



Divine Word College

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“Educating Tomorrow’s Missionaries”

A Kind of Joy

You can almost feel it. Most everyone who walks through the front doors—from visiting young men contemplating the life of a missionary, to faculty and staff, to those who come to daily Mass in the Main Chapel—most all sense it.



Len Uhal

There’s a kind of joy that lingers throughout Divine Word College these days, a subtle vibrancy that began when it opened its doors wider to accept a broader range of students.

“There’s more joy. There’s more excitement, more energy here,” said Len Uhal, director of admissions at DWC. “I think that is a direct result of broadening the Mission Statement and having people who are committed to the formation process as they try to understand where God is calling them.”

Since 2006 DWC has gradually diversified its enrollment. The revised mission statement approved in December 2009 reflects the changes. The college not only educates young men discerning their call to join the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), but also religious sisters, seminarians from other orders and laypersons from SVD parishes.

“In January of 2008, our total student enrollment was 55. Now we’re at 107, so we almost doubled in three years,” Uhal said. The trend has followed for enrollment of candidates for the SVD. In August 2008, there were 29 SVD candidates. This fall the number stands at 45.



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD

“We’ve seen a jump of 16 over the last two years,” Uhal said, an increase of more than 36 percent. The number is also closing in on the goal to have half the student population made up of SVD candidates by 2012.

The rest of the students are primarily seeking a degree. This fall, DWC welcomed its first two lay students since the Mission Statement change, both from an SVD parish in Jamaica.

Other religious congregations have also benefited from the new enrollment policy. The majority of the religious sisters come from convents

in Vietnam. There are four religious brothers and one priest of the Cistercian order. Maryknoll missionaries have sponsored two archdiocesan seminarians from Hanoi. Glenmary Home Missioners, based in the US, have sent three seminarians.

“If I was a formation director of another religious order with four or five seminarians, and I was looking for a place to send them, I would send them here for three reasons,” said Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD, associate dean of students. “First, we have a more traditional philosophy program compared to a regular college outside. Second, we have the multi-cultural atmosphere

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Bittersweet Return to Haiti

Enrollment numbers on the rise



Stanley Jean

Stanley Jean and Karldy Isidor went home this summer. For most college students that would mean time with family and friends and the comforts of home. For them, it was to see firsthand how their family and friends were surviving.

On January 12, the two young men from Port au Prince, Haiti had just begun their second semester at DWC when a magnitude 7.0 earthquake rocked their homeland, leveled entire areas of the city and killed thousands. Five days passed before Karldy learned his family had survived. It took two weeks before Stanley could feel the same sense of relief.

Thanks to some inhouse fundraising, they were able to return home, arriving in Port au Prince on May 17—four months after the disaster.

“I wanted to get back home, but I can say, I was happy and I was sad also,” Stanley said. “I see a lot of people, a lot of handicapped people, hurt in the body, with injured leg, injured hand. I visit some people in the hospital.”

The devastation is rampant. Homes and familiar landmarks that help a person navigate the city of Port au Prince are gone.

“When I was there, it was difficult for me to find places I already know,” he said. “My parent’s house was destroyed. A lot of people in Haiti are living in a difficult situation now.”

Like Stanley, Karldy was glad to return, but the devastation also hit close to home. Though not rich, his family before the disaster could eat every day and they had work. But his mother literally lost everything in the devastation.

“She lost her house that she just built, maybe two or three years ago,” he said. The house also contained a boutique she owned and operated. The loans to build her home/business are still outstanding. “Her business, everything, is gone in the earthquake.”

Both young men hold hope for the future. Fall elections in their country will mean the formation of a new government. Both are grateful for the fundraising among students, employees and those who attend daily Mass.


“Because without their effort,” Karldy said, “we would not go home to see our families after the catastrophe.”




Karldy Isidor

Family Feast

Celebrated since the days of SVD founder, St. Arnold Janssen, Family Feast is a special day for members of the order. SVDs at Divine Word recognized it this year on September 8, with food, fun--and no classes.



Sr. Thoa Celine Y, IMM celebrates a victory in one of the games played in the afternoon.



Fr. Walter Bunofsky and Bro. Tony Kreinus set a table, preparing for the dinner they and the other SVDs served to the students that evening.

Dear Alumni and Friends,

The celebration of Mission Sunday is a long-standing tradition here at Divine Word College.

By worldly measure, our celebration is a minor event, scarcely noticed by those outside our circle of friends and supporters. NFL Sunday will draw a lot more attention. But for the discerning Christian, Mission Sunday is significant. This issue of *DWC World* portrays that significance through descriptions of the multi-cultural Eucharist, the international food festival, all special features of Mission Sunday here at Divine Word College.

At the heart of Mission Sunday is a strong appreciation for the communion of all believers, for the solidarity of all the churches, in their living and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. We recall that by our baptism, our profession of the Creed, and our sharing in the Eucharist, we form spiritual bonds with followers of Jesus throughout the world. Bonds more fundamental than those of race or nationality or political affiliation. We recall that our Church is a universal Church, truly itself only when all peoples can participate fully in its life, bring the gifts of their experience and culture to its growth and formation. We recall that we share in the joys and suffering of all the churches as they seek to live the Gospel message in their particular and often challenging circumstances.

At Divine Word College we enjoy the blessings of a rich cultural diversity. Our students come from 17 different countries and many cultural backgrounds. Through our daily prayer, study, and community living, we experience tangibly, as in a microcosm, what Mission Sunday signifies. This is a privilege we do not take for granted. We consider it an optimal environment for educating missionaries, Christian leaders, whose lives will express the big values and broad vision of Mission Sunday. Mission Sunday is for us a time to think about, pray about, and rejoice in our missionary identity, to give thanks for the bonds we share with believers around the world.

We thank you, as always, for sharing in our missionary vocation. Your prayers, words of encouragement, and financial support are immensely important to us. I hope you can recognize your importance as you reflect on the meaning of Mission Sunday. You are our good partners, and we thank you.

Sincerely,

Fr. Mike Hutchins, SVD



**Fr. Mike
Hutchins, SVD**

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in which a student can learn to interact and learn to live with other people from different cultural backgrounds. Third, we have the presence of the religious sisters, who would help them come to a better sense of clarity in their discernment.”

Two other areas that underscore the positive direction that the college has taken are in recruitment and retention.

The results of student visits to campus—also known as “Come-And-See” visits—have been impressive, according to Uhal, who said about 50 percent of the young men who come to check out the campus return as students. A few years ago, it was only about 20 percent. The college has taken a different approach to these visits. Previously, they were scheduled twice a year, which resulted in two large groups of perhaps 50 or 60 young men to entertain over the course of a weekend.

“We were bringing in a lot of people. Some guys would come that really weren’t all that serious,” Uhal said.

In recent years, the Come-And-See visits are set up through a dedicated group of SVD recruiters—Fr. Joseph Nguyen, Fr. Tony Romo, Fr. Quy Dang and Fr. Trung Mai—who screen potential candidates. When they identify four or five young men who are seriously considering religious life, they arrange one of the special visits.

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“Now, when we have smaller groups, we can really give them individualized attention,” Uhal said. “They experience the life of a seminarian. They go to some of the classes. We have a much better student ambassador program and faculty hosts who take an active role in making sure those visitors have a good experience.”

Meanwhile, retention is running strong. At the end of the Spring semester, there were 40 SVD candidates. Four graduated. Out of the remaining 36, 34 are in the classrooms this fall.

“That’s a huge return rate,” Uhal said.

There is also considerable cultural diversity at DWC. The DWC community is made up of people from more than 20 countries and virtually every habitable continent in the world.

“The spirit of the school is very high, very uplifting,” said Fr. Thang. “The students here are very happy with the environment, with the education they are receiving and the interaction with other people of other cultural backgrounds. It’s a very enriching experience for all of them.”

The Sisters

You’d be hard pressed to find anyone who does not acknowledge the positive contribution made by the religious sisters to this new sense of vibrancy that pervades DWC. Across the board, from students to staff to faculty and administration, the sentiment is the same: The sisters have been a blessing.

Most of the seminarians are young men out of high school or in their early 20’s. All of the religious sisters are older and in vows.

“So they become more or less like bigger sisters for the seminarians,” Fr. Thang said. “You know that a big sister has a lot of power.”

Though they still speak from a position of authority, the young men tend to listen to the sisters because they have a gentler approach. It is a different type of authority compared to that of the SVD and other faculty members.

“Sometimes there is a level of resistance against authority, but with the sisters, they are gentler yet more direct,” Fr. Thang said. “They talk on a level that the seminarians can feel comfortable with. That’s probably why the students listen to them and are motivated to be better people and better seminarians.”

Added into the mix of seminarians, religious sisters and lay people from SVD parishes, the DWC enrollment also includes a group of five Cistercian monks and eleven SVD missionaries, all of whom are either in temporary or perpetual vows.

“You bring in these men who are already committed to their vocation and our younger guys see their great example and they rise to the occasion,” Uhal said. “The point is that people feel that sense of connection to the Eucharist, they are connected to the faith, they are connected to service, and they are connected to formation and a broader sense of mission.”

Conclusion

There appears to be a national trend to more vocations as more young men are looking at becoming religious priests and brothers. With a more diversified enrollment, Uhal believes Divine Word is well positioned to attract those interested in entering religious life.

“That’s a wonderful thing, and I think the energy here is what helps our numbers grow,” he said. “When our visitors come and experience that, they say, ‘I want to be included in this. This feels right for me and this is a place that can help me discern God’s call.’”

Sometimes there is a level of resistance DWC Welcomes New Faculty



**Jackson
Zimmerman,
Ph.D.**

Dr. Jackson Zimmerman is the new chair of the Cross-Cultural Studies Program. With academic degrees in Cultural Anthropology, Organic Horticulture, and Geography, he taught at UW-Platteville and does contract work for National Geographic.

Born and raised in the Philippines where he joined the SVD, Fr. Oliver Quilab was sent on mission to Germany. Ordained there, he did parish work and furthered his education. Currently in the US to be near his family, he is teaching courses in Philosophy at DWC.



**Fr. Oliver
Quilab, SVD**



**Fr. Khoa
Nguyen, SVD**

Born in Vietnam, Fr. Khoa Nguyen moved with his family to the US where he joined the SVD. After completing his overseas training in Austria, he spent time on mission in Mexico. He is currently exploring a career move to teaching by assisting in classes at DWC.



Terry Sykora
VP for Development

This summer I joined the staff of Divine Word College as vice president for development. I am very grateful, and excited, to be here. This is an extraordinary place with a bright future – especially due to the diligent, thoughtful work of the board of trustees, faculty and staff, in developing and implementing the college’s expanded mission. Everyone I have met has been exceptionally kind and helpful to me, not because they have to be, but simply because that’s the sort of people they are, and because that’s the Divine Word way.

What I’ve learned in my short time here, is that Divine Word College is a place where people have serious discussions about matters of discernment, formation, vocation and mission on a daily basis. These are not armchair philosophical dialogs. Our students are preparing to dedicate their entire lives to serving God through the Catholic Church. They already have an abundance of faith and enthusiasm. What they need, and what the college provides, is skilled people and programs to help them discern their calling, to help them hear that quiet voice that guides them to their vocation.

Over my career, I have been privileged to work for Catholic institutions of higher learning, but this is the first time that I have worked for a seminary. Every day, I learn more about the important work that goes on here. I have also found that the mission of the college is aided greatly by people like you, who have discerned that part of your own vocation is to support Divine Word College through your philanthropy.

Some people say that giving comes from the heart. I believe that’s true, but I also believe that giving comes from the mind and spirit. Your support is not accidental; I believe you give because this college holds a special place in *your* heart, mind and spirit.

Thanksgiving is fast approaching, and in the spirit of the season, I thank you on behalf of the Divine Word College community for your thoughtful, generous support. Our faculty, staff, students and volunteers are greatly encouraged and empowered through your help. May God bless you, your family and friends throughout the holiday season.

Have you remembered Divine Word College in your estate plans? All bequests to Divine Word College help with scholarship support for our seminarians. If you would like more information about making a planned gift to Divine Word College, please contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-3353 or singsank@dwci.edu

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

Memorials have recently been received for:

Glennice Ascheman	Amy Klein	Harold Schuster
Paul Bisanz	Gladys Kress	Helen Steffensmeier
Brian Bisenius	Louis Marchesiani	Jack & Faith Taylor
Donald Burns	Catherine McDonough	
David J. Decker	Madonna Redmond	In Honor of Wilhelm & Elizabeth Eck
Richard J. Dolphin	Marie Schmidt	In Honor of Allan & Ruth Heiar
Carol Gudenkauf		

Mission Sunday: the legacy

A special occasion at DWC

When Mass is said at Divine Word College on World Mission Sunday—this year it was October 24—it is truly a celebration. Students walk up carrying candles, representing our cultural diversity. Readings are read and songs are sung in various languages. Those in attendance are invited to join in a feast that offers a host of ethnic dishes. Everything reveals a glimpse of the global embrace of the Catholic Church.



World Mission Sunday has been celebrated by the Catholic parishes since the early 1920s.

Those in the pews of the Main Chapel on that day enjoy an intimate connection to the legacy of missionary support exemplified by this special Mass that can be traced back nearly two centuries.

It's hard to imagine this country as "mission territory." That's what it was in the early 1800s, when Pauline Jaricot started gathering small groups in her family's mill in Lyon, France to offer daily prayers and sacrificial giving of a penny a week—a great amount at that time—to support missionary work in North America and China. Her effort steadily grew to become the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, which continues to educate

people on the global mission of the Church and asks for prayers and financial support for the missions.

A century later in the early 1920s, the US was no longer a primary focus of missionary efforts. But there was concern that Catholics here lacked an understanding of the Church's global outreach and the work of missionaries.

"Most didn't see the Church as worldwide," said Fr. Bill Shea, SVD. "They were more concerned about their parish or their diocese. It was very parochial."



Fr. Bill Shea, SVD

In 1926, Church leaders decided a way to combat this narrower view of the faith was to designate the second-to-the-last Sunday of October as World Mission Sunday.

"Every parish was asked to have a special Mass and collection for the missions, and that would go to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith," Fr. Shea said. "The other part of it was the education of the people through homilies and literature to let them know what mission was all about."

In the 1960s, Vatican Council II—echoing the missionary credo found in the words of Mathew 28:18—emphasized that the Church is actually missionary by nature, and every baptized Catholic should be involved in missionary work through good works and setting a good example.

"The new understanding of 'mission' is more in the spirit of Jesus. The core of his teaching is the Kingdom of God. St. Paul tells us that the Kingdom of God is justice, peace, joy and the spirit," said Fr. Oliver Quilab, SVD, who presided at World Mission Sunday Mass this fall at DWC. "If I understand 'mission' as this spreading of the Kingdom of God, I work for justice, peace, joy and the spirit of human development."



Fr. Oliver Quilab, SVD

Today, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith supports this work. It collects contributions from Catholics around the world—through efforts like World Mission Sunday—to support the Church's worldwide mission in more than 1,150 missionary dioceses. Many of our DWC students are destined to work in those missions.

With a faculty, staff and student body representing 23 countries from around the globe, the education and multi-cultural experience students receive here will help prepare them for their future ministry.

"We're already doing mission here, the way we adjust to each other, we live in community, that's already 'mission' at Divine Word," Fr. Oliver said. "We cross bridges. We learn foreign languages and we try to understand each other. We try to live equally. The positive experience here flows."

"Jesus came forward and addressed them in these words, 'Full authority has been given to me, both in Heaven and on Earth. 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. 'Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you and know that I am with you always until the end of the world.'"

Mathew 28:18