



PAX REGIS

Vol. 84 No. 1 December 2024

The cover: *Close-up of Inlay Wood Intarsia of Westminster Abbey, gifted to Engelberg Abbey.*

Celebrating our Grandmother Abbey's 900th Birthday



Br Kuno Rüst oss, the Prior of Engelberg, holding the gift with a background of Br Columban's inlay work

BEFORE attending the Abbots' Congress in Rome this September, Abbot Alban made a meaningful visit to Westminster Abbey's grandmother abbey, Engelberg in Switzerland. Founded in 1120, Engelberg established Mt Angel Abbey in Oregon in 1882, which in turn founded our community at Ladner, British Columbia, in 1939.

When Engelberg celebrated its nine-hundredth anniversary during the Covid pandemic, our commemorative gift was necessarily delayed. Brothers Joseph and Bartholomew Bruneau collaborated on creating something special: a wooden image of our monastery crafted from local woods of varying shades, each piece carefully selected to create a striking three-dimensional effect.

The artwork was accomplished this summer, and presented to the Abbot and community of Engelberg at recreation on September 5, the solemnity of their abbey church's dedication.

They were very appreciative of the fact that it was uniquely made for them, even though Engelberg has a rich history of woodworking – their own Br Columban Louis had adorned much of their monastery with exquisite inlay work in the previous century. Our brothers' distinct technique, similar to intarsia in which pieces of different woods are fitted together to create a design or pattern, offered a fresh interpretation of this artistic tradition.

The gift held special meaning for us, as we remembered Engelberg's generosity in commissioning an abbatial crosier for the dedication of our abbey church in 1982. More than mere artifacts given in exchange, these gifts embody the deep spiritual bonds between our monasteries – tangible symbols of the prayers, shared heritage, and enduring fellowship that unite our communities across generations and continents.

**PAX REGIS – Biannual publication of Westminster Abbey and the Seminary of Christ the King,
Box 3310 Mission, B.C., Canada V2V 4J5. www.westminsterabbey.ca; info@westminsterabbey.ca**

Publications Mail Agreement Number 40012235 Subscription: \$5.00 a year. ISSN 0031-3335

A New Path Forward: Launching the Minor Seminary Transparency Initiative



FOR some time, Westminster Abbey and the Seminary of Christ the King have been on a journey toward healing and reconciliation following the sexual abuse perpetrated by Placidus Sander at the minor seminary. The profound harm caused by these acts of abuse in the 1970s, and the subsequent pain experienced by victim/survivors in seeking acknowledgment and justice, have led us to establish an online platform: *The Minor Seminary Transparency Initiative*.

This new website draws inspiration from a quote widely attributed to Mother Teresa: “Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.” It serves as both an acknowledgment of our past failures and a commitment to supporting victim/survivors. Recent civil actions, including the settlement reached in May 2024 with D.H., a former grade eight student of the minor seminary, have highlighted the critical importance of transparency, healing and the need to prioritize victim/survivors’ experiences. The new website houses several key components:

Documents

The *Joint Statement* from Westminster Abbey, Seminary of Christ the King and the Archdiocese of Vancouver as published in the previous issue

of the *Pax Regis*; a *Tribute to Victim/Survivors* as published in this current issue (pp.4-5); *Released Files*, which include personal letters, medical records, legal documents, and other materials related to Placidus’ life.

Victim/Survivor Support

The website provides access to professional resources and support services for victim/survivors through our Victim/Survivor Assistance Coordinator, Kristin Austin, LCSW-C, CCTP, who offers confidential, trauma-informed care.

Safe Environment Protocols

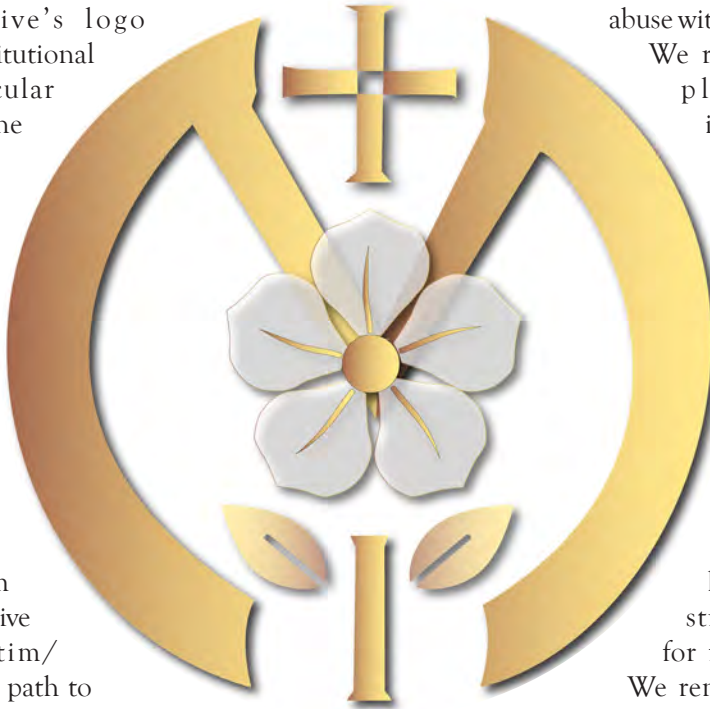
The website details our commitment to preventing future abuse through comprehensive safeguarding measures. We have established an advisory board and engaged Praesidium’s expertise to help implement rigorous standards for abuse prevention, response protocols, and supervision policies.

Resources for Healing

Healing is a deeply personal journey. Accordingly, the website includes space for prayer requests and provides various resources for spiritual and emotional support. We acknowledge that while prayer alone cannot erase past harm, it can be part of a broader journey toward healing when combined with concrete action and accountability.

Logo

Our initiative's logo embodies our institutional values: The circular "M" represents the minor seminary and our monastic community's solidarity with victim/survivors, while the T-shaped cross symbolizes our commitment to truth and transformation. The "I" stem signifies our initiative to support victim/survivors on their path to justice and healing. The dogwood flower, with its associations of renewal and the crucifixion, represents both the acknowledgment of suffering and the promise of healing. Two leaves, representing Westminster Abbey and Seminary of Christ the King, complete the design, symbolizing our shared commitment to rebuilding trust.



Logo of the Minor Seminary Transparency Initiative



This initiative stands as more than just a website—it represents our steadfast commitment to transparency, accountability, and most importantly, to supporting the healing journey

A Tribute to Victim/Survivors

“THERE is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you” (Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*). Your voices have broken through decades of silence. Each word you have shared carries the weight of profound courage – courage that has shaken our community to its core and demanded that we listen, truly listen. You have taught us fundamental truths: that

victims must be our first concern, that invisible wounds persist throughout lifetimes, and that protecting the vulnerable is our most sacred obligation.

Your testimonies have brought these painful experiences into the light. Your courage to speak, to make visible what had been invisible, has done more than secure recognition of your own experiences – it has created pathways to healing

of all who have been affected by abuse within our community.

We recognize that this platform, while important, is just one step in an ongoing process.

To those who have suffered and spoken out: your voices have been instrumental in creating this change. Your courage in coming forward has helped establish stronger protection for future generations. We remain committed to listening, learning, and working toward a future in which such violations of

trust will never occur again.

To those who still suffer in silence: we would be honoured to receive your story when and if you choose to speak. We desire to journey with you toward healing. That is our first concern, not our institution's reputation. *The Minor Seminary Transparency Initiative* can be accessed at: www.catholicseminaryabusedocuments.com.

We invite everyone to visit the website and join us in our commitment to fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and healing.

and protection for others. You have shown us what it truly means to see, to hear, and to witness.

We will not shroud your experiences in protective language or distance ourselves through institutional defense. The abuse you endured at the hands of one entrusted with sacred duties within the seminary community represents our tragic failure. Your suffering was real, and the impact continues to ripple through lives and families.

You chose to speak when speaking seemed impossible. You entrusted us with your stories when we had done nothing to earn that trust. This act of bravery has galvanized us into action. The safeguards we now implement, the protocols we have developed, and our commitment to transparency have received enormous momentum because you refused to let silence prevail.

Our commitment to you is this:

- We will strive to ensure your experiences are not minimized or forgotten;
- Your needs and healing will remain at the center of our response;
- We will continue to strengthen our safeguards and accountability measures, recognizing our own fallibility;
- We will foster a community where survivors are believed, supported, and protected;

- We will work to earn back trust through actions, not just words.

To those still carrying unspoken burdens: We stand ready to listen when and if you choose to speak. Your timeline is your own. Your story is yours to tell or hold close. Whatever you choose, know that your healing matters more than our institution's reputation.

As members of the communities of Westminster Abbey and the Seminary of Christ the King, we embrace our sacred duty to be ever-vigilant witnesses and protectors, so that no voice goes unheard and no suffering goes unseen.

Drawing inspiration from the angels, who stand as eternal sentinels before God's throne – ever watchful, ever present – may we remain constant in our vigilance and unwavering in our commitment to protect those in our care. Just as angels bear witness to both human suffering and divine mercy, we too wish to bear witness to your pain and stand ready as instruments of healing.

May the holy angels assist us and unite us in peace.

With profound respect and a heartfelt commitment to change,

– Abbot Alban, the monks of Westminster Abbey, and the community of the Seminary of Christ the King

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you”

– Maya Angelou



New Benedictine Abbot Primate

ON September 14, 2024, the Feast of the Holy Cross, Abbot Jeremias Schröder OSB was elected as the new Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation by the heads of the Benedictine monasteries of the world assembled in Rome for the Congress of Abbots, held September 6-20 this year.

Abbot Jeremias, 59, hails from Bavaria. He was elected Archabbot of his monastery, St Ottilien near Munich, at the age of 35. As such he was also President of the Congregation of St Ottilien, and when that office was no longer tied to the Archabbey, he was elected Abbot President from 2012 until his election as Primate.

He succeeds Abbot Gregory Polan OSB from Conception Abbey, Missouri, who was Primate 2016-2024 and decided not to stand for re-election. The Abbot Primate, elected



Former Abbot Primate Gregory Polan OSB with new Abbot Primate Jeremias Schröder OSB

initially for eight years, is not a superior general such as the Jesuits or Franciscans have. Rather he represents the Benedictine Confederation to the world, especially to the Holy See and to Benedictine nuns and sisters. He is Abbot of Sant' Anselmo, the Benedictine house on the Aventine hill in the heart of Rome.

Although the initials OSB stand for "Order



Abbots of the Swiss-American Congregation

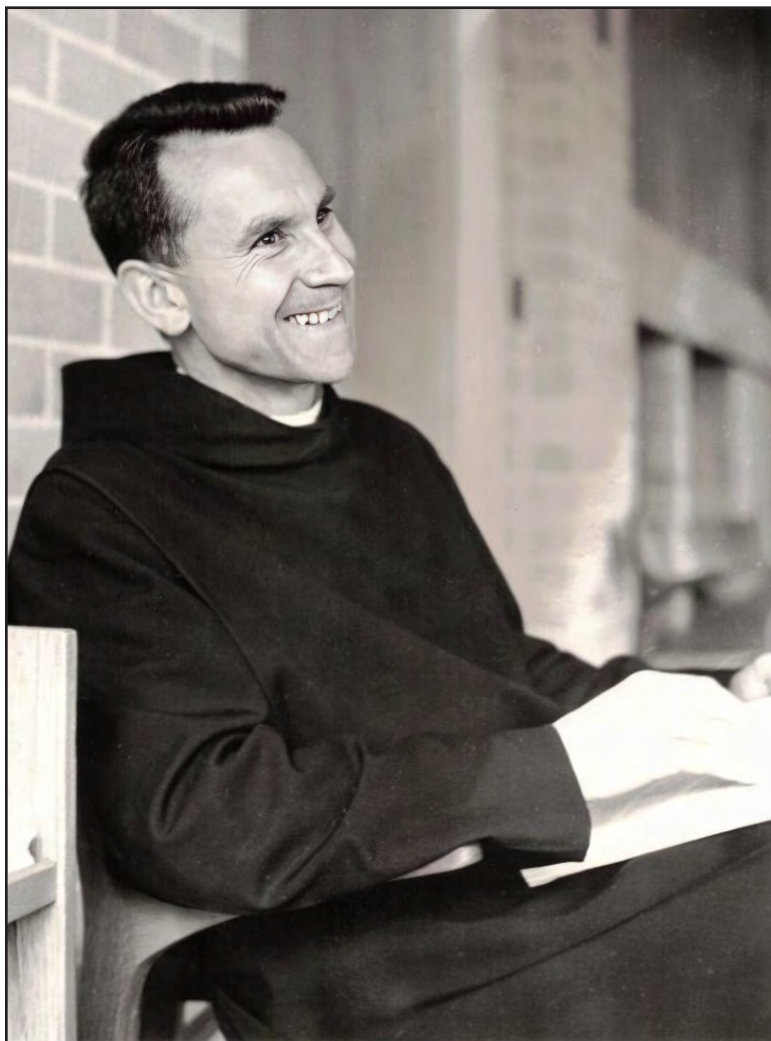
of St Benedict”, the Benedictines are an order only in the broadest sense. The basic unit is the individual monastery, an abbey or priory. For historical or geographical reasons, the monasteries have grouped themselves into Congregations. For example, our abbey belongs to the Swiss-American Congregation, monasteries in North and Central America that have their roots in Swiss abbeys. The Congregations in turn are joined in the Benedictine Confederation. This was established by Pope Leo XIII in 1893, a short time ago when you consider that some abbeys have a thousand years of history or more.

In fact, in five years Montecassino, the monastery where St Benedict wrote his Rule,

will be celebrating 1500 years, 529-2029. The Congress backed Abbot Primate Jeremias’s suggestion that this should be celebrated worldwide and not just in Italy, as in a certain sense it could be considered the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the Holy Rule.

Over the main entrance of Montecassino stands in huge letters the traditional Benedictine motto, PAX, peace. Peace was the theme Abbot Jeremias chose to emphasise to the Congress, and also to the Holy Father when the abbots participated in the General Audience of September 18. Pope Francis replied that peace has to start from within. That is a good message to leave with the readers of *Pax Regis*.

Father Nicholas Ruh OSB 1926-2024



FATHER Nicholas Ruh OSB entered eternal life on October 28, 2024, shortly after his 98th birthday. Born Bruno Franz Ruh on October 19, 1926, in Ramsen, Canton Schaffhausen, Switzerland, he was the fifth of the seven children of Alfred Ruh and Marie Neidhart.

At the Benedictine Abbey School in Disentis, Bruno studied five languages in addition to his native German. Following agricultural engineering studies at the Zurich Polytechnic Institute, he immigrated to Canada, working on farms near Ottawa, Ontario, and Ladner, British Columbia, before arriving in Dewdney. There, drawn by the sight of buildings rising on the hill above Mission, he discovered Westminster Abbey. Initially seeking English instruction, he found his calling to Benedictine life. As he would later recount, upon seeing the abbey and



him back to the monastic community.

As enrichment for his teaching of Scripture he spent time at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome (1978-79) and the École Biblique in Jerusalem (1992-93), his fidelity and generosity never wavering. Upon learning of Fr Damasus' passing in 1978, he wrote to Abbot Eugene from Rome, "I am writing to express my solidarity with you and the community. This is one less in our small family, and should you decide that perhaps I should return home, you know I will always be ready."

Throughout his many years of service, Fr Nicholas assumed numerous roles within the abbey. As chief maintenance supervisor, he managed the upkeep of vehicles, heating, and plumbing systems and coordinated the annual silage and hay harvest. His diligent care and love for hands-on work extended from routine repairs and maintenance to broader agricultural planning. His meticulous records on natural phenomena, as well as his detailed notes and instructions posted throughout the abbey and seminary, stood as a testament to his

hearing its bells, he felt in his heart, "It looks like they need help up there."

Making his first vows in 1957, he chose the name Nikolaus von Flüe, the patron saint of Switzerland. Following his ordination to the priesthood in 1960, he studied at the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, NS. Despite being invited to remain there, his commitment to his vows and his Abbot's direction summoned





On Sunday, October 27, he concelebrated Mass with the monastic community for the last time. The next morning, too weak to join morning prayer, he lay peacefully in his room, facing west, his Mass intention book open on his desk. As the community celebrated the conventual Mass, Fr Nicholas quietly offered his soul to God. In a final gesture of faith, he turned in his bed towards the

observational skills and fastidious attention to detail. Through his tireless stewardship of the community's infrastructure and operations, he ensured the smooth functioning of daily life.

While his disciplined nature could sometimes appear stern, Fr Nicholas' smile could light up a room. His bright eyes and rosy cheeks revealed a joy that ran deep. He set high standards, correcting thoughtlessness or carelessness when necessary, yet he also displayed a gentle understanding of human frailty.

Fr Nicholas dutifully served as Vice-Rector (1993-1996) and later as Rector (1996-2011) of the Major Seminary of Christ the King. Even after retiring at 85, he remained physically and mentally active, including constructing an open tractor shed single-handedly. A fall from a ladder briefly interrupted but did not halt this work; it merely taught him to acknowledge his limitations.

In his final years, despite profound hearing loss, he participated in community events with good will, and sought to uplift the spirits of the young through prayer and example. In the days leading up to his death, Fr Nicholas sensed that his time was near.

east, facing Christ, the Rising Sun.



Maureen Creelman: Volunteering to Teach Math with Joy



Driven by a desire to deepen and share her faith, Maureen also teaches “The Catholic Faith in Plain English” alongside Fr Vincent Hawkswell, reaching Catholics and non-Catholics across the Archdiocese. One of her greatest joys in teaching at the Seminary is the chance to integrate her faith with her love for mathematics. Between discussions of parabolas and tackling complex “double star” equations that challenge grade 11 and 12 students, she finds opportunities to share insights into scripture and Church teaching.

Maureen’s system of rewrites allows students multiple opportunities to master material, reflecting her belief in learning as a process rather than a single attempt. Yet even a rewrite is no simple path to an easy A; it requires a true understanding of the material, a practice she sees as reflecting God’s boundless mercy. Through her dedication to both mathematical and spiritual growth, Maureen fosters an environment where academic achievement and faith naturally complement one another.

For Maureen Creelman, teaching is more than just imparting mathematical concepts—it’s about sharing in the joy of discovery. She sees moments of understanding as small spiritual joys, akin to the way angels share their discoveries of God. In her small seminary classes, she has found the ideal setting to combine her love for mathematics with her deep faith. The monastic and seminary communities are profoundly grateful for her dedicated teaching and joyful presence.

“ALL men naturally desire knowledge” (Aristotle), and delight in what they understand. This is the guiding philosophy of Maureen Creelman, our Grade 12 mathematics instructor. Born in England and later settling in Vancouver with her family, she earned a double major in Mathematics and Physics from the University of British Columbia. While editing revised curricula during her studies, she discovered her passion for teaching and for helping students take joy in learning.

After graduating, Maureen completed her teaching certification at Simon Fraser University in 1974 and then spent many years teaching in the public school system. Nine years ago, she volunteered her talents at the Seminary of Christ the King, where her approach to teaching reflects a deep understanding that, while not all students have equal mathematical ability, each can find satisfaction in what he grasps. Teaching Pre-Calculus to minor seminarians, she draws on St. Benedict’s wisdom to “give the strong something to strive after and the weak nothing at which to take alarm.”

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.

Empowering the Laity: Equipping Catholics for Mission in the World

by Michael Roy

Pre-theology II, Archdiocese of Vancouver

FOR much of Catholic history, the concept of laypeople having a “mission” within the Catholic Church was utterly foreign. Ministry was viewed as the exclusive realm of priests and religious, while the laity were seen as passive participants. During our annual SCK Lecture on October 19, guest speaker Fr Michael Sweeney emphasized the Church’s commitment to making Christ accessible not only within church walls but also in the everyday lives of ordinary people—a mission that relies fundamentally on lay involvement. Originally from Vancouver, Fr Michael now serves as a priest of the Western Dominican Province in the U.S. and has dedicated much of his work to engaging the laity. His passion led him to co-found the Catherine of Siena Institute, which aims to equip parishes to evangelize and empower lay Catholics to embrace their mission in the world.

In his morning lecture, Fr Michael highlighted the relationship between clergy and laity as “not simply one of collaboration, but of co-responsibility.” He underscored that co-responsibility means all Catholics bear the same duty to proclaim Christ to the world as any bishop or pope. He encouraged his listeners to fully embrace their baptismal identity as priest, prophet, and king: as priests, to always approach the Eucharist with the intent to bring others; as prophets, to speak into contemporary culture on behalf of the Body of Christ; and as kings, to

foster spaces for genuine dialogue among those in their care. With the Church’s paradigm being the salvation of every soul, this mission demands that Catholics of every vocation and charism come together, envisioning new ways to fulfill their common apostolate.

Fr Michael’s afternoon talk shifted from the need for a lay apostolate to the essential formation it requires. Citing St. John Paul II, he affirmed that “we should regard our present circumstances—our work, relationships, and life in the world—

as a divine call.” Consequently, lay formation must be tailored to the unique circumstances of the laity and should encompass three core elements. First, a spiritual discipline suited to the mission, including praying specifically for those we encounter and developing needed spiritual gifts. Second, a systematic theological preparation, incorporating Catholic social teaching and Church history within civil society. Finally, communal discernment, where formation occurs within the body of Christ, discerning the mission collectively in the Spirit.

He concluded by encouraging listeners to determine who their community is and engage in a meaningful dialogue about the actions needed to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” Both lectures are available to watch on our seminary website, www.sck.ca/news-media/sck-lectures. For more on Fr Michael Sweeney’s work in promoting the lay apostolate, visit the Catherine of Siena Institute at www.siena.org.





A BENEDICTINE EDUCATION FUND

originally established during our 50th anniversary celebration, continues to support the education of our young monks in the major seminary, their advanced degree studies, and faculty development. As we mark our 85th anniversary, this enduring fund remains vital to our educational mission. Contributions would be much appreciated at this time to:

JUBILEE BENEDICTINE EDUCATION FUND
Box 3310
Mission, B.C., Canada
V2V 4J5

Fr Luke Tran: A Journey to the Priesthood

LUKE Tran was born on May 30, 1986, in Hanoi, Vietnam. As the third youngest of nine children—with six older siblings (three brothers and three sisters) and two younger sisters—Luke grew up on his family’s farm. There, alongside his parents, he helped cultivate rice and tend to their livestock of pigs, chickens, and cows.

Faith was the cornerstone of the Tran household. Luke’s father taught him how to pray, while his mother cultivated his interest in priestly vocations by encouraging daily prayers for more priests. The presence of priest relatives, particularly his uncle, deeply



Fr Joseph Park O.S.B. and Fr Luke Tran

influenced Luke’s spiritual journey. During visits to Luke’s home parish, his uncle would engage the children in fascinating discussions about creation and its origins, sparking Luke’s curiosity about nature and animals and inspiring him to seek a deeper understanding of God.

This spiritual foundation led Luke to join the Dominicans in Hong Kong in 2010, where he studied in Macau for eighteen months. Though he remained with the order until 2013, Luke initially changed course after leaving, considering marriage as his life’s path. However, a powerful retreat experience renewed his calling to priesthood.

Through a series of providential encounters, Luke’s journey brought him to Canada. In 2017,

he arrived in the Diocese of Saskatoon, where he was accepted as a seminarian. He entered the Seminary of Christ the King in September 2018, participating in the inaugural Spirituality Year Program before completing his theological studies in 2023. During the summers as a seminarian, Luke dedicated himself to Indigenous and homeless ministry in the Diocese of Saskatoon.

When not serving others, Luke maintains an active lifestyle, enjoying workouts, swimming, hiking, and skiing. On October 18, 2024, Bishop Mark Hagemoen ordained Fr Luke Tran at Holy Family Cathedral in Saskatoon. He now serves as Assistant Pastor at St. Mary’s Parish. We wish him many fruitful years in the Lord’s harvest.

Major Seminary Diary



Marilyn Martin and Barbara Renaud speak with the majors about the Catholic Women’s League of Canada

September

Tues 10: The 2024-2025 academic year began with the celebration of the Abbey Church’s 42nd anniversary of dedication. Eight major seminarians were present - six studying for Vancouver, one for Prince George, and one for Saskatoon.

Wed 11: As is custom, we began the year with a day of recollection to mentally and spiritually prepare for the beautiful, life-changing gifts and challenges that await us in seminary formation.

Mon 16: The major seminarians welcomed Marilyn Martin and Barbara Renaud for a presentation on the Catholic Women’s League. The CWL representatives shared the organization’s rich history, ministerial framework, and vital role in parish life. Their visit highlighted the numerous resources the League offers to support parish communities, equipping our future priests with valuable knowledge for their upcoming pastoral work.



Hiking up Mount Cheam (L to R): Fr Caesarius Marple OSB and the major seminary student executive: John Krump (Secretary) Paul Vo (President), Peter van Leeuwen (Treasurer)

the majors and Fr Caesarius began the epic ascent of Mt. Cheam. Highlights from the adventure include John Krump's stunning drone footage and the remarkably clear view from the peak.

October

Thur 3-Sun 6: Departing shortly after lunch on Thursday, the major seminarians as well as Fr Joseph and Fr Caesarius embarked on a work weekend at St Joseph's Carmelite monastery in Armstrong. Joined by local alumni, the group was able to fell many dead trees, and with the aid of a wood

Fri 20-Sun 22: Travelling with Fr Joseph and Fr Caesarius, the major seminarians, hit the road in Peter's truck and the monastery's Dodge Caravan, in the direction of Princeton for the Perfect Storms men's retreat. The experience was impactful, meaningful, and unforgettable for all. Jake Khym and Sam Blair, a former Navy Seal, encouraged the 300 plus men attending to see the significance of their daily storms and go deeper in their relationship with the Lord. The retreat hit home the fact that our storms can be perfect storms if we let Jesus into our lives! The highlight occurred Saturday evening when the men gathered by the lakeside for adoration. Sitting or kneeling on the sand as the apostles would have done, we were struck with the intimacy of encountering our Lord, gazing upon us in the Holy Eucharist. Peace, be still!

Sept 28: Several majors joined the Assumption Parish Young Adults for an evening of sports and board games, participating in basketball, soccer, volleyball, and chess.

Mon 30: After a long and bumpy car ride



Jacob Klaponski at St. Joseph's Carmelite monastery



Learning the ropes in the abbey belltower

chipper, spread the chips on the sisters' forest paths. For all, 3:30 pm signaled a time of great rejoicing as the good sisters would then bring out their delicious snacks! Ultimately, the weekend was a rest-filled time of prayer, fraternal bonding, and plenty of good food.

Fri 25: In the evening, SCK welcomed several students from Catholic Pacific College for a holy hour in the guesthouse chapel. After a time of quiet with our Lord, we met at Mission Springs for a time of fellowship and sharing.

Sun 27: With joy and thanksgiving, several majors had the honour of serving at Fr Luke Tran's Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Matthew's Parish in Surrey.

November

Sat 2: All Souls Day signaled not only a day of prayer for the Holy Souls but also the commencement of our first Live-In weekend. Throughout Saturday and Sunday the seminarians were able to introduce the 6 discerners to our treasured Divine Office, seminary community life, as well as the beautiful liturgy we are privileged to enjoy!

Tues 12: The Vancouver seminarians attended two talks given by Rev Robert Gahl PhD at the Vancouver clergy study week in Harrison Hot Springs. While benefiting immensely from the expert lectures on Priestly Fatherhood and Gender and the Holy Face of God, the seminarians soaked in the opportunity to casually socialize with so many holy, active parish priests!

Minor Seminary Diary

September

Wed 4: The seminary commenced its new academic year with renewed energy and purpose. A warm welcome celebration brought together returning seminarians, new students, and their families for a potluck lunch. Under Fr Anthony's rectorship, the seminary has implemented strategic changes, including an optimized daily schedule and refreshed leadership structure. Frater Athanasius and Br Joseph have assumed the roles of prefects from Br Maximus, bringing their distinctive blend of pastoral guidance and disciplinary oversight. Working alongside fellow formators Br Bartholomew and Br Maximus, they have elevated community standards



Minor seminary student executive



Celtic Illustration at a local art gallery

across campus—from the more structured dining hall procedures to the spotless dorms, maintained with care. Needless to say the seminary has changed for the better, and, as we journey further into our glorious future, we can continue to grow, ever joyful in our pursuit of the Lord. Equipped with the glorious freedom of the sons of God we are now ready to wage war against the darkness which opposes us, and by the cross of Christ conquer the world over again.

Sat 21: During our free time (what the monks call “discretionary time”, to our chagrin), we gathered at Heritage Park for some fresh air before visiting a local art gallery—our sizeable group filling its intimate spaces. The highlight was an exhibition at Mission Dock, where we engaged directly with artists showcasing diverse works: innovative electrical char art using vegetables, beautiful Celtic illustrations, and watercolors by a local papermaker. The afternoon reached an unexpected crescendo when, as we admired the Fraser River’s flowing waters, a magnificent sturgeon breached the surface, leaving Fr Anthony and all present in awe.

Wed 25: In a demonstration of democratic spirit, the seminary elected its new student executive. Josef R. emerged victorious as president, with Jude L. securing the vice presidency and Pius V. appointed as secretary. In a separate election, the athletic leadership saw Dominic L. unanimously chosen as hockey president, while Marko B. prevailed in a competitive race for vice president. And

so we can sleep soundly knowing that the fate of the seminary is in good hands.

Mon 30: Our community participated in National Truth and Reconciliation Day, beginning with a contemplative hike to Heritage Park. At the site of the former residential school, Fr Leo delivered an address about the harms experienced in the residential schools; he also spoke about the historical relationship between missionaries and First Nations Peoples, highlighting the dedication of Fr Jean-Marie Le Jeune, who mastered Indigenous languages to share the Gospel effectively.

October

Sun 6: Our seminary participated in the Coalition for Life’s annual Life Chain event along Lougheed Highway in Mission. Standing alongside Frater Athanasius and Fr Anthony, we joined community members in a dignified, prayerful demonstration supporting the sanctity of life and opposing abortion and euthanasia. Each participant held signs expressing our shared commitment to protecting human dignity.

Thu 17: The Seniors (Grades 11 and 12) attended the annual Pro-Life Gala, an evening of fellowship and inspiration. The event featured presentations from Hope for Women, an organization providing vital support to mothers and women in crisis. A particularly moving testimony came from a speaker who shared her personal journey of teenage pregnancy and choosing life, illustrating the transformative power of maternal love. Students enjoyed



Pro-life Gala in Abbotsford on October 17



testimonies of individuals who chose life despite significant challenges. The evening included dinner and recreation—featuring memorable foosball matches with Brothers Joseph and Bartholomew – followed by an engaging Q&A session exploring theological and ethical dimensions of human dignity. The presentation concluded with thoughtful discussion and communal prayer.

November

Sat 2: We welcomed 25 prospective candidates from British Columbia and Alberta for an immersive experience of seminary life. Visitors

abundant hospitality, including a generous buffet of chicken, pasta, and meatballs.

Sun 20: Some members of the minor seminary choir brought joy to residents at Mission hospital’s hospice center through uplifting performances of Taizé chants and traditional hymns. The elderly residents expressed their gratitude through generous offerings of sweets to our young vocalists.

Sun 27: We received distinguished speaker Amanda Achtman, whose presentation on dignity in aging and end-of-life care deeply resonated with our community. Drawing from her extensive studies of St. John Paul II’s theology in Poland and research into euthanasia’s history in Germany, Amanda shared compelling

participated fully in our daily rhythm of prayer, meals, and community activities—including a spirited dodgeball tournament that fostered camaraderie through friendly competition. The day featured an insightful presentation by Frater Athanasius and informative videos about priestly vocation. We continue to pray for these young men as they discern their calling.

Wed 27: The minor seminary choir presented a memorable performance at the Rotary Carol Festival in Mission’s Clarke Theatre to support the Mission Christmas Bureau. Our repertoire featured two Latin polyphonic motets: “Te Joseph Celebrent” and “Gaudete!” The event united musical artistry, faith, and service to others.

The Good Shepherd and Making Rosaries: Acquiring a Servant Heart

IN early October, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd class at St. Patrick’s Parish in Maple Ridge prayed the rosary together. For many of the children, it was their first time praying the full rosary, and they were attentive and engaged as they passed a candle around, each taking a turn leading the prayers.

Afterwards, the children asked if they could keep the rosaries they had used. The catechist, Kristina McBride, a Benedictine oblate of Westminster Abbey and a local Catechesis of

the Good Shepherd catechist, responded that they couldn’t keep those rosaries, but suggested they could make their own. The children enthusiastically insisted on making rosaries, and for the next two weeks, repeatedly asked Kristina about doing the rosary-making project.

Knowing she would need assistance, Kristina reached out to Br Bartholomew, an expert rosary maker, and asked if he and some seminarians could come help. One Wednesday evening, a group of Grade 10 seminarians, led by their

formator Br Bartholomew, went to St. Patrick’s to teach the children how to make rosaries. When they arrived, Kristina greeted them, saying “The children have been so excited to learn how to make rosaries!”

The seminarians followed Kristina to the atrium which is a specially prepared, peaceful environment where children explore their relationship with God through hands-on materials such as small sets of vestments, hands on scenes with characters describing key stories from the Gospels, miniature sets of the sacred vessels and linens, etc. In this special space a group of eager youngsters awaited them. When Br Bartholomew entered one child’s eyes widened as he declared, “Wow, I didn’t know monks were real!” The children welcomed Brother and the seminarians, who patiently guided them through the process of creating their own rosaries.

Making rosaries aligned well with the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd’s focus on practical life skills. It was a hands-on activity that encouraged children to develop fine motor skills, patience, and intentionality in their work, all while fostering a deeper connection to prayer. The seminarians also had the opportunity to practice these same skills while assisting the children. As one seminarian reflected, the evening “really reminded us that



God calls us to approach him with a child-like wonder and joy.”

After the rosary-making session, Kristina showed the seminarians the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, which focuses on the reality of Jesus’ life. One of the materials in the atrium is a 3D raised map of the Holy Land. Kristina challenged the seminarians to see if they could properly place pins marking Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem - a task the young children in the atrium regularly complete, which proved too difficult for the seminarians.



Through this meaningful engagement with the wider community, the seminarians left with a renewed appreciation for nurturing people’s relationship with God. The rosary-making project was a significant experience for both the children and the seminarians, allowing them to collaborate, develop practical skills, and deepen their connection to prayer and the Catholic faith.

Interested readers can learn more about the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program in the Archdiocese of Vancouver at: <https://rcav.org/cgs>.

Finding Strength in Struggle and Silence: A Transformative Wilderness Journey

IN the wilderness near Clearwater, the Grade 12 seminarians recently discovered that some of life's most profound lessons come not from textbooks, but from shared challenges and quiet moments in nature. Accompanied by Fr Leo, Br Joseph, and Frater Athanasius, the young men embarked on their annual camping trip, which would test their resilience and strengthen their bonds in unexpected ways. The journey centered around challenging hikes, including an ambitious trek up Trophy Mountain, where the group's determination was put to the test. Perhaps no one embodied this spirit of perseverance more than Dominic N., who, despite battling pneumonia (though not knowing it at the

time), pushed himself to complete the hike. His persistent cough became something of a tracking device for the group, but his resolve never wavered. "I learned to push myself even when I can't reach others," Dominic reflected, "and to accept my current situation even as hopeless as it can be." The practical challenges of wilderness living became valuable lessons in themselves. For Theo V., managing the group's food supplies was a weighty duty. "The hardest part of the trip was the frightening responsibility of having to take care of the food - everything from quantity to cooking to rationing," he shared. Meanwhile, Josef R. found himself confronting his own limitations

with campfire cooking, initially feeling "useless" as he watched Noah R., a veteran of the outdoors, handle these tasks with greater skill.

During their adventure, the group visited several natural wonders, including Dawson, Helmcken, and Mole Falls. A particularly meaningful encounter came when they met Norm and Lisa, a couple whose wisdom left a lasting impression. Norm's emphasis on intentional living resonated with the students, offering them a model of purposeful existence that extended beyond their wilderness experience.

Perhaps the most surprising transformation came during periods of shared silence. The group embraced these quiet moments,

participating in an hour of silent reflection that proved unexpectedly powerful. "I found our mutual agreement to be silent throughout different parts of the trip unexpected," Josef noted, revealing how these moments of quiet contemplation brought the group closer together.

The experience revealed hidden depths in their relationships as well. As Theo observed, "What surprised me most was that, really, we're not that different after all. I don't always see eye to eye with my classmates, and that is certainly still true, but I think that deep down we are looking for the same thing, just in different ways."

Josef discovered that "simply suffering



Helmcken Falls



Frater Athanasius OSB and Grade 12s

with someone means a lot more than using consoling words,” while Theo concluded that “no

matter what the costs, it is always worth it to be kind to people.” These insights, forged in the crucible of shared challenges and quiet reflection, will likely shape these young men’s perspectives long after they leave the seminary.

As the group returned from their wilderness journey, they carried with them not just memories of mountain views and waterfall visits, but a deeper understanding of themselves and each other. In the end, what began as a camping trip became a profound lesson in perseverance, community, and the unexpected ways we find strength in both struggle and silence.

find strength in both struggle and silence.

With the Brothers

ON September 8, before an unexpected wave of illness swept through the monastery, the community gathered in gratitude to celebrate Fr Prior Benedict’s 25th anniversary of monastic profession. The joyful occasion fostered unity and thanksgiving—a serene prelude to the challenges that would soon test the brethren’s resilience and devotion.

In the days that followed, an unusual and persistent illness began to spread through the monastery, marked by troubling symptoms: coughing, sore throats, fever, and even pneumonia among the seminarians. Whether the illness arose from a single adaptable pathogen or multiple strains remains uncertain, but its impact was undeniable. Yet, amid this trial, the monks embraced St. Benedict’s timeless counsel: “Before all things and above all things, care must be taken of the sick, so that they will be served as if they were Christ in person; for He Himself said, ‘I was sick, and you visited me’” (RB 36).





**Celebrating the start of the novitiate after Vigils on August 25 (L to R):
Frater Nov. Pedro Kauffmann Amaral, Br Joseph,
Br Nov. Manuel Vélez Arango**

Fr Anthony, in his second year as rector of the minor seminary, worked tirelessly to put this counsel into action. He familiarized himself with available treatments and took seminarians in need to the emergency room for professional care. Thankfully, Br Joseph, Br Bartholomew, and Frater Athanasius had cleaned up the high school infirmary, ensuring everything was in order.

Amid these challenges, daily life at the monastery pressed on. Br John, balancing a mountain of homework with farm duties, prepared a large garlic patch with help from the novices. The pungent aroma stirred novice Manuel’s memory of a Bulgarian lady he once knew, famed for her annual garlic binges. Her potent garlic aura likely disturbed her neighbors, but Manuel insists she never fell ill. The lengths some go to ward off sickness are remarkable.

While garlic is said to repel vampires, bells are traditionally believed to drive away demons. Tower captain Br Joshua has been diligently training a team of seminarians in the art of bell-ringing. Though the learning process is marked by much clashing and banging, progress is evident. Soon, the seminarians will be ready to wield the bells with precision.

Our Lord cautions that an empty room,

swept and tidied after a demon is cast out, is vulnerable to further attacks. While bells are invaluable, they humbly defer to the even greater weapon of liturgical prayer. Novice Pedro is learning to play the organ, determined to fill the sacred spaces with mellifluous notes that uphold the community’s prayers.

Despite being in the latter years of his teaching career, Br Luke has taken on a new seminary course in World Religions. Br Benedict continues his long-standing culinary service, working wonders with Br Joshua and the kitchen staff, while Br Emeric remains devoted to the barn, carefully cleaning eggs and

sorting cracked ones to guard against salmonella.

Illnesses bring their own sets of challenges—unpleasant sounds among them. Frater Antonio, ever patient, has endured nights of incessant coughing from his neighbours. No complaints escaped him, blessed as he is with a gift for sleeping; on a Thanksgiving camping trip with confreres, his deep breathing lulled him to sleep within seconds, even as the others engaged in a lively game of bridge.

This nightly bridge-playing lends weight to one of Br Isidore’s diagnoses: he’s certain the community is gripped by a severe case of “bridge addiction”. The brothers went so far as



Fr Matthew and Br Benedict at evening recreation

to reassemble a mixed deck of cards found in the cabin, meticulously marking and replacing missing cards to make it complete. They even sacrificed precious sleep for the game during an outing meant for rejuvenation.

If Br Isidore is correct, there are indeed many sick brethren in need of care. Yet, illness is also an opportunity for the brethren to pray and work

alongside Christ, practising the sixteenth tool of good works left by their monastic forefather, “to visit the sick.” Indeed, it is our very sicknesses that call upon the mercy of the Lord and the compassion of one another. As our Lord reminds us, “it is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners” (cf. Mk 2:17).

Alumnitems

Fr Gregory (Dominic) Carey OSB '90 informs us that he made solemn profession of vows in Farnborough Abbey in England on January 13. His mother, Mary Carey, died two days before.

Raphael (Ralph) Girard '57 writes:

After I left SCK in 1957, I worked for a year to save enough money to start university in the fall of 1958. Through providential twists of fate, I was accepted into the Foreign Service largely due to my role as President of the Newman Club and my French language skills. My 40-year career focused on refugees, with postings across Yugoslavia, Romania, Lebanon, Italy and the UK. I served as Director and Director General of Refugee Affairs and led efforts to establish Canada's refugee claims system. As Ambassador to several Eastern European countries, I supervised the airlift of 5000 Kosovar refugees to Canada in 1999 and led the Canadian delegation to the European Security Conference, which had been convened to rebuild civil infrastructure in the Balkans at the end of the short war that had been waged there.

Though much of my professional life was spent outside Canada, I maintained connections with fellow SCK alumni. The discipline, spiritual values, and moral foundation instilled in me at SCK served me well and no doubt enabled me to have a satisfying career in the service of others.

John J. Bouz '62 writes :

I attended SCK from 1958 to 1962, struggling with English but focused on math and the sciences. The beautiful liturgical music still resonates with me today. After Victoria College, I completed my science degree at the University of Toronto, where a philosophy course finally opened my eyes to critical thinking. I earned my master's at Columbia University and worked as

a radiological physicist in the Nuclear Medicine Department at Calgary's Foothills Hospital. At that time I also married my wife Mary whom I met in New York. I worked in this field for about eight years, but my past experience at the Seminary helping harvest hay one summer after school was over, drove me to want to live on a farm, and so we bought a farm. I farmed full time for a number of years, I gave up my job at the Hospital, and later got a new job teaching at the agricultural college in Olds, Alberta, which I continued for about 20 years.

Now retired at 80, I'm blessed with six children and fourteen grandchildren.

Philip (Sean) Hannis '86 writes:

Currently I serve as a Development Officer for the Stó:lo Xwexwilmexw Government. I recently discovered my birth mother Lily was buried 100 feet from my parents, Harry and Ruby, at St. Mary's Cemetery in Chilliwack. She had six other children and passed at 50 from cancer. We never met; we were separated at birth. In those days, Catholic Social Services handled the fostering and adoption. When she was buried, it was not known by her family that her first son had built the pillared shrine to the Blessed Virgin there at the cemetery. The son didn't know either. Thank you, Fr Ronald Thompson, then Pastor of St. Mary's, for giving me that work so many years ago. My birth grandparents, Alexander and Marta, are also buried in Chilliwack in the Legion Cemetery. Marta was from Warsaw, and Alexander, Serbia. Alexander served as a Lance Corporal in the Yugoslav Army in WW2. In the 50s, they and their three daughters immigrated to Canada and settled here in British Columbia. Thank you, Lily, for choosing life.

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Requiescant in Pace

Thomas Easton '69 died in Langley, British Columbia, on July 30, 2024.

J. Vincent Cain '51 died in Victoria on August 20, 2024. He had been in the RCMP for 25 years and was Chief Coroner of British Columbia for 10 years, 1985-95.

Fr Nicholas Ruh OSB '61 died in his monastic cell aged 98 on October 28, 2024. For his obituary, see p.7-9.



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