Spirituality Year Overview

Human and Spiritual Formation
In the fall of 2018, the Seminary of Christ the King will begin its Spirituality Year Program (sometimes referred to as a propaedeutic period) for all candidates who enter the seminary. The purpose of the Spirituality Year is to help seminarians “form a priestly heart” in the atmosphere of a Christian community. This involves acquiring a solid foundation for their faith, a habit of prayer, and a deep personal love for the Word of God. This time of formation (September to May) also prepares candidates to embrace their Christian/priestly vocation with greater freedom of heart. As she states in her most recent guidelines for the training of future priests (2016), the Church now considers programs like the Spirituality Year to be a regular part of seminary formation.

The spiritual dimension is the mainstay of the program: daily Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, meditative lectio, Eucharistic adoration and examination of conscience, as well as days of retreat. Also included as supporting elements of the spiritual life are regular spiritual direction and Confession, and regular input from other formators. Cultural days and basic life skills supplement the human formation at this stage.

Meditative Study
The approach of the program is non-academic and experiential, that is to say, courses are not for credit. It is hoped that, without the pressure of academic performance, seminarians can more easily integrate the readings and discussions into a lived way of discipleship. Classes include: Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, priestly spirituality, and the liturgy. Presentations on selected formational topics also occur regularly.

It is expected that the candidates will read the whole Catechism and a major portion of the Bible during their year, be instructed briefly in the spirituality of all the major liturgical feasts and read selected Magisterial and Conciliar documents as well as a few important Catholic spiritual classics.

Apostolic Work
Participants will engage in daily manual work and weekly apostolic outreach. They will come to experience the providence of God in a deeply personal way through a mini-pilgrimage in which they will have to make due with a minimum amount of money and live close to the poor.

While this year of formation takes place in a community that is distinct from the seminary community proper, there are regular opportunities of prayer and recreation with the seminary community at various points during the week. Interaction with the Archdiocese of Vancouver is fostered by means of apostolic outreach. A particular characteristic of the Spirituality Year is a media fast (limited use of TV, radio, cell phone and internet).

To Prefer Nothing to Christ
Each year may have different emphases within the program to accommodate students’ needs and to nurture in them that love for Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin which alone transforms everything we do and say and are. Such is our hope for each Spirituality Year.
Fr. Lawrence (Leonard Anthony) Bilesky was born in Regina, SK, on March 24, 1930, and died in the abbey infirmary on Easter Monday, April 2, 2018.

His parents were Anthony and Theophila (Mireau) Bilesky. Predeceased by his sister, Lorraine Schmidt, and brothers Cyril & Gerald Bilesky, Fr. Lawrence is now survived by many cousins and nephews and nieces.

In 1934 his family moved to Vancouver, BC, where they eventually settled on Lulu Island and found a home in St. Paul’s Parish, Richmond.

While growing up, Leonard received schooling under the tutelage of many religious, most notably the Irish Christian Brothers at Vancouver College (1943-1948). On the advice of a local priest, Fr. Patrick McEvoy, he entered the Seminary of Christ the King on October 15, 1949.

After completing two years of Arts, Leonard entered the monastic community as a postulant on August 14, 1951. The next year, at simple profession, he took the name Lawrence and three years later made his solemn vows on Sept 12, 1955. Finally, he was ordained priest on April 6, 1957.

Already after solemn vows, Frater Lawrence was put in charge of all the motor vehicles in the monastery. He was typically meticulous, with an orderly yet artistic sense for tasks and spaces. He also helped maintain the heating system and installed the first gasoline tank on the property. On the abbey grounds, he did much of the grading of the lawns and playing fields. His longest-held job, though, was the maintenance of the telephone system, which he carried on until a few months before he died.

Upon graduation from the seminary, he started teaching Latin, English and Social Studies in the high school seminary. In 1959 he was appointed its vice-rector, until sent to St. Louis University to obtain a master’s degree in Classics in 1964.

When he returned home, it wasn’t too long before Fr. Lawrence was back in the full swing of monastic life. He designed the layout for our “Pax Regis” magazine, whose publication he looked after for many years. Although he was colour blind, he was a good photographer and left thousands of slides and black-and-white photos in the monastic archives. For many decades he was registrar of both the major and minor seminaries; as in many other monastic spaces, so here he employed his carpentry skills to design a fitting room in the minor seminary as a registrar’s office.

In his early years he was much involved with
the construction and finishing of the abbey and guesthouse buildings. He also learned to run a large bulldozer given to the abbey by Emil Anderson Construction. With this, he moved a lot of earth from around the construction site of the Abbey Church and helped expand Mary Lake.

With frequent pastoral assignments and a longstanding interest in guests, he made many friends from outside the monastery. One person at his funeral recalled how Fr. Lawrence had an eye for doing the extra little task for guests, such as the times he would be clearing a path with the bulldozer for them if they needed to drive up or down the driveway in the midst of a snow storm. Being multi-talented and a perfectionist, Fr. Lawrence gave generously of himself and of his time to the community for many years. As his health declined he found it difficult not to be as active within the community.

Throughout his 65 years of monastic profession and 60 years of priesthood, Fr. Lawrence toiled “in the school of the Lord’s service”. As he advanced in years, he had to endure various physical ailments (he suffered from late onset diabetes, had two knee replacements, and kidney failure), but he also struggled spiritually. Nonetheless, he held on perseveringly to his monastic vows. As the presence and sincere care of the community, especially that of the younger members, touched him more and more, he gradually allowed himself to be carried by others and to let go of worldly attachments which had kept him looking more outside the community than inside.

After spending two weeks in March in Mission Memorial Hospital being treated for pneumonia, and then being diagnosed with lung cancer, he returned to the abbey infirmary for the last week of his life. At home with his monastic community, Fr. Lawrence accepted the faithful presence of his confreres who walked with him to the end. The night before he died, Easter Sunday, he was anointed by Father Abbot John. Gathered around his bed in the infirmary were also ten of the younger members of the monastic community who care for the elderly. In the grace of that moment, Fr. Lawrence thanked those who cared for him and initiated an exchange of forgiveness with those present. Just as the risen Lord brought his forgiveness to the disciples on that first Easter Sunday, so may he bring Fr. Lawrence to the eternal Easter Peace.

Fr. Lawrence excavating

Visiting the abbey of St. Walburga in Colorado
Bishop Greg Bittman

Pope Francis’ appointment of Most Reverend Gregory Bittman as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Nelson was announced on February 13. He succeeds Bishop John Corriveau, OFM Cap, who had shepherded the diocese for ten years. Bishop Bittman is the second SCK alumnus to lead the Diocese of Nelson, Bishop Peter Mallon having presided there from 1990 to 1995.

Bishop Bittman studied at SCK from 1986 to 1990, completing his theological studies at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Edmonton but receiving an M.Div. degree from SCK in 1991. He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Joseph MacNeil on August 15, 1996 and to the episcopate by Archbishop Richard Smith on September 3, 2012. He served as Auxiliary Bishop to Archbishop Smith in Edmonton until his appointment to Nelson this spring.

Bishop Bittman was installed as Bishop of Nelson in Kelowna on April 25, the Feast of the Evangelist St. Mark. Having relocated to British Columbia, he is now the neighbour of an SCK classmate, Bishop Joseph Phuong Nguyen, who was appointed to Kamloops in 2016. We wish Bishop Bittman joy and peace as he enters into a new phase of pastoral ministry in British Columbia’s beautiful southern interior. We trust that he will find time to engage in outdoor activities such as cross country running and downhill skiing amidst his pastoral responsibilities.

Community of Jesus: Chant Workshop

Who would think of looking to the native soil of Pilgrim settlers in America for experts on Gregorian chant? There exists, however, on the shores of Cape Cod in Massachusetts a thriving monastic Christian settlement called the Community of Jesus and composed of consecrated men and women as well as entire families. Two of its members, Srs. Evangeline Ingwersen and Alicia Mitman, gave the major seminarians their annual 3-day January workshop, this year on Gregorian chant, the traditional music of the Roman Rite.

Gregorian chant is both familiar to seminarians and somewhat inaccessible because of its Latin text and different musical notation. Sisters Evangeline and Alicia therefore led the seminarians in various ways to a deeper appreciation of the text, even by having them dramatise a chant on the wedding feast of Cana. As to the musical side, they highlighted the elements of modality and notation that serve as scaffolding for chant melodies. With these keys, one can unlock the structure of a melody, savour its flow and appreciate how it expresses the inspired biblical text which it adorns. The sisters also came equipped with a 40-foot-long visual display. More than 2000 years of musical history were highlighted here: from the roots of Gregorian chant in Jewish synagogue liturgy through its time of flowering in the monasteries of the Middle Ages to its modern revival by the Abbey of Solesmes in France.

A heritage acquired over centuries can hardly be combed through in three days. However, the workshop offered glimpses of vistas yet to be discovered and gave the participants a desire to share this musical patrimony with the rest of the faithful to whom they will one day minister.
The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, traditionally held every year between January 18th (the Feast of the Confession of Saint Peter) and January 25th (the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul), is an intentional time for Christians around the world to live out Christ’s prayer that his followers “may all be one,” as he and the Father are one, “so that the world may believe” and have life in his name (John 17). At the Seminary of Christ the King, we were honoured to have four different groups of guests join us during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Our first guests were Sisters Evangeline Ingwersen and Alicia Mitman from the Community of Jesus, an ecumenical Christian community from Orleans, Massachusetts; our afternoon of ecumenical dialogue was the culmination of a three day workshop in sacred chant. The seminarians were edified by their passion for chant and their desire for Christian unity.

Our next three guests, spread over two nights, were Jonathan Bird, Flynn Ritchie, and Dr. Ray Bakke. Jonathan Bird is the founder and executive director of CityGate Leadership Forum, a non-profit organization that fosters vision and synergy among Christian communities and charities. Flynn Ritchie is the founder of Church for Vancouver, a website that promotes ecumenical dialogue and charitable works. Dr. Ray Bakke serves as the Senior Associate of his own company, Ray Bakke Associates, where he continues to invest in the next generation of urban ministry leaders locally, nationally, and around the globe by speaking, teaching, mentoring, consulting and publishing. Whereas Jonathan and Flynn gave interesting insights into applying urban theology and missiology on a local level, Dr. Ray shared his own personal journey of applying urban theology and missiology on a global level. In short, we learned both how the story of redemption has an urban conclusion and how the culture of the city shapes Christian spirituality. As Dr. Ray asked us so poignantly, “If you had to prove to me that God is alive in your city, where would you take me?”

Our last guests were Stephen Mulder and Mara Narciso from Alpha Canada, an ecumenical organization based on the Alpha Course, a ten week program that combines a communal meal, a video, and a small group discussion. We were edified by their zeal for missionary work within Vancouver and their desire to bring about true ecumenical dialogue through their Alpha programs.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Seminary of Christ the King was a fruitful experience of shared prayer, reflection, and fellowship. We look forward to building upon these initial encounters and striving to make Christ’s prayer that we “may all be one” a reality in our world today.
Rev. Matthew Gerlich OSB, celebrated 25 years of priesthood on May 16th. The eldest of four children, he was born in Edmonton in 1958.

He received his primary and secondary education in the separate school system and earned an honours degree in economics at the University of Alberta.

After a year as a teaching assistant and a scholarship-funded graduate student in economics at Queens University in Kingston, he returned to Edmonton to work on his master’s thesis for the Alberta oil industry. For the next three years he was employed by the Edmonton Economic Development Authority.

As part of his vocation discernment he spent 1986-87 as an associate with the Basilian Fathers teaching at Catholic Central High School in Novi, Michigan.

In September 1987, he entered pre-theology at the Seminary of Christ the King. As an economist and mathematician he tried to picture being, in Fr. Augustine’s Metaphysics course, “as one big matrix. ... it didn’t work.”

The following year he entered the novitiate at Westminster Abbey. He made first profession of vows in 1989, choosing St Matthew as his patron, and in 1992 he made final vows.

He taught for a year in the Seminary after ordination in 1993, and then studied Moral Theology at the Alfonsianum in Rome for two years. He has been a teacher at the Seminary ever since.

He was appointed Prior from 2006-2011 and chaplain of the Poor Clares for four years.

In 2011 he became the Rector of the Major Seminary, succeeding Father Nicholas Ruh.

We wish him many more years in the Lord’s Vineyard.
Robert Weaver, ordained April 28th

Robert Weaver was ordained to the priesthood on April 28th in London, Ontario, by Bishop Ronald Fabbro, CSB.

Born in Penticton in 1966 and raised in Summerland, he attended the Seminary of Christ the King in 1988-89 in fourth arts.

He discerned a call to the priesthood during the late 1980s. “Eventually, however, I concluded that I was not called to this life. I was drawn to the human services and I worked in this area for a number of years. I was also attracted to research and academics, and I earned a PhD in social work from the University of Georgia in 2004.

“After living in the United States for about six years, I returned to Canada in 2007 in order to work as a professor at the University of Windsor’s School of Social Work. These years were both challenging and fulfilling as I achieved various personal goals but in time I began to once again experience God’s call to the priesthood. The signs were quite gentle at first, but the call was persistent and it steadily grew stronger. I cooperated and nurtured this call through prayer, including praying the Liturgy of the Hours, frequent Mass attendance and regular celebration of the Sacrament of Confession, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and spiritual direction. After spending time with priests from both religious orders and the Diocese of London, I applied to St. Peter's Seminary and re-entered formation for diocesan priesthood in August 2013.

“Since then, my time in the seminary has been a transition for me that has included various challenges, but it has also been a time of tremendous grace. For instance, I have encountered the Risen Jesus in the Sacred Scriptures and my love for Him, in union with the Holy Trinity, has increased tremendously.”

Paul Birdsall to be ordained June 2nd

Paul Birdsall was born in 1989 in Cut Off, Louisiana, and attended school there before entering Christ the King Seminary for Grades 11 and 12, starting in 2005. He attended St Joseph Seminary College in St. Benedict, LA from 2009-13 and received a BA in Philosophy. He then did his theology at Notre Dame Graduate School of Theology in New Orleans 2013-18, where he earned his M.Div.

He has three brothers and two sisters. He will be ordained at St. Francis Cathedral in Houma, Louisiana on June 2nd by Bishop Shelton Fabre, and say his first Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Cut Off, LA, the next day. He has been assigned as assistant to St. Bernadette Parish in Houma, LA. He did his Internship at Christ the Redeemer Parish in Thibodaux, LA. He enjoys hunting, fishing and artifact collecting.
Ken Anderson to be ordained June 8th

Ken Anderson was born in 1992 in Prince George, BC, was homeschooled on his family’s ranch at François Lake, and entered SCK in September, 2010. He comes from a family of strong faith; his oldest sister is a Cistercian nun in the US.

He will be ordained on June 8th for the Prince George diocese by Bishop Stephen Jensen at Sacred Heart Cathedral, where he will say his first Mass the next day.

During his summers he worked as a labourer at a sawmill where his father also works. He also worked at Camp Morice on Stewart Lake.

He enjoys hiking, horseback riding, camping, canoeing and reading.

His pastor for the past 25 years has been Father Vincent James, OMI, for whom he was an altar server and who had a notable influence on his vocation.

Cesar Izquierdo Gomez to be ordained July 3rd

Cesar Izquierdo Gomez will be ordained a priest by Bishop Joseph Tyson for the diocese of Yakima, WA on July 3rd.

Cesar was born in 1988 in San Luis Potosi in Mexico, where he did his elementary and secondary schooling. He attended Santa Maria de Guadalupe Seminary in Mexico City from 2008-12, then Christ the King Seminary from 2012-14. For the last four years he has been at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. He hopes to obtain the STL in Public Ethics in 2020.

He has one brother and four sisters. His grandmother, a daily communicant, was a deep influence in his vocation. During his summers he worked on construction, in a warehouse, and on a farm. He even spent a month in China with the Maryknoll Fathers, mainly teaching English. During the summers of 2015-16 he worked in the parishes of Penticton, BC, with Fr. Rex Velmonte, helping with baptisms, weddings and funerals.

His hobbies include sports, reading and travelling.

He hopes to say his first Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Granger, WA, on July 4th.

SEMINARY OF CHRIST THE KING
VOCATION LIVE-IN DATES

July 6-8, 2018
November 16-18, 2018
February 8-10, 2019

Seminary of Christ the King
Box 3310
Mission, B.C., Canada
V2V 4J5
Phone: (604) 826-8715
or (604) 826-8975
Facsimile: (604) 826-8725
E-mail: a30085@paralynx.com
rector.majors@yahoo.ca
or frpeterosb@gmail.com
December 2017
8: The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Several majors renewed their Marian consecrations this morning under the direction of Fr. Anthony. After Mass we drove a couple of groups of minors to St. Matthew's school in Surrey, then went next door ourselves to Holy Cross high school to talk to a few classes.
10: The Advent Program was today. Four weeks of mercifully low-intensity rehearsals by the philosophy guys, under the leadership of Andrew and directorship of Patrick, culminated in a well received, sarcastic take on the status of truth in our society. "Quid est Veritas?" was the title of the play and it involved governor Pilate, played to great acclaim by Shawn, and his cabinet discussing the tense situation in Jerusalem following Jesus' death and resurrection. Also, Patrick directed a polyphonic group of majors in singing "Agni Parthene", a Greek hymn composed by St. Nectarios of Aegina. Dominic was this year's MC and, following his performance, there were calls of "MC for life!" heard coming from the other majors.
12: Classes are over for the semester!
20: The exam period ended this afternoon. The social committee gave us a nice Advent supper, which was followed by the Advent gift exchange. This year, our surprise gifts (and there were definitely some surprises) were courtesy of a very generous donation from the archdiocesan Serra clubs.

January 2018
20: Ten majors and Fr. Joseph went skiing at Sasquatch Mountain (formerly Hemlock) today. The weather was pleasant, as was the skiing. Several guys were skiing for the very first time and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves.
24: Fr. John Horgan provided the conferences for our retreat this year. He gave us a good understanding of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: its origins, and its development by many
saints throughout the Church’s history. His basic encouragement to us was that we figure out how best we relate to Christ through any of the various teachings about the Sacred Heart, and use this knowledge to deepen our prayer life and our relationship to Christ in general. To aid in this he gave us many tips regarding helpful forms of art, both images and statues, as well as many stories about a large number of saints. The saints are our examples and proof that ordinary human beings can attain holiness through devotion to Christ. Following the retreat, some of the majors and one of the hockey teams adopted the martyrs of Gorkum as patrons.

February 2018

4: Archbishop Miller celebrated Sunday Mass at the Abbey today. During Mass, he instituted Raffaele, Joshua, and Richard into the order of lector, and instituted Felix into the order of acolyte. Our prayers are with you, gentlemen.

7: The Ordinandi dinner was held this evening at the Italian Cultural Centre. We got to anticipate the upcoming ordinations of Deacons Guy and Ken with some pleasant food and enjoyable company. During one of the games the ordinandi had to play, we learned that Deacon Guy’s last meal would be at McDonald’s, while Deacon Ken would prefer some bannock.

March 2018

3: Mildred Moy, Sarah, and Jillian met with us today to share some of the work that they do with Catholic Street Missionaries. They had riveting testimonials regarding human trafficking, drug abuse, mental illness, homelessness, and what it is really like for women living and working on the streets. Perhaps the most disturbing part of their presentation was the realization it gave us of just how pervasive and close to home the problem of human trafficking really is.

17: Continuing a longstanding tradition, the majors defeated the minors on the hockey court today. The final score was 4-0, which makes the game appear much more lopsided than it actually was as the minors pressed their attacks hard for the entire duration of play.

21: Perhaps beginning a new tradition, the majors, as victors of the seminary match, played the monks at hockey on the Solemnity of St. Benedict. Fr. Joseph had the first goal, which was cheered wildly by the minors who were seeking retribution (or, at least, a vicarious victory) against the majors. After intensely-fought periods the monks, and their two ringers, emerged victorious: 3-2.

22: The long and frequently interrupted SHL season ended today. Too Hot To Handle (Matthew, Lucas, An, Joseph, and Peter the El-
der, captained by Dominic) triumphed over all comers and will be the next team to appear on the Bishop David Monroe Trophy.

23: In one last hurrah before the trek through Holy Week begins, over two-thirds of the majors went to a play tonight at Trinity Western university. The production was Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors", set in the 1970s and given a disco soundtrack. Anyone who has seen this play before will know that it does not take long for hilarity to ensue once two sets of identical twins appear in Ephesus where they are mistaken, and mistake themselves, for each other. Several rather witty scenes would make splendid additions to a future Advent program.

25: It is Palm Sunday, which can only mean one thing: oratory contest! This year’s speakers were Alexis, encouraging us to go skiing, Patrick, informing everyone of the uselessness of a seminary education, Matthew, making us all aware of fake news (and the dangers of water), Shawn, extolling the virtue of civil discourse as a response to the scourge of populism, and Lucas, with warnings about the role of technology in our lives. The minors entertained everyone with a series of musical performances while the judges deliberated. Eventually, a verdict was reached. Shawn and Patrick took second and third place respectively, and, for the second year in a row, Lucas was deemed the winner. Congratulations, gentlemen!
January 2018

19: Today, we excitedly boarded the bus that would take us to Sasquatch Mountain for our annual ski trip. We arrived just in time for the first-timers’ lessons, and we had a blast flying down the snowy slopes with our skis and snowboards, taking a short break only to pray Midday Prayer and to have lunch. By the end of nearly five hours of skiing, most of us were quite tired but satisfied, as we hopped back onto the bus that would take us back to ordinary life.

28: From Thursday after school until just after Mass on Sunday, the minor seminarians took a break from school work and engaged in a silent retreat directed by Fr. Leo. Conferences on the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, along with extended periods of spiritual reading composed most of our schedule. After such a grace-filled time, most of us felt refreshed as we resumed regular life, keeping in mind the encounters we had with Christ.

February 2018

2: After Vespers on the Feast of the Presentation, the Gr. 11 and 12’s, with Br. Joseph, embarked on a hike to Burke Mountain in Coquitlam. The two hour walk to the cabin itself was long and arduous due to the deep snow, but upon reaching the cabin, the survivors were fulfilled and contented, feasting on rich fare and an abundance of snacks.

18: The vocation live-in this weekend turned out to be fun and lively, what with around 40 live-inners coming just days after the start of Lent. Although a few traveled from Alberta or the States, most of the boys came in groups from the Lower Mainland.

21: Woken up at 4:00 in the morning, the seminarians prepared to embark on a ferry trip to Victoria for the annual cultural trip. After Mass and a hurried breakfast, we drove to the ferry terminal, only to have missed the ferry by a few minutes, so we waited for the next one which was two and a half hours later. This resulted in a rather relaxed and amicable time at the terminal, playing with the seagulls, praying Morning Prayer, and playing card games. Upon reaching Victoria, the seminarians and the parents that came with us headed straight for the museum, which exhibited many intriguing facts and artifacts. After finding our way to the cathedral, we prayed the Chaplet
of Divine Mercy there, then some headed back to the bus, while others visited the stores on the way. The ferry ride back was an opportunity for us tired pedestrians to relax and grab something to eat. On the sundeck, some dared to venture out against the whirling ice-cold winds. Arriving back at the seminary at 8:30, those who hadn’t had supper headed to the dining-room, while the rest unpacked, took showers, then went promptly off to bed.

March 2018
17: The major vs. minor hockey game took place today on the feast of St. Patrick. The minors were well-organized and had practised but the majors won 4-0, though not without a challenge as the minors pushed harder than in previous years. Some attribute their victory to the fact that they wore green, the colour associated with St. Patrick. Later that evening, the minors had a fulfilling supper at the lower field, where we roasted hot dogs over a smouldering fire of fallen trees from the last ice storm. After feasting on the aforementioned hot dogs, along with sandwiches, most played ultimate frisbee or chatted on makeshift benches near the fire. When all was dark and the stars were becoming visible in the night sky, we prayed the Rosary, and then, tired and content from the merry and joyful time spent together, we headed inside.

April 2018
1: Alleluia! Today we celebrated Easter. The long-awaited night finally came. The Vigil, preceded by quiet recollection throughout the Triduum, began with the outdoor fire and the arrival of the multitude of people gathered together to celebrate the Resurrection. Long, but awe-inspiring, the liturgy lasted from 10:00 at night till 1:30 in the morning, after which the seminarians went home for the Easter break to celebrate with their families.

22: Shortly before Vespers on Sunday, the minor seminarians returned after a weekend of performing poems, Shakespearean monologues and Bible pieces at the Speech Arts Festival hosted in Coquitlam by the Knights of Columbus.

27: The grilling sun reigned for one short week, fortunately coinciding with the two hockey games we hosted against Abbotsford Christian Secondary. The first, which was on Tuesday, was a suspenseful seesaw game, but Abbotsford Christian won by 3-2. Today, we held the second match. Because of a shortage of players on the opposing side due to a track meet on the same day, Fr. Peter and some of the majors joined their side, resulting in a fun, casual game. In the end, we gained a victory with 4-3. Overall, both sides displayed an abundance of enthusiasm and skill, making each game worth the time.
Well that was some winter! Perhaps not like the ones Brother Benedict can recount from his youth in Nova Scotia but still quite dramatic compared to the otherwise mild winters that grace the Abbey. The week surrounding the new year’s Solemnity of the Mother of God saw first a huge dump of powder, then a wave of sleet, and finally a bout of freezing rain that left every bough and blade of grass sporting almost two inches of clear armour. The fields were left a white Siberian waste land, except for the odd staff of ice which had incredibly grown up around a thin thread of vagrant hay which testified that there was still a black earth below. Every eave and gutter was adorned with a long chain of sharp swords, thrusting lower and lower as the hours progressed. Then finally, a most silent and still night, with only the cracking of wood and the glassy shattering of fallen branches to break the quiet peace reigning over the subdued Fraser Valley. In the morning, wow, what a mess! It seems that Mission and the monastery had been right at the heart of the storm, and in the days that followed a wonderful silence prevailed as men again, only timidly and tentatively, crawled out of their dens to face the consequences and the clean-up. A number of the older brothers and fathers noted that this was certainly the worst ice storms that the Abbey has experienced.

Within a week, a second round of freezing rain finished off whatever foliage had been left teetering on the edge of life, and in the ensuing days and weeks there followed the inevitable rounds of chipping and burning, shoveling and plowing. Most of the Brothers report being involved in this work in some capacity, whether this meant feeding Father Nicholas’ insatiable wood chipper, or building up piles of smaller sticks with Brothers Luke and Maximus (alongside their students). After clearing the power lines, driveway, and limbs leaning against the buildings, the postulants with Brother Bartholomew and Frater Philip undertook to clear the road which once connected the tractor garage to the monastery: a dangerous and painful task indeed, as shoe-sized chunks of ice continued to melt off the conifers above and bombard the workers.

With the forest making the largest demands on the Brothers’ time outdoors (“clearing trees and fixing fences and making fires till the day I die!” -Brother Bartholomew), what can be said about work indoors? Providence arranged for repairs to the elevator to be made shortly after Christmas, which meant that now the hullabaloo of hungry monks had to funnel into the guesthouse thrice a day to forage their meals. This exile from the monastic dining quarters lasted a
whole week, which allowed the furnishings to be
moved, and the floor to be scrubbed and sealed
by Brother Joseph and the juniors. Postulants An-
drew and Thomas assisted Brother Bartholomew
with similar repairs and sealing in the minor
seminary, while Novice Caleb and Frater Philip
did the same for some key areas of the kitchen.

Back outside, a stretch of dry and clear weath-
er allowed Brothers Maximus, Joseph and Bar-
tholomew to finish spreading the manure before
Lent began. The next morning, as Father Alban
preached a fine Ash Wednesday homily about
penance being the Father’s heavenly Valentine
gift to the community (and theirs to Him!), a
thick coat of fluffy white snowflakes descended
gently onto the freshly fertilized pastures, even as
ashes were peppered onto long rows of penitential
heads. With this vivid parable to inaugurate the
season, the monks’ Lenten works began in ear-
nest. Brother Paschasius redoubled his stitching
efforts to have the new pontifical copes ready
for Easter, Father Joseph donned his ski goggles
to re-saddle and mount his trusty snow-plough.
February 27th was a historic day for the com-
community, as the Brothers ambushed Frater Philip
after classes, enlisting his help in hoisting Father
Dunstan’s newest half-ton piece of sacred art up
to its final resting place on the wall above the Ab-
bott’s choir stall. The hammer’s ringing filled the
church as inch-thick steel pegs were pounded into
place: and yet this was no crucifixion scene, but
rather the long-awaited “entombment of Christ”.
Two and a half years after the first sieving of dry
concrete, and innumerable monk-hours later, the
whole community can at last look up and sigh
“What a Relief!” Father Dunstan has now turned
his attention to the final resurrection scene (in
progress), has begun sorting through pigments
untouched since the last fresco, and is currently
making the preliminary preparations for life-sized
stations of the cross set to grace the upper cloister.

Father Leo has spent the winter handling the
seasonal monsoon-flooding that grips the library,
and in his spare time (between teaching classes
and accompaniment of students) has been super-
vising the renovations of the guest cottage, which
will henceforth serve as a house of formation for
new major seminarians in the Spirituality Year.
While time and man-power constraints required
that this project be contracted-out, the finer de-
tails were handled by the Brothers; specifically,
furnishing pews and kneelers for the cottage chapel, where the most essential work on the fresh recruits is set to take place. Brother Joseph handled this job personally, with a little help from Novice Caleb, Andrew and Thomas. Not enough has yet been said about this last pair of postulants! Some highlights from one of their job lists: “trenching around the cottage/ moss removal from the high-school in preparation for reroofing… lots of fence repairs/ some tree milling [see below!]. . . hangers for the new copes/ inserting new copies of “Vespers” into the monks’ choir books... feeding silage/ moving cattle into the pastures... building temporary fence around the construction site for the new sacristy/ building a coffin/ digging a grave... transferring dahlia bulbs...” In short, a taste of everything!

Perhaps one of the more exciting changes in the life of the Brothers has been the revamping of the Divine Office books, spearheaded by Father Caesarius (with plenty of assistance from his secretaries). New copies of “Vespers” and “Vespers Saints” are now ready and waiting in the monks’ choir stalls (though a certain postulant accidentally recycled Brother Joseph’s morning “Lauds” instead, leaving the latter to discover the “misfiling” at 5 a.m. and then go swimming about through bags of paper to retrieve his missing pages!). “Vigils” is the next “hour” on Father Caesarius’ hit list, and even while balancing this work with teaching and spiritual direction, he still finds the odd moment to compose music for the feasts of the year. His newest compositions? Two polyphony motets for Epiphany and All Saints: “Venit Lumen Tuum”, and “Amen Benedictio” (cf. Revelation 7:12), respectively.

This spring has also seen the acquisition of some new equipment. In view of the unforeseen and abundant harvest of hardwood reaped from the winter’s ice storms (including an old walnut whose “butt-swell” diameter measures an imposing two meters), les Canadiens among the brothers thought it time to secure a portable mill. While much of the Abbey’s own wood has been milled in the past to supply lumber for ongoing building projects, the machinery has always come from outside. Now everything from structural beams to planks for caskets can be hewn by the monks themselves! Meanwhile, Father Joseph has had his eyes on doing some cutting of his own, and with the old lawnmower on the fritz and a huge freshly-planted soccer field to consider, purchase was made of a new John Deere. This machine is a ride-on and astonishingly quick. Reports have come in of Father Leo and the juniors “testing” its
safety features by whipping doughnuts in the upper field... One last species of “mowing” deserves mention: Father Abbot recently enlisted the services of Novice Caleb and Frater Athanasius, and the three set out on safari, hacking a path through the tangle of rhododendrons which huddle against the minor seminary. With this room made for scaffolding to poke through the soon-to-bloom canopy, the summer’s roofing project is already begun...

A final scene with the brothers should be recounted before this last winter is assigned to history. The first Sunday of Lent, armed with bus trays and old broiling pans, a troupe of cherry-cheeked juniors struck out into the bright sunshine towards a neatly ploughed mountain of snow (kudos Father Joseph!). Brick-makers in hand, a human chain was formed and within an hour the finest of snow fortresses (replete with arch, subterranean dungeon and raised turret) soon stood a grim sentinel over the gymnasium and seminary parking lot. Alas, it was only a matter of time before seminarians, major and minor, caught wind of it. That day and the following week saw brilliant ambuses followed by desperate guerilla warfare to preserve control of the coveted mound. It was common to witness volleys of ice balls answered by cinder-block sections of wall hurtled Ent-like upon the fleeing masses below. As snow-bricks were salvaged to construct an opposing wall, one could only think of the derelict abbeys of Europe, whose large stones were cannibalized to physically build up the surrounding districts. In the midst of this maelstrom, and then later at a safe distance, the original builders could reflect with complacent good humour on an invaluable lesson. Even should the inevitable tendency of fallen men be to continually turn the heritage of Christian civilization into fodder for secular ambition and strife, the humble labours of the brothers, undertaken for God, are their own reward. These noble pursuits will continue with a heavenly peace and joy so long as the Lord provides sons of St. Benedict to live on in the blessing of true brotherhood.

FORM OF BEQUESTS
I give, bequeath and devise to WESTMINSTER ABBEY LTD, Mission, BC, a corporation under the laws of British Columbia, the sum of $........ to be used at the discretion of the Benedictines of Westminster Abbey for the building program and general benefit of the Seminary of Christ the King, Mission, BC, Canada.

Abbot Jeremy Driscoll from Mount Angel Abbey (our Motherhouse) in Oregon visits May 15-17
Alumni celebrating golden jubilees of ordination this year include: Fr. Nicholas Boomars ’68 and Fr. John Eason ’68 of Vancouver. Those celebrating silver jubilees include: Fr. Peter Tuyen Nguyen ’88 of the Hamilton diocese, Fr. Thomas Duong Nguyen ’88 of the Regina archdiocese, Fr. Tien Tran ’88 and Fr. Paul Chu ’93 of Vancouver, and Fr. Matthew Gerlich, OSB, Rector of Christ the King Major Seminary. To all our jubilarians, ad multos annos!

Among those receiving new assignments as pastors effective in July are Fr. Joseph Hieu Nguyen ’99 will move to St. Andrew’s, Vancouver, and Fr. Alessandro Lovato ’02 to St. Helen’s, Burnaby.

As assistants, Fr. Lucio Choi ’16 will move to Immaculate Conception Parish, Delta; Fr. Mark McGuckin ’16 to St. Mary’s in Chilliwack, Fr. Francesco Voltaggio ’14 to All Saints in Coquitlam. Fr. Davide Lanzani ’15 will go to Rome to study for an STL in Missiology; Fr. Nick Meisl ’07, who returns from Rome, will teach at Corpus Christi/St. Mark’s College while in residence at St. John the Apostle Parish.

Fr. Hien Minh Nguyen ’00 will become the first Director of the Spirituality/Propaedeutic Year at SCK this September.

Tim Frymire ’73 writes from Winnipeg:
“I am now retired after 28 years as a Hospital Chaplain, the last 15 of which were spent also as a Teaching Supervisor for Clinical Pastoral Education and Adjunct professor at the University of Winnipeg. My wife Debbie and I now look after 2 grandchildren 3 days a week here in Winnipeg. Our 5 kids are all grown up with the youngest, Micah, having just graduated from the University of Manitoba with BA in Anthropology.

“I look forward to my visits to the Abbey and connecting with Ken Beatch who graduated from Grade 12 with me in 1973.”

Dominic Carey ’90 writes:
“On the 21st of March, I made simple profession at Saint Michael’s Abbey, Farnborough in the UK. They call me Gregory now. Pray for my perseverance. Dom Gregory, OSB (Dominic Carey)
Saint Michael’s Abbey
280 Farnborough Road
Farnborough, Hants
GU14 7QN UK”

Ron Junk ’62 writes from Ottawa:
“As a student from September 1956 to October 1962, ... I recall Father Lawrence’s ordination in the large ordination class of six priests in the spring of my Grade 9 year, 1957. In my Grade 11 year ... he taught Latin and in Grade 12 he may have been our Greek teacher... Another memory that I cherish is of Fr. Lawrence at the controls of the big red TD14 bulldozer that the Abbey acquired in the late ’50s. Thanks also for sharing the photo of Fr. Lawrence with Bishop David Monroe, ’67 who was one year ahead of me...”

On April 8, Martin Obradovic, ’87, visited from Washington, DC.
Requiescant in pace:
Carmelina Braganza, the mother of Father Abbot John, ’92 died on December 24 in Prince Rupert, BC.
Fr. George Pfliiger, ’50 died February 7, 2018, in Kelowna BC.
Werner Hansler, father of Br. Gregory OSB, died on Good Friday in Delta, BC.
Duyen (Ann) Dinh, mother of Anthony Dinh who is in the minor seminary, passed away on May 13, Mother’s Day.
Fr. Joseph moving earth to make room for the new sacristy

Blessing of the ground for the new sacristy

Fr. Joseph moving earth to make room for the new sacristy