



ST. BENEDICT

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

DRAFT

Dear Friends,

Advent/Christmas 2024



When we moved back home to Western Canada and to Alberta almost seven years ago, we were thrilled. Having spent years studying in England and working in the United States, we knew we wanted to serve the Church at home.

For my recent years of service at NTC – as Vice-President and Academic Dean, as Director of the Benedict XVI Institute, and as Professor – we are immensely grateful. We leave behind friends, beloved students, and of course our eldest son, Peter, who is in his second year as a seminarian. We continue to pray for NTC and hope it can grow ever more faithful to its mission.

Over the past few weeks, some have asked, “What are the Toppings doing next?” Lines from Cardinal Newman’s “Lead Kindly Light” often run through my head: “I do not ask to see the distant scene / One step enough for me.”

At this point we hope to continue living and serving in Alberta.

So, after prayer and discussion, we’re taking a risk. In what follows, we share with you some ways we think the Toppings might be able to serve God and our community.

What we present to you is a “menu” of proposals. We need time to test them. We need time to develop proper strategic plans, budgets, partnerships. And for the gift of time, we ask for your support.

In Jesus and Mary,

Ryan Topping
Director@BenedictInstitute.ca



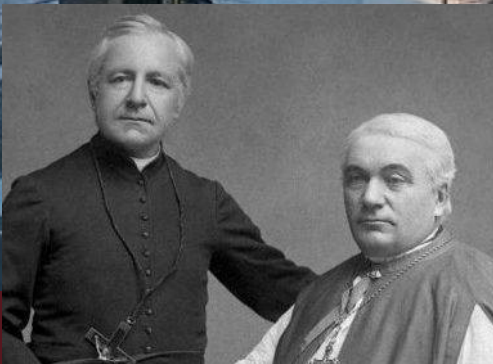
ST. BENEDICT

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter	1
Table of Contents	2
Vision	3
Proposed Projects	4
St. Benedict Institute	5
A School for Virtuous Leadership	6
An Academy for the Trades	7
A Think Tank	9
Timeline	11
Questions	12
Governance	12
Budget	12
A Brief Bio	13
Want to Join?	14



Following in the footsteps of Western Canada's first missionaries to the West, like Fr. Lacombe and Bishop Grandin, let's promote faith, reason, family, culture, and vocations!



THE VISION

Our Lord said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.”

Catholicism has a rich history in Canada. One has only to call to mind the names of many of our nearby towns and streets to appreciate this legacy: Lacombe, Grandin, St. Albert.

And yet, this legacy is in danger. The long march of progressive ideology through Canadian institutions has weakened the fabric of both the Church and our society.

Today, a mere 15% of Canadian Catholics believe in the Real Presence and it is estimated that 70% church-going high school seniors lose their faith after they leave home. Yet, hunger has not abated. Indeed, in a recent survey, 71% of Canadian Church leaders say they *witness an increased spiritual curiosity among unbelievers*.

When describing the mission of Christians in our time, Pope Benedict XVI once remarked that we need the visionary action of “creative minorities” of people who can form islands of holiness.

This Pope Benedict Option is not a call to retreat. It is a call to refocus. It is a call to rebuild. We need to strengthen our local communities of faith. Only then can we move outward in confidence to transform the world for Christ.

The proposals that we invite you to consider aim to cultivate communities of faith and learning. They envision models for formation of young Christians in three domains: culture, work, and politics. Please prayerfully consider how you might join us in this work.



65%

Of English-speaking Canadian Catholic colleges closed between 1960 and 1985.

15%

Of Canadian Catholics believe in the Real Presence.

70%

Estimated number of practicing young adults who lose their faith at college.





PROPOSED PROJECTS

We are seeking \$120 000 in seed money to fund a set of feasibility studies for these projects, and to launch programs. In the coming eight months we will be conducting market research, stake-holder surveys, strategic planning, program and business plan development, donor engagements, and discernment. We also hope to launch our first seminars and publications. You'll find a detailed budget and roll out plan on page 12.



ST. BENEDICT INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

- The umbrella institute of several apostolic projects
- Funding provides seed money for the start up for multiple projects, launch of social media program, seminars and publications on Catholic culture

**LAUNCH
ADVENT
2024**



A SCHOOL FOR VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP

- Courses in Humanities, Theology, Business, and Virtuous Leadership
- Certificates in Humanities and Virtuous Leadership, Diploma in Christian Leadership
- Students at the Academy for the Trades and Think Tank take courses here

**LAUNCH
SUMMER
2025**



A CONSERVATIVE THINK TANK

- Conservative think-tank and formation program for youth in Canadian civics, political philosophy, and Catholic social teaching
- Political analysis and the identification, formation, and networking of socially conservative youth with MLAs, MPs, and leaders within Canada's conservative movement

**LAUNCH
FALL
2025**



A LIFE-COACHING APP

- Life-Coaching App combining the wisdom of classical philosophy with the insight of modern psychology
- Personality tests with life-coaching tools to help with discerning vocation, courtship, career, finance, health, fitness, cultural literacy and virtuous living

**LAUNCH
SPRING
2026**



AN ACADEMY FOR THE TRADES

- 3-year Christian formation program for men studying in a registered trade
- Formation houses, mentorship, and courses studied alongside polytechnic and work
- Diploma in Christian Leadership through the School for Virtuous Leadership

**LAUNCH
FALL
2026**



ST. BENEDICT

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

ST. BENEDICT INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

(NAME UP FOR REVIEW)

BIG PICTURE



Mission: To equip Christians for the New Evangelization of Canadian culture.

Scope: The Institute is the administrative hub for the development of several projects, including seminars and publications focused on renewing Catholic culture. Seed funding will be used to develop feasibility studies, business plans, fundraising projects, and activities related to strengthening Catholic culture within Canada.

Audience: Christians interested in deepening their understanding of the connections between faith, reason, and culture. Formation programs will primarily serve young adults (17-25) and mid-career professionals (35-55), but will be of interest to people of all ages.

Success: Build a fantastic team of advisors and supporters; collect the insight of supporters and stakeholders to shape new local and national initiatives; launch summer projects, and one or more items on the 'menu'; raise 120k.

ROLL OUT

Fall
2024:

- ◆ Develop initial concepts for service
- ◆ Launch Advent fundraiser with goal of 120k by early January 2025

Winter
2025:

- ◆ Strategic Planning
- ◆ Establishing Partnerships, legal Board

Summer
-Fall
2025:

- ◆ Fundraising for first 2 years of operations
- ◆ "Catholic Culture and Leadership" Internships for College Students
- ◆ Host Faith and Reason Seminars for professionals

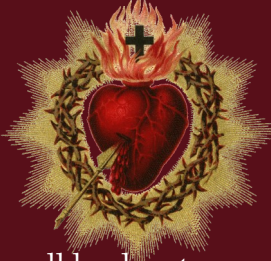
Spring-
Summer
2026:

- ◆ Publication of the 2nd edition of Dr. Topping's *The Gift of the Church: How the Church Transformed the History and Soul of the West*, family publication by Anna Topping, *Preparing for Easter: A Guide for Teens*.



A SCHOOL FOR VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP

BIG PICTURE



Mission: To call leaders to greatness of soul and to equip them to lead others with virtue.

Description: Inspired by the classical understanding of virtue as human excellence, the School achieves its mission through delivering courses, seminars, and publications on Western civilization's tradition of virtue ethics. Courses in the Humanities, Theology, Business, and Leadership lead to Certificates in Humanities and Virtuous Leadership, and a Diploma in Christian Leadership.

Audience: Young adults, parents, and business professionals seeking tools to master themselves and lead others with excellence at home, school, work, the public square and the Church.

Success: A network of inspired leaders who love the cardinal virtues and know how to implement them in all domains for their happiness and the flourishing of others.

Infrastructure: Purchase or rent a beautiful house or coffeehouse for evening classes.

ROLL OUT

Winter
2025:

- ◆ Topping takes courses in small business ownership and fundraising
- ◆ Complete business plan

Summer
2025:

- ◆ Establish legal entity and develop program structure

Fall
2025:

- ◆ Open first course





AN ACADEMY FOR THE TRADES

BIG PICTURE

Mission: The Academy for the Trades forms men entering the trades into devoted and effective leaders in their communities, ready to assume their obligations as husbands, fathers, and mentors.

Description: The Academy offers a three-year formation program for young men studying the trades in Western Canada. It provides formation houses, mentorship opportunities, and courses leading to a Diploma in Christian Leadership. This program is to be pursued alongside their work and study of a trade at a provincially accredited polytechnic. Built around four pillars - human, intellectual, spiritual, and vocational formation - the Academy graduates men who have mastered themselves and are ready to lead others.

Audience: Christian men (19-29) enrolled in a certified program in the trades in Western Canada.

Participation: Apprentice (student enrolled in program), Tutor (student who has qualified to lead a house), Mentor (a mentor businessman who joins in a monthly service activity with a house of men three-four times per year), Benefactor (a man or women who offers prayer, financial or other support to the men).

Success: Graduates will understand the Christian value of work and marriage; be able to discuss master themes within the classic texts of Western literature, philosophy and theology; be skilled in praying the Liturgy of the Hours; demonstrate Christian self-mastery in finance and fitness, and key leadership skills.



NUTS & BOLTS

Formation Houses. Students will live together in houses with 3-7 other men gathered around a common rule of life. Men will commit to a daily regime of prayer, weekly meal, accountability groups, class, and Sunday Mass. Houses will be led by approved dorm fathers - young men in a trade-school program who have received Leadership accreditation through the School for Virtuous Leadership.

Virtuous Leadership Courses. Alongside their employment and trade-school program, students will study one class per semester in the areas of Humanities, Theology, Business, and Virtuous Leadership. Students enrolled in the Institute will be able to achieve a Diploma in Christian Leadership.

Community Retreats. Students will attend short retreats and seminars that focus on a wide range of topics connected to the promotion of Catholic culture, personal discipline, and business leadership.

Mentorship program. Members of the Academy will engage in monthly mentorship and service activities with local Catholic business and tradesmen (e.g. hunting, hiking, building).



AN ACADEMY FOR THE TRADES

(Continued)

DOLLARS & CENTS

Location: Edmonton first, then expanding to Calgary and Saskatoon.

Revenue: Tuition fees will cover 80% cost of courses and formation fees; donations required for purchasing of homes/residences and administrative costs.

Staff: 1 FTE administrator/teacher; 1 full-time director of formation/teacher; 2 summer interns; 2 part time sessional faculty; dorm fathers (paid by reduction in rent); consulting help for website, marketing, database, accounting, and online course delivery.

Need: Houses, Duplexes, Fourplexes, to rent or buy. Annual budget: 250k.

ROLL OUT

Winter-
Spring-
Summer
2025:

- ◆ Strategic Planning
- ◆ Establishing Partnerships

Summer
2025-
Spring
2026:

- ◆ Fundraising for First 2 Years of Operations

Fall
2025:

- ◆ Seminar *John Paul II's Vision for Work and the Family* for 20 Potential Mentors (Catholic Businessmen)

Spring
2026:

- ◆ Applications Open for Fall 2026

Fall
2026:

- ◆ First class of 25 enters formation houses





A CONSERVATIVE THINK TANK

BIG PICTURE

Mission: To strengthen the intellectual foundations of the conservative movement within Canada.

Vision: Will achieve its mission by recruiting, forming, and connecting young Canadians interested in promoting a coherent, socially conservative, political and ethical vision for Canadian society, and by providing thoughtful political analysis.

Principles: Proudly drawing upon thinkers foundational to Canadian political culture such as Edmund Burke, D'Arcy McGee, Stephen Leacock, George Grant, Charles de Konick, and Charles Taylor, this (as yet unnamed) Think Tank roots itself within the West's broader tradition of Christian anthropology and political thought.

Audience: Socially conservative Canadian young adults (15-35) interested in advancing a coherent, inspiring, common-sense vision of the common good within our nation.

Success: Participants in programs will: understand the Christian value of marriage, the dignity of work, principles of market economies and Catholic social teaching; be able intelligently to discuss master themes within the classic texts of Western literature, philosophy, and theology; be capable of serving effectively within political and other leadership positions.

NUTS & BOLTS

Recruitment: By partnering with other youth programs and networks, this think tank will develop a structured, national, recruitment program to identify and connect young adults with a strong interest in culturally conservative goods and virtues.

Formation: Through short courses, seminars, and an internship program in Ottawa, this think tank will offer training programs focused on civics, classical and Christian political philosophy, and virtuous leadership. Students will have the opportunity to earn a certificate in Virtuous Leadership from the *School for Virtuous Leadership*.

Mentorship: Students will be paired with mission-aligned professors, politicians, political staffers, and leaders of non-profit organizations to learn theoretical and practical skills essential to running or serving in effective campaigns.





A CONSERVATIVE THINK TANK

(Continued)

DOLLARS & CENTS

Location: Edmonton and Ottawa

Scale: 12 students in 2026.

Revenue Streams: Various.

Staff Structure: .5 FTE Executive Director, 1 FTE Administrator/teacher; 4 part-time academic advisors, 1 FTE training coordinator; consulting help for website, marketing, database, accounting, and online course delivery.

Budget: ca. 250k

ROLL OUT

Winter-Spring
2024-25

- ◆ Strategic Planning
- ◆ Establishing Partnerships

Summer 2025-
Spring 2026

- ◆ Fundraising for First 2 Years of Operations

Summer
2026

- ◆ First Summer Seminars for 12 students:
“Jerusalem, Athens, Rome”
“Aristotle and Aquinas on the Goods of Politics”
“John Paul II on the value of Family and Work”

Fall
2026

- ◆ Full internship begins



TIMELINE

2024

NOVEMBER

Develop proposals
Receive feedback

CULTURE



DECEMBER

Launch fundraising campaign
with the goal of raising 120k
by January

WORK



2025

JANUARY

Begin feasibility studies
Begin taking business courses

MARCH

Begin publishing content
Establish legal boards

POLITICS



JUNE

Summer activities
Launch major fundraising cam-
paign for one or more initiatives

COMMUNITY



JULY /
AUGUST

Summer programs begin:
Faith & Reason Seminar &
Student Internship



ST. BENEDICT

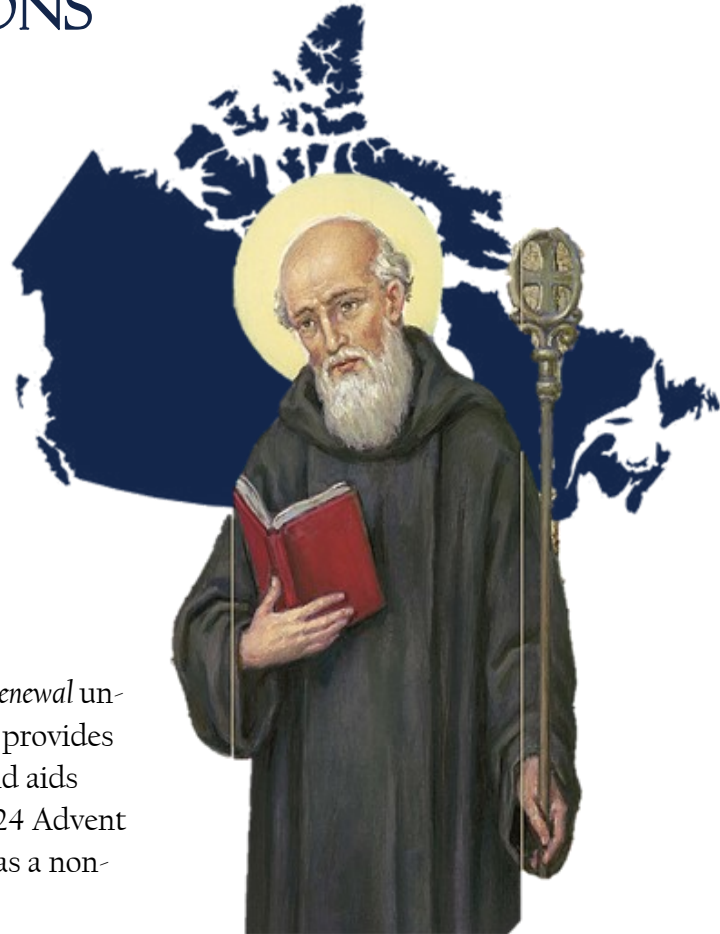
INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

QUESTIONS

ST. BENEDICT?

We chose St. Benedict as our patron because he taught the West how to love God during times of upheaval. When the Roman Empire grew decadent, Benedict proposed a simple alternative: to form communities of virtue. These communities became small islands of holiness - centres of prayer, friendship, study, beauty and economic vitality. At the *St. Benedict Institute for Cultural Renewal* we hope to strengthen these sorts of communities here in Canada. We are not monks. But, like Pope Benedict XVI, we count ourselves among Benedict's spiritual children.



GOVERNANCE?

Dr. Topping is launching the *St. Benedict Institute for Cultural Renewal* under the guidance of an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board provides oversight over financials, guidance for strategic planning, and aids with fundraising. Assuming an adequate response to the 2024 Advent-Christmas campaign, the Institute will legally incorporate as a non-profit society in 2025. *See website for updates.*

BUDGET 2024-25?

Director's salary: \$75,000	Consulting/Contractor fees: \$29,000	Office: \$8,000	Travel/Hospitality: \$4,000	Admin: \$4,000
* Topping's work Dec-August	* Admin 0.6 for 6 months * Internship, program development * Fundraising, marketing	* Printing * Supplies * Tech	* Presentations/conferences * Donor engagement	* Legal Fees * Other

ROLL OUT & MORE INFORMATION?

Between Jan and August 2025 we will pursue activities in this order: (1) establish regular commentary on the Creed & Culture (2) establish a legal board, review name, brand, and website (3) conduct stakeholder surveys (4) complete initial strategic planning, business, program, marketing and fundraising plans (while taking intensive courses on business and fundraising) (5) establish a small publishing house (6) host one or more *Faith and Reason Seminars* (7) host a summer internship (8) begin a major campaign. For more information about the launch of the St. Benedict Institute, to help spread the word, or to speak with Dr. Topping about making a gift, get in touch at Director@BenedictInstitute.ca.



ST. BENEDICT

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL

FEASIBILITY STUDY

A BRIEF BIO

Who are the Toppings? Ryan and Anna grew up as Mennonites in SK and BC and converted to Catholicism after a long search, help from many friends, and attending the funeral of John Paul II while studying at Oxford University.

At Oxford, Ryan studied with, among others, Oliver O'Donovan, Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., and Sir Roger Scruton. He was influenced by Catholics such as John Finnis, Ralph McInerny, Fr. John Saward, Stratford Caldecott, and C.S. Lewis' secretary, Walter Hooper.

The Oxford Oratory, one time home to Cardinal Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins, offered the Toppings their first experience of Catholic parish life. Even better than earning a doctorate, the Toppings returned home to North America in 2008 with their first sons, Peter and Joseph.

Ryan helped establish the Catholic Studies Program at St. Thomas College (Saskatoon, SK), held the Chair in Catholic Studies at St. Thomas University (Fredericton, NB), then served as a Fellow at a classically-oriented Catholic Great Books college, the Thomas More College of the Liberal Arts, just north of Boston.

Feeling a strong tug to be nearer to family and to help build up Catholic institutions and intellectual life nearer to home, the Toppings returned to Canada seven years ago, when Ryan took the position of Vice-President and Academic Dean at Newman Theological College. Their family by this time had grown to 8 lovely children.

At NTC, Ryan helped the college to solidify its accreditation status, establish its first BA in Catholic Studies, and secure over 1 million dollars in funding for outreach programs. Pairing up with Georgetown University's *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate* (CARA), under his leadership the Benedict XVI Institute produced a first-of-its kind national study on newly ordained priests in Canada, *Meet our New Priests*.

Ryan helped launch other initiatives at NTC including a yearly *Faith and Reason Seminar* for professionals, the *John Paul II Leadership Camp* for youth, and the *Catholic Culture Internship* program for students.

While at NTC, the Toppings contributed to the college's Catholic identity and helped make it a "hub" for joyful Catholic orthodoxy among young adults.

The Toppings are privileged to be a founding family of *Campion Classical Academy*, where Anna serves as the Administrator. Their eldest son, a graduate of *Campion*, is currently studying as a seminarian.

Ryan has published 10 books on Catholic culture and education and dozens of articles and interviews in outlets

such as *First Things*, *EWTN*, *Word on Fire*, *Crisis*, *Catholic World Report*, *National Catholic Register*, *Sham Media* & *Epoch Times*.



Ryan and Anna at JPII's funeral: Rome, April 2005



Dressed up for Thomas More College's Tea and Shoot: New Hampshire, 2013



WANT TO JOIN?

Thank you for prayerfully considering these proposals! We invite you to help us raise \$120 000 in seed funding by the end of 2024. There are three ways that you can join us:

1. Become a Prayer Partner

- ◆ Donate if you can, but commit to offering at least one Rosary per month for the Institute

2. Donate Seed Funding

- ◆ One time donation: \$100, \$300, \$1000, \$3000 or more
Monthly donations of: \$30, \$100, \$300 or more

3. Join the St. Benedict Society

- ◆ Founder - donate \$15 000 or more
- ◆ Leader - donate \$5 000 or more
- ◆ Ambassador—donate a sacrificial gift, & promote the Institute to friends

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
VISIT

BenedictInstitute.ca





ST. BENEDICT INSTITUTE
FOR
CULTURAL RENEWAL

UMBRELLA INSTITUTE
PROVIDES INITIAL FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION



A SCHOOL FOR VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP
WHERE CLASSES ARE HELD



A THINK TANK
POLITICAL INFLUENCE
INTERNSHIPS



AN ACADEMY FOR THE TRADES
BUSINESS MENTORSHIP
FORMATION HOUSES



A LIFE COACHING APP
ATTRACTS ATTENTION AND POTENTIAL
STUDENTS