



THE CURRENT

LIVING WATER COLLEGE OF THE ARTS NEWSLETTER - PROMOTION OF ART, FAITH AND REASON

What keeps drawing me back

THE ANSWER OF A STUDENT WHO
KEEPS RETURNING

By MaryAnne Spiess

Imagine a still, early August evening in the rural Alberta countryside; vivid blues and yellows paint the deepening line of the horizon; the air outside is fresh and cool; frogs chorus quietly from a marsh nearby, and from the little hollows of the landscape rise ethereal swirls of fog. Arrested by such beauty after a busy but delightful day of work, study, and prayer, in an environment that exudes the appreciation of the good, the true, and the beautiful, one cannot but marvel that such good exists! But it truly does at the unique Living Water College of the Arts. Whether a student is painting, discussing, singing, acting, or filming, the atmosphere of the place is an echo of high Christian civilization so scarcely to be found in these days of rampant mediocrity. In the peace of the gorgeous countryside, (ideal for transferring to canvas, or for numerous outdoor film sets), one can immerse oneself deeply in one's art and one's faith, out of which his art is born.

I have had the privilege of attending several of the summer courses offered by Living Water College in the past few years: Classical Painting (2011), Sacred Choral Music (2012), and the joint LWC/WISDOM Homeschooling week long film camp last summer. Three things blow me away in every course I take: the rich learning environment, the expertise of the instructors, and the inestimable value and sheer amount of knowledge and skills I take away from the course.

Despite the fact that the age of the students in a course has often ranged through several decades, the mutual enthusiasm and Christian respect, instigated excellently by the instructors, has invariably knit us into a vibrant group

of artists working towards a common goal. In such an environment, one is free to debate questions that come up, ask questions when unsure, to critique, to share ideas, and to laugh at mistakes with everyone.

The instructors, in addition to the expertise they have in their particular field, have had wonderful skill in teaching. Passionate about their art and passionate to share it, they set on fire those who have the privilege of learning from them with a passion like their own, which I am sure will continue in us for a lifetime!

And the skills they impart! Many of us who took the Classical Painting course had never touched oil paints before. By the end of the two weeks we were finishing impressive self-portraits in the styles of Rembrandt and verdaccio under-painting (painting the whole picture in shades of green before applying other the other colours on top, to the obtaining of amazingly lifelike skin colours!) At the Sacred Music course, I was constantly peeling my jaw off the ground at new revelations about music, its power, its connections with mathematics, and so on. The Living Water/WISDOM Home Schooling film camp found us students becoming the competent crew of a professional short film, Anna's Goodbye. We were doing everything from script-supervising to set dressing to acting to sound, as well as learning about the logistics of film making, special effects (including constructing two convincing rain machines for the film, one for indoors, one for outdoors) – and most importantly, the necessity of story.

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Each course has been a life changing experience that I would not have missed for anything! And in everything is found intrinsically the faith and the rich traditions of the church. I am very much looking forward to taking the Truth in Motion Film course this coming July/August, to which I have just been accepted. Film-making, among many loves, is my

biggest passion and what, God willing, I wish to devote my life to!

“Why do you keep coming back to Living Water College?” I have been asked. The answer is simple! As an aspiring young Catholic artist, I could hardly hope for a better place to study. Where else in Alberta, in Canada – in the world for that matter, could a young, Catholic, would-

be artist learn his or her craft to such a high degree, without being forced to compromise his or her faith in the least? – indeed being encouraged in it! The college is a dream come true for me, and I am sure that many others will soon be saying the same! ☒



Social Media: Branching Out!

By Glenn Spiess, Assistant Director of Development

Living Water College has had a presence in social media spheres for some time now. The creation of a Living Water College YouTube channel in 2012 and Facebook in 2010 have sought to introduce and promote the College through the use of videos and images, assisting promotion of the vision of the College and highlighting various summer programs. The use of these social media outlets has benefitted the College by opening the doors of the College to a wider audience, and yet it was felt that more could be done with social media to increase awareness.

As a result of this need a very small group



of individuals, spearheaded by Eric Spoeth (Chairperson for Living Water College of the Arts Foundation), began holding weekly meetings aimed at developing strategies to assist the College in achieving a more prominent presence on the web and establish target goals for Facebook

and Twitter. Phase 1 of the Social Media Marketing plan was specifically aimed at the “team” utilizing their knowledge and experience to enhance the use of the College’s Facebook page and create a Twitter account, increase “Likes,” and establish a Twitter presence. Implementation of these strategies began in February and, as many of you may have noticed, Living Water College of the Arts has been increasingly active in utilizing social media outlets. With daily updates on Facebook and Twitter, this team has worked to pass meaningful information into the hands of our online “friends”.

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IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT

By Nicole Dunn, Development Officer



Now a friar belonging to an order specializing in communication, Fr. Leonard Revilla of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word admits that his understanding of God's communication in his life wasn't always so clear. Named Anthony Revilla at birth, Fr. Leonard was a native of Los Angeles, California, and grew up expecting to follow the normal trend: get a job, find a girl, get married, start a family. When he began junior high, though, he received an inkling that perhaps there was a different plan for him. He began serving Mass and found himself "drawn to a deeper life in the Church." Young Anthony thought about a vocation to the priesthood but was always hot and cold toward the idea. His choice of the name Francis at his confirmation turned out to be a foreshadowing of things to come; a name he chose because of his attraction to St. Francis' "radical desire to live the Gospel life in a real way." This radical desire complemented an interest he had consistently experienced, always

wishing to work in public service.

As a young man Anthony Revilla approached vocational directors about his tentative calling, insisting: "I am ready to throw myself, offer myself to the calling." However, these directors told him to wait, go about his life, and see where this inclination might lead. With this advice, he moved toward the public service industry, looking specifically into the police force and firefighting. While working for the Sears department store, he financed his pursuit of these service careers with great energy. Upon failing the requirements of the police academy due to his eyesight, the determined young man set about getting lasik eye surgery, a fairly new procedure during the 90's. It was only after 5 unsuccessful attempts at entry that he figured it was an unmistakable sign that police work was not his calling.

Young Anthony turned back to firefighting. This field is extremely competitive with applicants often waiting years for the opportunity to get to an interview. Having applied to take the firefighter test when he was 18, he finally received a letter accepting his application when he was 24. He took the chance and passed, and another three years went by before he was accepted into the firefighting academy. During this time, he joined a lay

missionary group in California; one of their specializations was evangelization through drama. He also attended Sears business school and worked in management for the company. All this time, the serious young man remained uncertain about his vocation but continued moving forward, knowing "God would use this experience and knowledge one way or another." As Fr. Leonard now expresses it, he tried to follow St. Paul's maxim: "Take advantage of every time."

In 2001, he became a youth director at his parish, a position in which the talented young man found much fulfillment and joy. He also began his work at the firefighting academy at this time, and "everything went wrong." It became clear that this was just not a fit for him, and he realized it was time to move on to the next thing. That next thing was something he had been experiencing all along: a quiet yet insistent call to the religious life. He had reached a point where he always "needed more." His life had become work, the gym, then church, always the church. "I was probably doing the maximum a lay person could do in the church," Fr. Leonard remembers. He thought that it was again time to try out a religious vocation and looked into a few orders, such as the Carmelites and the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word (MFVA). He fired off a quick email to the MFVA, expecting from past experience to hear back after several months. Instead, his phone rang 4 days later with an invitation to a vocation retreat taking place that summer. Having just started a new job, he did not expect to be able to get the time off, but also from looking at

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Box 100. Derwent. Alberta. T0B 1C0
 P: 780-741-2488
 F: 780-741-2204
 www.livingwatercollege.com



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his past he knew that, if it was meant to be, potential impediments would either remove themselves or become painfully obvious.

His new boss immediately gave him the time off, affordable airline tickets became available and a joyful Anthony Revilla found himself at the Franciscan Friary. The week quickly showed him that he had found what he was looking for, reflecting: "I found a fount that I could drink from." Upon returning to LA, he found all the other doors of opportunity starting to close. Business at his new job was going poorly, and someone very suitable came forward to lead the youth group. Anthony applied to the MFVA and was approved to begin his novitiate in October 2002. He subsequently professed final vows and received the name, Leonard, after St. Leonard of Port Maurice, OFM. He was ordained a priest of the order in 2012.

The MFVA is a community which specializes in evangelization through new media. "The Friars' apostolate is to communicate the Catholic faith by word and example," utilizing contemporary methods of connecting with people; but Fr. Leonard says this is not what first attracted him to the order. He describes how he was drawn in by "the essence of living the religious life, the Gospel life through the spirit of St. Francis and the charisma of Mother Angelica, foundress of the MFVA." Film and media had been mostly

entertainment in the past, but these things became tools as he immersed himself in the duties of the brothers: working in studio doing filming and editing for EWTN, leading pilgrimages and retreats, and performing office tasks. He didn't have a particular aptitude for the studio side of the work, but the community approached him to obtain training in communication since he already had several college credits toward this degree.

As he was finishing his degree, while coming to a deeper understanding of the community's mission, an idea was sparked in Fr. Leonard's imagination. In 2010, he approached his superior with the idea of a "media room:" a training for the temporary professed brothers, which would provide them with practice and theory to become more media literate. Over a period of 2 years, these brothers would learn both sides of the spectrum: from an introduction to mass communication, journalism, and broadcast skills to the principles of humanity, rhetoric, public speaking and public relations. The program was budgeted at \$20,000, a sum the community could not afford. With regret, Fr. Leonard's superior was forced to turn him down, only to open the community mail some time later

and find a cheque for that exact amount from a generous donor. Sometimes God's communications are wonderfully clear. The course was launched 2 years later.

The Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word are a singular order, addressing a gap in the contemporary presence of the Catholic Church in the new online social network that powerfully impacts our world. "Our mission is especially important now that people are more dependent on technology," Fr. Leonard insists, "The evolution of the industry has become so much more electronic. Movie-making has become more user-friendly; everything is digitally based. It's essential that the friars become literate and active in this form not only for evangelization but also for vocations." Fr. Leonard says the friars are aware of the interests and needs of the public: "After all (our work) is still a business. The better the quality of work, the more people will watch it." Father urges that through it all, the use of media has to be accompanied by the virtue of charity: "Within this online world, it is easy to lose yourself because it's all about self-promotion. Charity will keep you committed, passionate and pure because you're doing these actions with love of God and neighbour."

Fr. Leonard is looking forward to being a part of the Living Water Film Program this summer. He will serve as chaplain to students and staff. ☐



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What are the results? Our Facebook page has more than doubled the number of "Likes" since January (225+ "Likes" as of this printing), and our Twitter account (LivingWaterClg), opened in February, has seen even more dramatic results: 700+ followers and growing weekly. This is good news for the College as it suggests that people are looking for, responding

to, agreeing with, and sharing the mission of the College. Phase 2 of the Social Media Marketing plan is to engage our supporters in helping to achieve the established targets of 1000 Facebook "Likes" and 1000 Twitter followers by June 2014. You may become an integral component of this 2nd phase. How? By sharing and liking the College's Facebook posts/

page and by following the College on Twitter, tweeting and/or re-tweeting our updates. Doing so, you become a valuable partner in developing Living Water College's social media presence and, more importantly, you move the College closer to realizing its vision of "providing technical training in the Arts, inspired by Faith and informed by Reason." ☐