officially named the President of the United States. All of the lawsuits were thrown out of their respective state courts except one outstanding lawsuit in Texas filed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton. Biden has begun the process of transitioning power from President Trump.
- Midst protests and riots in Thailand, the Thai parliament chose to not curb the powers of their monarchy. Meanwhile, the military is ramping up their pressure on the rioters, arresting more demonstrators and increasing their presence on the streets.
- 15 Asian countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and China, created the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This agreement is a mix of existing agreements intended to increase the global GDP by an annual \$186bn by 2030.
- National Ethiopian forces entered Mekelle, the capital of the northern region Tigray, less than a month into their civil war. This is following a threat by the Ethiopian prime minister Abiy Ahmed to take down the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Ahmed's forces have taken control of Tigray, targeting citizens and arresting many. TPLF fighters withdrew from the capital to prepare for a possible guerrilla war.
- Mexico is in the process of reviewing a cannabis legalization bill. This law would permit drug users to have a maximum of 28g of cannabis and at most four plants growing for personal use. If this bill passes the lower house of Mexico's congress, it would become the third country to fully legalized the drug for recreational use.
- Britain became the first nation to authorize a covid-19 vaccine for public use. The approved Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine will undergo a continuous review of the data as they become available first to *a priori* citizens. The FDA also recently accepted a vaccine for commercial use.
- French President Emmanuel Macron is cracking down on police criticism, ordering his government to redraft a bill making it illegal to post pictures of the police. This is following a CCTV tape where three officers beat and verbally abused a black man went viral.
- A new law was issued stating that all Chinese companies cannot be traded on American stock exchange. The House of Representatives passed the bipartisan bill and it quickly cleared the Senate. China has three years to follow this law.
- Britain will follow in California's footsteps with a future ban on vehicles. By 2030, all sales of new petrol and diesel cars will be banned. The government included this in their new "green industrial revolution" plan to move the nation towards renewable energy.



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Editors' Quotidian Remarks

Andrew

The semester is ending faster than I realized. With tests and finals, I have really felt the pressure of senior year. Things like the term paper and college admission decisions are weighing on my mind as the semester comes to an end.

Although things have been stressful, I've been able to appreciate many things during the end of this semester. St. Nicholas and Angel Tree were really fun. The joy of sledding with my classmates is still the same as when I was a freshman. Ben and I are really excited for our final forensics season to start. We hope everyone enjoys this issue of Hilltopics safely. We'll see you next year!



Merry Christmas everyone! The snowfall has begun, and the weather's beginning to grow colder. Winter sports have started, and forensics is looming down on the two of us. College deadlines are also drawing near; everything is beginning to fall in on us. However, it will be nice to go home at the end of such a stressful semester.

As the first semester comes to a close here on the Hill, Andrew and I are thankful to edit such a publication. With cases and deaths rising, we're glad that we can bring you news of a secluded world with some sort of normalcy. Hopefully once we return we'll be able to bring you the same content. See you next year!



Benjamin