Did you know?

How many graduates become priests or Brothers?

As friends and supporters of Divine Word College, you already know that we are the only Roman Catholic college seminary in the United States whose primary mission is the preparation of young men for missionary service. But resting on the laurels of our unique status is not enough. In the last DWC World, you read "Mission in Many Forms," showing that the Society of the Divine Word continues to embrace the challenges of change, developing new ideas of mission and new ways of "making the world our parish."

And how are we doing? Did you know that on the global level there are over 6,000 SVDs serving in over 70 different countries? And did you know that the Society of the Divine Word is the largest international missionary congregation in the Catholic Church? And that among the ten largest Catholic religious congregations for men, the SVD is currently the 6th largest and the only one that shows consistent growth?

It's no secret that, even as the numbers of Catholics increase, the numbers of ordained priests and religious are falling. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, this is a "national religious problem, not just a Christian concern." It's reassuring then, to know that the Society of the Divine Word continues to hold its own with a modest but steady increase in missionary vocations.

But what about Divine Word College? Are we doing our job here?

Divine Word College plays an integral role in the development of those vocations. Becoming an SVD requires a commitment to education, formation and personal development. DWC offers a cross-cultural seminary atmosphere of spiritual guidance and discernment, where young men who question God's call can find their answers.

In the past twenty years, since the 1988-89 school year, Divine Word College has had

DWC Graduates in Religious Life 1988 - 2007 3 Seminarians to be ordained in 2008 4 Seminarians at **SVD Novitiate** 13 Diocesan or Religious Order priests 19 Seminarians at CTU or **Cross Cultural Training** 47 SVD priests & Brothers

approximately 180 seniors graduating with their bachelor's degrees. Of these, 47 (25%) are now SVDs who have professed their final vows, including two SVD Brothers and 45 ordained missionary priests currently serving in many areas of North and South America, Europe, Asia and the West Indies.

Not included in this number are three SVD seminarians who will be ordained this year, and four DWC graduates who are now at the Novitiate at Techny, Ill. In addition, we have 19 SVD seminarians who are either completing their studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, or serving in the SVD Cross-Cultural Training Program (CTP). This brings the total number to 73, indicating that 40% of our graduates since 1988-89 are, or

Since 1988, 47% of DWC graduates are now serving the Church as seminarians and ordained or professed religious.

will soon be, Divine Word Missionaries.

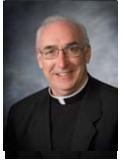
If we add in the number of DWC graduates who have gone on to become diocesan priests (12), plus one graduate who is now a candidate for the Trappist religious order, the number increases to 86, or 47% of our Divine Word College graduates who are now serving the Church as seminarians or ordained or professed religious.

Other graduates, instilled with a lasting sense of mission from their experiences at DWC, have gone on to serve the Church in lay capacities. One example is Paul Dinh Nguyen, a 1989 graduate, whose Chicago-based business helps the Vietnamese community with travel, taxes and translation issues. He also oversees a program which arranges for doctors and nurses to go to Vietnam on medical service projects, continuing the legacy of mission engendered at DWC.

A Word from the President

The Gospel selection for a recent Sunday was the familiar account of Jesus' call of the first apostles (Matthew Ch. 4). With alacrity, Peter and Andrew abandoned their nets; James and John, their boats and their father. In an instant, at Jesus' summons, four adult men turned their backs on a familiar way of life, on routines that were their security and means of livelihood. In the compressed narrative of the scripture, no time to hesitate, weigh consequences, make provisions. Time only to recognize the opportunity of a lifetime and commit oneself to its pursuit: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Was it the nature of Jesus' mission that drew those Galilean fishermen to follow him? Apparently not. The details of their vocations reveal men with little early understanding of Jesus' cause. James and John envisioned a worldly kingdom. In a later moment Peter earned Jesus' scorn for suggesting that Jesus forsake the cross altogether. So, what compelled those first apostles to become his companions? Surely it was the power and attraction of the person of Jesus himself. Surely it was the magnetism of one centered in



Rev. Michael Hutchins, SVD

God, of one inspired by a higher vision, of one free in his own person and so vulnerable to all others. Mission and task would come later. Person was primary.

Divine Word College exists so that men and women engaged in the contemporary equivalent of "mending their nets" might encounter Jesus Christ, might feel his liberating grace and peer into his higher vision of love. Divine Word College exists so that those poised to leave their boats behind might find the new firm ground on which to begin their journey as Jesus Christ's companions. The responsibility of our trustees, administrators, faculty members and staff employees is to create that special place where Jesus Christ is palpably and compellingly present.

This issue of *DWC World* offers some statistics about our efforts in recent years. They present a picture of modest success. With help from all of you, our friends and benefactors, we will try to continue to be a place, although never perfect, where men and women will find the opportunity and the encouragement to throw in their lot with Jesus Christ. May we find the grace and the courage to be all he calls us to be.

Did you know?

(continued)

But what about new vocations?

Here at Divine Word College, Len Uhal, our National Vocation Director, is another example of a DWC graduate (1987) whose career is driven by a sense of mission. He oversees five other vocation directors, all SVDs and graduates of DWC. Four directors are responsible for certain regions of the country, and one is director of our SVD Associate Program.

In November of 2007, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry hosted its biennial National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Columbus, Ohio. All of our DWC vocation directors, including Len Uhal,

2007 Ordination Class - Chicago Province *Five newly ordained are graduates of Divine Word College*

Frs. Trung Mai, Tony Romo, Michael Vu and Binh Nguyen, attended the event. With about 20,000 people participating in the three-day celebration, the directors spoke to between 3-5,000 young people and youth group leaders from around the country.

Our vocation directors regularly attend or host conferences like these, both large and small, rubbing shoulders with young Catholics active in their faith. They lead youth retreats and are initiating a "Mission Experience" trip program for interested candidates beginning in May, 2008. They plan and host events and speak at youth gatherings nationwide.

Divine Word College is fortunate to have a focused, multi-faceted and dedicated Vocation Department, attending to specific vocation plans and goals. We also try to research the changes in today's world, asking: "Who is pursuing missionary life today? And why?" Answers to these questions will help us to do a better job. We want to acquaint young people with the idea of religious life as an important choice. We want to instill in them the conviction that this is *their* Church.

And did you know that we rely on you, as well, to help foster vocations here at Divine Word College? We belong to you, our

Catholic community. As you go about your daily lives, we need your prayers, your positive encouragement and your continued support of vocations.

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Alumni on mission today

In this issue, we've shared some facts and figures about our seminary students from the past 20 years. Now take a glimpse into the lives of some of those Divine Word College graduates.

Fr. Matheus Bitin Ro, SVD

"Mission does not have to be going off to distant lands to evangelize – rather, most of the time, it is right where you are living."

After their long drive from Kentucky to Divine Word College seminary in Epworth, Iowa, Fr. Matheus Ro's brother looked around and exclaimed, "You came all the way from a rice farm village in Indonesia to study in a college surrounded by cornfields and cows?" Fr. Matheus remained silent amidst the laughter of his family. "Later," he says, "I sent them a postcard showing an Iowa farm scene." And on that postcard, he wrote: "God does not care where you study about Him and His mission. Whether in a rice farm or cornfield, God has a way to teach us how to find His presence."

Fr. Matheus graduated from Divine Word College in 2002, and was ordained as an SVD missionary in his home of Timor, Indonesia, in October of 2007. In November, he arrived in Gassaway, West Virginia, as an associate pastor of St. Thomas, St. Ann and Risen Lord parishes, all located in the hills of Appalachia. Keeping busy with masses, religion classes, Bible study and visits to the sick and homebound, Fr. Matheus believes that "this is what I have been prepared for in those years in Epworth: to envision an idea of mission that is realistic and right at the center of God's people."

Among his newest challenges, he cites "driving around the sharp curves of the mountain roads, trying to be on time to celebrate the Eucharist." Fr. Matheus feels gratified by the warm welcome and acceptance that the people of Appalachia have shown him. "It wipes away any difficulties," he says. "It reminds me of my childhood years, when the old American missionaries came to visit us at my village. It gives me a good feeling, 20 years after those memories, that I too, can do the same."

Ellis Southwell

"God's call to us is an invitation to live in the way that will allow our unique gifts to flourish for the greater good. I believe that in my teaching profession, I am answering God's call."

As a boy, Ellis Southwell attended St. Joseph Academy in Antigua, an all-boys high school started by the Christian Brothers in 1958. After graduating from Divine Word College in 1998, Ellis returned to St. Joseph to teach Religious Education and English Literature. He is also the Coordinator of the Religious Education Department, and organizes monthly liturgies, the annual retreat program and weekly assemblies.

Ellis' fond memories of Divine Word College include the special friendships he made, the cultural evenings with ethnic food and the beautiful liturgies celebrated on special occasions. These experiences have inspired him in his calling as a teacher. "Like DWC," says Ellis, "we have a myriad of cultures at our school, with nearly 300 boys from American, Caribbean, Chinese, European, Indian, Lebanese and Syrian backgrounds. There is a wide academic scope among them, but they are respectful and eager to learn."

"One of the challenges of teaching in the Caribbean is the limited resources that one has at his disposal," adds Ellis. "Instruction is usually 'chalk and talk,' though the library has internet access." He believes that teaching in a Catholic school gives him the opportunity to teach by words and deeds. "I know my job is important so I try to walk the talk, always remembering that my actions speak louder than my words."



At his home parish, Holy Family Cathedral, Ellis is a member of the Youth Council and also a catechist who is preparing 38 candidates for confirmation. "This gives me more avenues to mission to the young, who are the future leaders of the church and the country." From his years at DWC to his role now as teacher of young men, Ellis believes that "each person has been created by God for a special purpose, and is called to serve God in a unique way."

(continued on page 4)



Fr. Adam MacDonald, SVD

"What I consider especially important to the idea of mission is relationship. Our God is a God of relationship... Whether in the Philippines or at Techny, the driving force behind my ministry is reaching out to and establishing relationships with the people I serve."



"In high school, I received a postcard from the Vocation Office at Divine Word College, advertising the seminary and offering the invitation to be a missionary," says Fr. Adam MacDonald, SVD. "The idea spoke to me, and here I am – nearly 20 years after arriving at DWC in 1988 – an ordained SVD missionary priest."

Fr. Adam has a favorite memory from his seminary years at Divine Word College: "Sharing meals in the dining room – not just with my fellow students, but also with the SVDs, teachers and staff. It was through these shared meals that I truly tasted what it means to be a 'community' where all are welcome and all have a place, just like at the banquet table in God's Kingdom."

A 1993 graduate of Divine Word College, Fr. Adam believes that "one of the surprises I've experienced [in my mission service] has been the realization that my ministry didn't begin the day I was ordained a priest. It began the day I was baptized." Apostolic activities, novitiate and study at CTU "were all a part of my ministry," adds Fr. Adam, "and simply took on a new form through the rite of ordination."

As a new SVD, he was assigned to the Philippine Central Province in June of 2000, to serve as Associate Pastor of San Antonio de Padua Parish in Antipolo City. But all too soon, Fr. Adam received a new assignment, requiring his return to the United States. "After spending so much time learning the language and culture of the Filipino people, and investing myself in pastoral and personal relationships with the people I served," he says, "it was no simple task to leave that behind."

As Assistant Secretary of Education for the SVD Chicago Province since 2003, Fr. Adam oversees the Ongoing Education program of the Province for all its members in perpetual vows. "This work relates to my sense of mission in that I feel my efforts foster a deepening of the relationship of the members with the God who calls them and also with the people they serve," Fr. Adam explains.

Being the youngest member of the vowed community at Techny wasn't easy at first. Fr. Adam says, "I was shaking in my boots the first time I presided at a daily community Mass, wondering what I, a young whipper-snapper, could possibly say to inspire these men who had so much more wisdom." But somehow, he made it through the Mass, and felt much better when he was told that "his youthful vigor was a breath of fresh air."

"Wherever I am, God is there, too," Fr. Adam adds. "It's helped me to learn the meaning of *letting go and letting God*."

Fr. Toan Vu

"In the midst of hardship, I heard God's call."

After enduring over a month at sea in a small boat and three years in a Thailand refugee camp, Fr. Toan Vu finally made his way to the United States. Inspired by missionaries he'd met in the camp, he longed to follow in their footsteps once he reached the "free land."

In 1995, Fr. Toan began seminary studies at Divine Word College, graduating in 1999. Since his ordination as an SVD missionary priest in 2006, he has been serving as one of the pastors for Divine Word Parish in Capichu, located in a mountainous region of southern Quito, the capital of Equador. The parish encompasses 23 precincts, with four churches, two centers and more than 3,500 Catholic families. "Life and infrastructure are primitive," Fr. Toan says, "but the people are relaxed and happy and enjoy their lives as much as they can."

Fr. Toan's motto, "His mission is our mission," is an excerpt from the SVD constitution. No stranger to hardship, he navigates this cold, rainy region with a strong sense of mission, performing his pastoral duties in a place with only two paved roads and no sewer, phone lines or Internet service. His days are filled with offering Masses, visiting parishioners and the sick, coordinating parish centers, preparing meals and keeping office hours to attend to people's

needs. Despite the challenges, Fr. Toan feels joy and satisfaction in his work in Ecuador. "I am blessed to be with these people, worshipping and working together to build a better community for all."

"Divine Word College is always my home," adds Fr. Toan, "where I learned to serve generously, live fully and work effectively in my calling. The field of mission is endless and diverse; every one of us is called to do God's mission in our own way."





The Giving Perspective

In this edition of the DWC World, you have the opportunity to learn more about Divine Word College and the young men who have passed through its doors on the way to life as a missionary. As I thought about these men and the ministry they have chosen, I reflected on my role at Divine Word and the ministry I have chosen in the field of fundraising.

Often, friends and acquaintances will ask me how I can ask people for money. My reply is that if you truly believe in a cause, it is easy to ask others to support it.

Father Henri Nouwen, a missionary, pastor and author, was very involved in seeking support for the mentally and physically handicapped. Father Nouwen's words explain how fundraising is indeed an important ministry within the church. "From the perspective of the Gospel, fund raising is first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. Asking people for money is giving them



Mr. Mark Singsank VP for Development

the opportunity to put their resources at the disposal of the Kingdom. To raise funds is to offer people the chance to invest what they have in the work of God."

Asking you to invest in the young men who are studying here at Divine Word College is easy. Our seminarians will one day be spreading the Good News around the world while offering help to the less fortunate, an important investment in the work of God. A cause that is easy to believe in.

Thank you for your investment in the seminarians at Divine Word. Your support over the years has helped many young men become priests and Brothers. We hope that the next 20 years will see many more young men pass through our doors on their way to a new life as a missionary.

DRA Grant Awarded to Divine Word

Divine Word College is the recipient of a \$10,297 grant from the Dubuque Racing Association (DRA). The grant will cover costs of security enhancements at Divine Word and purchase of supplies in preparation for a possible pandemic flu outbreak, as recommended by the Center for Disease Control.

The Divine Word College community is very appreciative of the support it has received from the DRA the past 12 years. With this year's grant, Divine Word has received more than \$131,000 since 1996.

The DRA is an Iowa not-for-profit corporation which operates the Dubuque Greyhound Park & Casino in Dubuque, Iowa. Each year the DRA awards more than \$1 million in grants to area non-profit organizations.

Memorials

Memorial and tribute gifts offer an opportunity to honor a relative, a friend or a business associate for any special occasion – birthday, anniversary, promotion or some particular accomplishment. The memorial gift also provides a thoughtful and appropriate way to express sympathy at the moment and remembrance in the future. You may send memorial gifts to Divine Word College, P.O. Box 380, Epworth, Iowa, 52045-0380.

Memorials have recently been received in honor of:

James Nie Bro. Leonard Bauer Lois Gruel Carmelita R. Link Robert Shea Mary Coakley Florence Habel Michael Mangin Sister Ann Shea Clarence Dirksen, Jr. Joseph Hillary Robert Mangin Clarence Streiff Roger Elsbernd Melvin Kaune John Müller Janaan Theisen

Join us for the annual Spring Brunch

One of the best ways to appreciate the arrival of spring is to endure a cold and snowy Iowa winter!

Join us in celebrating spring this year by attending our annual Spring Brunch on Sunday, March 30, at Divine Word College. The day begins with a 9:30 a.m. Mass, followed by a delicious brunch. Many generous businesses and individuals support this special event by contributing items for our silent and live auctions. Take some time to browse at the auction tables and find your own unique items to bid on, or hold out for the live auction fun.

Tickets for the Spring Brunch are \$30 per person, with all proceeds going to the Divine Word College Cultural Arts program. This program enables Divine Word College to share year-round cultural events with the public, including art exhibits, music performances and our lecture series.

If you'd like to attend the annual Spring Brunch or donate an auction item, please contact the DWC Development Office at 563-876-3057, extension 296.





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Address Service Requested

The SVD Mission and Vocation Offices have teamed up to offer an inaugural "Mission Experience Trip" to Jamaica, scheduled for May 13 -22, 2008.

This unique experience is open to men and women 18 years of age and older, including students from area colleges and candidates who are considering Divine Word College. Join a group of volunteers and assist the Divine Word Missionaries in Southeast Jamaica in their day-to-day ministries. Featured activities include:

- Building a house
- **Painting**
- Bible Study with youth and adults
- Visiting the homebound and elderly
- Assisting at schools
- Food distribution
- Other day-to-day missionary activities

This is your invitation to learn about the missionary work of the Catholic Church, the ministries of Divine Word Missionaries and the SVD mission service in Jamaica!



