Go Forth and Make a Difference

On Friday, May 9, Fr. vanThanh Nguyen, SVD, delivered the commencement address to the eleven members of the Class of 2014. He stood in the same Main Chapel where he received his diploma 25 years ago and extolled the graduates to live up to their chosen theme, “Go Make a Difference.”

Acknowledging their hard work in attaining this spiritual and academic milestone, he noted they were just beginning their journey.

“While every beginning has its own challenges and uncertainties, you graduates need not be afraid to step into the future,” he said, quoting the Gospel of St. Luke, 1:37. “Nothing is impossible with God.”

Today a New Testament scholar, director of the Masters of Divinity Program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and member of the DWC Board of Trustees, Fr. vanThanh recounted some of the challenges he faced in the early stages of his journey, especially with studies.

He overcame his academic obstacles as he discovered a deep desire to learn the truth, especially as it pertained to the Bible. His was a distance race, with the early laps containing obstacles of his own making. Fr. vanThanh pointed out that St. Paul liked to use athletic metaphors, especially running, when encouraging the early Christian missionaries to overcome obstacles in their quest to spread the Word of God.

“Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.”

- St. Paul, First Corinthians, 9:24-25

“For me, the Christian life, especially the missionary life, is like running a race,” he said.
A Word from the President:

Fr. Tim Lenchak, SVD

The Boston Marathon attracted a lot of attention after the tragic bombing last year. Among the 36,000 participants was one of our students, Luke Henkel, who says it was a fantastic experience. At one point, exhausted and tempted to quit, he received tremendous encouragement from fans along the route who cheered him on. Luke finished in the top four-percent of all runners, and we are proud of him. Luke is not only “Boston Strong” but “DWC Strong” as well.

The Boston Marathon can serve as a symbol of a college education, which can also seem long and arduous. At Divine Word College, students face the challenges of studies, human development, spiritual growth, life in a culturally diverse community, and the discernment of one’s vocation. It is good to have someone cheering us on when life gets difficult—and students who are pursuing the priesthood, religious life, or lay ministry are no exception. Our students are supported and encouraged not only by the faculty, staff and their fellow students, but also by the SVD priests and brothers who call DWC home. We hope that our presence and support will encourage our students to persevere in their studies and in their vocations. Please join us in praying for these young men and women who will be future leaders of the church.

“The Boston Strong” and “DWC Strong” as well.

Congratulations Graduates

Ramon Urbina
Antioch, California
- Valedictorian
- Philosophy
- Attend the SVD Novitiate to discern the priesthood

“There’s a lot of good people here. Very humble priests, very dedicated workers, and it’s very intimate. I can have a conversation with the president of the school and any member of the staff at the same meal. It is that kind of close knit community that really spoke to me.”

Peter Do
Monroe, North Carolina
- Philosophy
- Attend the SVD Novitiate to discern the priesthood

“I grew up and had a lot of fun, did a lot of work, and had some hard times. Best of all I met and shared times with many wonderful people. As I like to say, in high school, I had a lot of acquaintances, but I never really had close friends until I came here.”

Sr. Theresa Dung Bich Trang, LHC
Dalat, Vietnam
- Salutatorian
- Theology and Religious Studies
- Return to Vietnam to serve her religious community

“When I came here, I challenged myself a lot to put myself in different situations, to do some things that I never did before. I feel much more confident now. I think that is because of the way they teach us, to think for ourselves and not to depend on other people.”

Sr. Nga Le, ICM
Angiang, Vietnam
- Philosophy
- Return to Vietnam and serve her congregation

“Studying in DWC is a blessing for me. I appreciate the devotion of everyone here. I think that the professors, fathers, brothers, sisters, and everyone in this college are the stars whose light shines on my soul.”
Fr. Joe McDermott, SVD-Retired has had a life-long love of photography and we like to share his work. Here we go Fr. Joe’s Photo Gallery

"Being the student senate president and the only Ugandan student here, I have learned a lot and have been exposed to many things, especially representing students on different committees. That has helped me grow more in leadership."

Joseph Musisi
Kampala, Uganda
• Theology and Religious Studies
• Attend the SVD Novitiate to discern the brotherhood

"I learned from many SVDs, the great SVD missionaries, who opened their life to the mission. If you open your life, you will love the people and the people are going to love you. Like St. Joseph Freinademetz said, love is the only language that everyone can understand."

Fransiskus Santoso
Semarang, Indonesia
• Philosophy
• Attend the SVD Novitiate to discern the priesthood

"Divine Word College has been a good experience for me, absolutely. The best part is the community life, because if you compare to bigger colleges, I have more friends, more close friends. Most of my friends are international students too, and that makes me appreciate what I have here."

Javier Arzaga Jr.
Pomona, California
• Philosophy
• Continue to discern his vocation

"I enjoyed this place and I leave it up to God for what’s next. All I have to do is just trust that if this is where God is calling me to be, then I’m ready to be a vessel, to be used, always proclaiming."

Binh Tran
Saigon, Vietnam
• Philosophy
• Attend the SVD Novitiate to discern the priesthood

"This place has given me the opportunity to know, explore and to figure out life. It’s let me develop into what I am today. It’s opened the doors to many opportunities. When I came here, I was lost, confused and scared. Today, I’m a lot more confident and I am not just a servant, but a child of God as well."

Sr. Uyen Nguyen, SJ P
Kiengiang, Vietnam
• Theology and Religious Studies
• Return to Vietnam to serve her religious community

"It is very difficult to say goodbye to this place and the people who have become my example for living in religious life. They are very humble, patient and always ready to help. I will carry them with me and keep them all in my prayers always."

Monique Henry
St. Thomas, Jamaica
• Intercultural Studies
• Continue studies in dentistry or social work

"I can honestly say that I am leaving DWC a different person than when I first walked through the doors. I believe that I am a better version of myself and I can even say that I view the world with a new pair of lenses."

Paul David Cottingham
Rittman, Ohio
• Philosophy
• Attend the Glenmary Novitiate to discern the priesthood

"If God can work through me, he can work through anyone."

- St. Francis of Assisi
Awards and Scholarships for 2013-2014

Divine Word College presented a number of awards and scholarships at the end of the academic year.

Inaugural Distinguished Service Award
Sandy Wilgenbusch, director of Public Relations, is the first recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, established to honor a staff member for outstanding service to the college community. Mark Singsank, associate director for Development, nominated her for the honor.

“Sandy works with all college departments and many students. She is always willing to help and always does so with a positive attitude,” he wrote. “She is always willing to be on committees and take the lead on those committees. She is often here on weekends for various events.” The award goes to a member of the staff who strives to improve their quality of work, develop creative solutions to recurring problems, and demonstrate a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

“I am overwhelmed and extremely honored to receive this award,” she said. “I work with many wonderful people and the opportunity to be a member of the DWC community makes it easy to do everything I can to make the college a better place.”

Excellence in Teaching Award
The college awarded Dr. Ron Condon, professor and chair of the Philosophy Program, with The Rev. Charles Malin Award as teacher of the year.

“It means the world to me. It’s an expression of the affection the students have for me and I’m very fond of the senior class this year,” Ron said. “One of the wonderful things about working here is once in a while you meet students that teach you a good deal about life. I love these students.”

The award was created to honor Fr. Charles Malin, SVD, the first Dean of Academic Affairs at DWC in Epworth. Following a selection process, the recipient is nominated by the students, recommended by a faculty committee and approved by the college administration.

Honors Presented at Recognition and Awards Luncheon, April 25

Dung Tri Nguyen received the Fr. Robert J. Flinn, SVD, scholarship, named for the accomplished educator, author, canon lawyer, medical ethicist, and former Divine Word College trustee. The Flinn scholarship is renewable each year that recipients meet the guidelines.

Giovanni Lopez-Huerta received the A. J. Hughes scholarship, named for the longtime member of the Divine Word College Board of Trustees and former college attorney. The Hughes scholarship is renewable each year that a recipient meets the guidelines.

Hoc Tien Mai and Quang Ngoc Pham received Fr. Chester Nowicki, SVD, Scholarships named for the long-time educator and administrator, whose wise and disciplined, yet kind and generous service as treasurer greatly benefited the Society of the Divine Word. The Nowicki scholarship is renewable each year that recipients meet the guidelines.

Jose Alberto Flores and William Ramon Rodriguez received Presidential Scholarships. The scholarship is awarded to no more than two freshman students who show promise of superior academic achievement.
Two SVDs Honored and Remembered

Divine Word College honored the lives of two accomplished members of the Society of the Divine Word whose journeys led them to DWC.

Missionary to Missionaries
Fr. Bill Shea, SVD, has touched the lives of perhaps thousands who have in turn touched the lives of thousands of others around the world. He has been a missionary to missionaries through his work as an educator, formator and spiritual director as well as an administrator at the highest levels of the SVD in North America. “Seeing people grow up before your eyes, when you’re with them for four years or more, that’s just a pleasant experience,” he said.

On April 26, Fr. Bill celebrated his 50th Jubilee in the priesthood with the Divine Word College community during a Mass and banquet. “He’s a dedicated Divine Word Missionary, a person of deep faith, somebody with a genuine concern for other people, a marvelous sense of humor and ability to relate to people of all ages,” said Fr. Jim Bergin, rector at DWC.

Born and raised in Boston, Fr. Bill attended Catholic schools and graduated from Boston College in 1953. After a stint in the U.S. Army, in 1956 he turned his attention to religious life as a member of the SVD. He professed his first vows in 1958, final vows in 1962 and was ordained on February 2, 1964. Hoping to be assigned to the Philippines, the society instead started Fr. Bill on a career working with young men discerning their path to religious life. He held positions at seminaries in Perrysburg, Ohio, East Troy, Wisconsin, Girard, Pennsylvania, and St. Mark’s Seminary in Erie, Pennsylvania. In 1976 he became Provincial of the Eastern Province, which a decade later would become part of the Chicago Province.

During this time, he continued working in seminaries in Bordentown and Princeton, New Jersey and in East Troy before coming to DWC in 1991, where he has served as assistant dean, rector, and teacher. Semi-retired since 2006, Fr. Bill remains active with Students for Life and works with student lectors, continuing his role as a missionary to missionaries. “It’s been wonderful, being a priest. I like the work being an educator, formator and administrator and fulfilling the needs of the Society,” he said. “I thank God and I would not want to trade places with anyone.”

“Dennis was a quick thinker, always brainstorming. He would come up with off-the-wall ideas and they would just take off,” said M arlene Decker, who worked with him in the DWC Business Office. “It seemed everything he put his hands on was successful.” Fr. Mike Hutchins, SVD, past-president of DWC, who worked with Bro. Dennis for many years, presented the eulogy at the funeral of his long time friend and spoke of the reverence he held for the SVD Brotherhood.

Born in Waterloo, Iowa, Bro. Dennis entered the minor seminary in East Troy and went on to DWC in Epworth, where he graduated in 1974. After teaching in Japan, he worked in the Southern Province and earned an M BA. He professed final vows in 1982. In 1988, he returned to DWC to become Business Office manager and vice president for Finance, later directing the Vocation Office. In 1999, Bro. Dennis was named vice provincial of the Chicago Province and in 2002 he was named national mission director. He helped establish Divine Word Farms in Iowa to advance sustainable practices and raise funds for missions outside North America. Over the years, he quietly worked as an advocate for the homeless in Chicago and for prisoners.

“I don’t think anyone has an idea of how many lives he touched. He helped people as he went along,” M arlene said. “He’d always come up with an idea or find the funds to help people out or solve a problem.”
Fr. Joe’s Photo Gallery
Fr. Joe M. McDermott, SVD-Retired has had a life-long love of photography and we like to share his work. Here we go back to an image from his days on mission in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, from 1953 - 1976. These three wise men were good friends of his, and often got together to solve the problems of the world. Typically the conversation revolved around three subjects—fights over land, quarreling among wives, and pigs getting into their gardens.

DWC Student Finishes Strong at Boston Marathon
Divine Word College student Luke Henkel not only ran in the Boston Marathon, he finished in the top four-percent of runners! He is pictured with his aunt and uncle, Anne and John Bradley, of Quaker Hill, Connecticut, who greeted him shortly after the race. From Seattle, Washington, Luke has a degree and is taking additional credits at DWC before applying to Novitiate next year. This was his fifth marathon, but the first in Boston. He is already planning to go back next year. “Everyone along the way was so supportive,” he said. “This was by far, the most incredible experience, I’m still getting chills.”

Spring Ministry
Twenty-five Divine Word students traveled to eight different sites to do ministry work during their spring break. Groups helped at a parish in Perry, Iowa, did service work at the SVD facility at East Troy, Wisconsin, and helped clean at St. Anselm’s in Chicago. Others traveled to Missouri to help out at St. Nicholas and Resurrection parishes in St. Louis. Another group went to Ohio to do service work at Our Lady of La Vang parish in Cincinnati. One group—which included senior Javier Arzaga (r)—traveled to West Virginia to help parishioners of St. Anne’s, in Webster Springs.

Donor Appreciation Celebration
On Sunday, April 30, DWC honored benefactors at the third-annual Donor Appreciation Celebration, highlighted by the latest inductees into the Legacy Society, which now lists nearly 70 members. Approximately 200 friends of Divine Word enjoyed a fine meal, and then heard Fr. Tim Lenchak express his thanks for their generosity while detailing the need for their continued support. The event wrapped up with an entertaining, student-produced video that expressed their view of their school.

Spring Roadside Clean Up
Talk about outreach! Three students form a human chain to grab some trash from among the cattails in a ditch east of DWC. More than 40 students, SVDs and staff teamed up to clean a two-mile stretch of Highway 20 as part of the spring Roadside Clean Up project with the Iowa DOT. A group also patrolled the grounds around DWC, collecting even more trash accumulated from a long, windy winter. At the end of the day, a large pile of paper, plastic and other debris was packed into trash bags, and no longer blemishes the roadside near DWC.
Jean Emmanuel
Goes to the UN

Divine Word student Jean Emmanuel Verrier is among a select few to take part in the 2014 Youth Assembly at the United Nations, August 6 – 8 in New York City, representing his homeland of Haiti. He submitted his application earlier this spring.

“I didn’t think that they would choose me because so many Haitian students from big universities abroad wanted to represent Haiti in the Youth Assembly, because it is so prestigious,” he said.

What may have helped his application was his dedication to his homeland. A year ago, he traveled to Haiti on a personal mission trip to fight cholera and promote clean water in a village where he once worked. He has also been instrumental in a program called, “Soccer for Peace,” which helps street children learn to work together and develop a better vision for their future.

At the UN Youth Assembly, he will make a presentation, “Ensuring Environmental Sustainability in Haiti.” He proposes to create a youth organization that will learn about and promote sustainable practices. He also wants to begin a recycling program to help clear plastic and other trash from the land and water, and encourage the government to be more involved.

“There are many NGOs in Haiti who work for environmental sustainability,” he said. “Most of them are going to be there, so I will present my plan to them.”

You are a Member

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian and political thinker, traveled throughout our country and recorded his observations in the book, “Democracy in America.” One of his most memorable findings was that “Americans of all ages, all stations of life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations...in democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all others.”

Most of us are members of associations of various kinds, from our parishes to social organizations, political affiliations, alumni associations and others. Sometimes we are members of associations without even realizing it.

For instance, as a friend and benefactor of Divine Word College, you are a member of an association of more than 6,000 people, who support the mission of the college and the Society of the Divine Word. This association doesn’t hold meetings or elect officers, but its purpose and impact are powerful and clear.

You make a tremendous, positive impact on Divine Word College, and you are not alone. You and 6,000 other people share, in spirit, a common interest and commitment to the education of future priests, brothers, sisters and lay persons. We are so very grateful for your support and your prayers.

Youth Assembly at the United Nations looks like an amazing opportunity for Jean Emmanuel. He submitted his application earlier this spring.

Jean Emmanuel

Terry Sykora, VP for Development

Jean Emmanuel

Join the Celebration!

Saturday, August 2
Epworth Town and Country Days Parade

Friday, August 29
Sunday, August 31 - All Alumni Reunion

Monday, September 8
Family Feast, welcoming clergy of the Archdiocese of Dubuque

Sunday, October 19
Mission Sunday - Fr. Jim Pawlicki, SVD, will preside at Liturgy

Friday, November 7
Vocal Concert by Fr. Raul Caga, SVD

Events will continue through May 2015
DWC Grad Receives Matthew 25 Award

A decade ago, Paul Dinh Nguyen volunteered for a medical mission trip to Vietnam. Halfway through, he was running the operation. Since then, the 1989 graduate of Divine Word College has organized dozens of such trips. For his humanitarian efforts, primarily through the non-profit Medical Aid Project, Paul was honored on Wednesday, March 19, with the Matthew 25 Award for 2014.

“My first reaction was that I am not worthy of it,” he said. “The Bible verse is very vivid and strong, who is worthy of this?” A former classmate, Fr. John Szukalski, SVD, faculty member at DWC, nominated him. “Although he did not continue with the SVD, he is very active in ministry to the poor, elderly and sick,” Fr. John wrote. “His ministry is well known to many SVDs and has strong links with our mission ideals.”

Born in Vietnam, Paul escaped to a refugee camp in the Philippines before coming to the U.S. in 1980. He later enrolled at the minor seminary at East Troy, Wisconsin where he met Fr. John. Both went on to DWC and graduated in 1989. Fr. John continued to the priesthood while Paul returned to the refugee camp in the Philippines where he worked for three years before returning to the U.S., eventually getting into parish work and starting his own tax preparation business in Chicago. In 2004, he met a priest who operated Medical Aid to Vietnam, a non-profit which organized two-week medical mission trips. Paul signed up and it changed his life.

“The coordinator of the team got sick, so they asked me to lead the second week,” Paul said. “From that day on, I took over as coordinator and I established the office here in Chicago and took the name Medical Aid Project.” Today, Paul coordinates a mission trip every eight months. “Part of the reason I do this, I think, is that Divine Word College instilled in me the value of missionary work,” he said. “I consider myself helping people, it’s very rewarding.”