

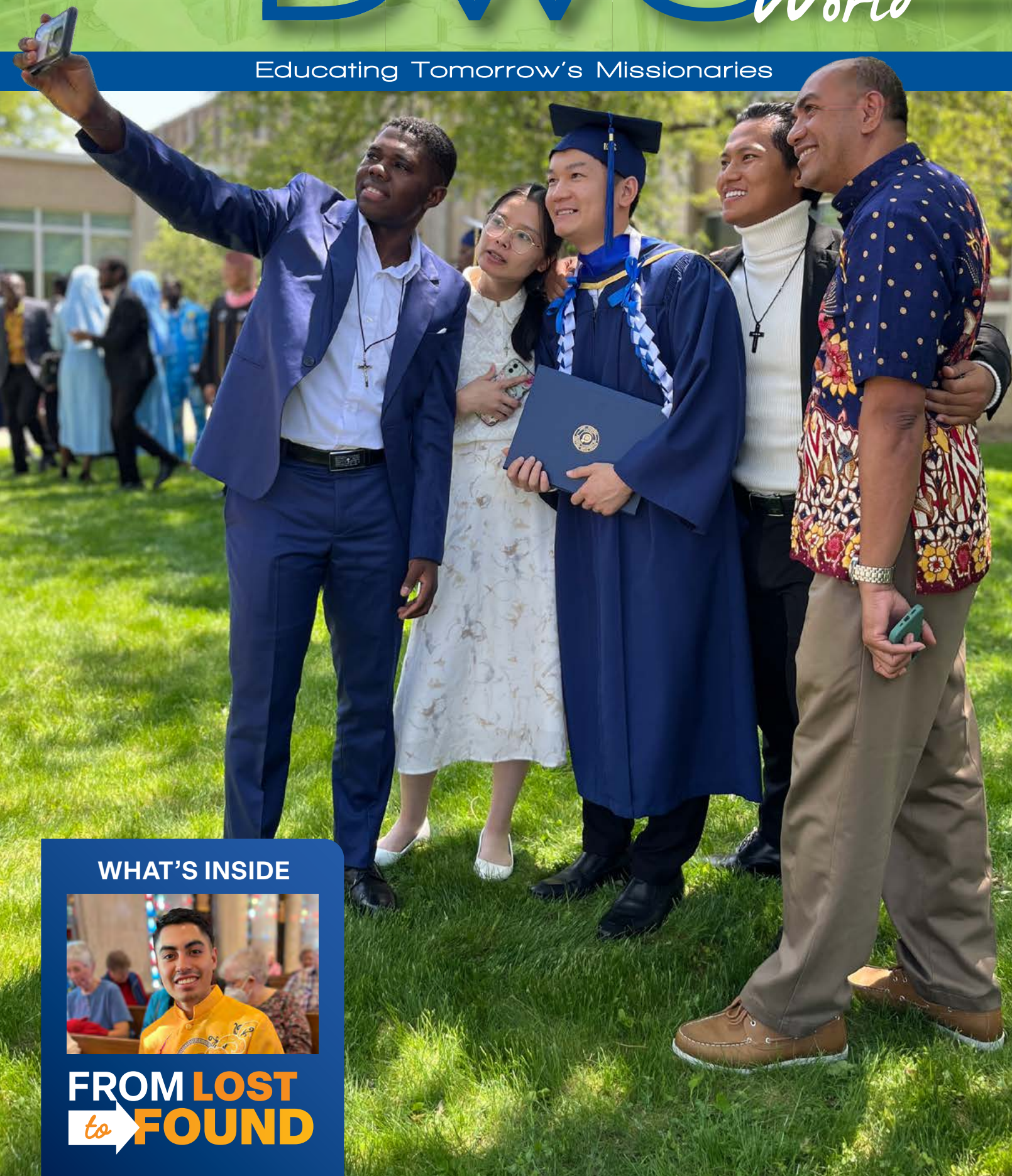
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DWC

World

Summer 2024

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



WHAT'S INSIDE



FROM LOST
to FOUND



You don't have to be a Vocation Director to **PROMOTE RELIGIOUS LIFE.**

Does your child, nephew, niece, grandchild, neighbor or family friend have a missionary spirit? An encouraging word from you could confirm a call deep in his or her heart.

Learn more at:

svdvocations.org

The missionary priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) are working in 80 countries around the world. More popularly known as Divine Word Missionaries, it's the largest international missionary order of men in the Catholic Church. They share the Word of God with those who may not have heard the Good News and live the lessons of the Gospels by serving the poor and marginalized, people of other cultures and faith traditions and faith seekers.

Characteristics that make a good missionary priest or brother:

- ▶ Prays regularly to further a relationship with Jesus
- ▶ Believes in helping others
- ▶ Likes learning about new cultures
- ▶ Accepts different social norms
- ▶ Worships regularly with a faith community
- ▶ Shares the Word of God
- ▶ Advocates for Peace and Justice
- ▶ Enjoys traveling and meeting new people

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Development Office

by Fr. Linh Pham, SVD

Contrary to the traditional concept of being a missionary, engaging in the Church's Mission does not have to involve working in a far-flung place, moving into a new culture, or even speaking a different language. Any one of us may be equipped to become a missionary!

Take Divine Word College alumnus Fr. Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD, for example. He came to Epworth from Myanmar 10 years ago to realize his aspirations for serving in the Lord's vineyard. Now he is getting ready to return to his native land as an SVD following his priestly ordination in May.

Joining him in an exciting new phase of their missionary journeys are 22 students who graduated from Divine Word College this spring. By taking part in academic, ministry, and formation programs during their studies, they've learned valuable skills they'll need to face the challenges ahead.

Supporting the training of missionaries is another way to answer the call to Jesus' mission. For years, a couple from Dubuque has been supporting Divine Word Missionaries worldwide. The missionaries' presence in various places is greatly owed to these Partners-in-the-Mission, without whom the Church's missionary work would have lacked vital material and spiritual support.

One crucial aspect of engaging in the Church's Mission is providing apostolic witness and maintaining a missionary presence. Bro. Lawrence (Larry) Kieffer, SVD stands out as a vivid example in this context. He served in Papua New Guinea for 46 years. Bro. Larry radiates such positive charitable energy that regular visitors to Divine Word College would find it hard to miss.

You can read more about the multidimensional nature of the Church's Mission by reading the pages of this Mission Magazine. As Divine Word Missionaries and their associates, we are privileged to be called and to serve. Please consider joining us in the Mission wherever you are and in whatever ways you deem as most appropriate for you.

You Helped Him Return HOME

“Home” is a word that can have many meanings. It can be a place, a state of mind, a feeling of comfort and a sense of security. For Fr. Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD, Myanmar is home. Given the tumultuous civil unrest in the country formerly known as Burma, it may be hard to understand why someone would choose to return there, but that’s exactly what Fr. Roger intends to do.

After spending the past 10 years in formation with the Chicago Province of the Society of the Divine Word, Fr. Roger was ordained in May. Now he’s set to embark on his first assignment in Myanmar.

“I just want to be there for the people, especially at this moment” he said. “Sometimes I feel like I’ve been here and I watched them from afar going through all of this and it’s so painful. I might not be able to do a lot for them, but at least I can be there with them.”

Discernment

In 2007, Fr. Roger enrolled in a high school seminary in his homeland. He went on to study mathematics in college while receiving seminary formation with his diocese in Myanmar. At the bishop’s request, he and another young man named Boromeo Soe, agreed to relocate to the United States for three years to improve their English proficiency and study philosophy before returning to complete their formation.

The pair arrived at Divine Word College in Epworth in 2014, unsure of what to expect. After two years, Fr. Roger felt a calling to shift to formation with the Divine Word

Missionaries. In time, his Burmese classmate did the same.

“The first impression I had here was that we’re all treated as family,” he recalls. “In Burma, we’re very hierarchical. The priests are separated from seminarians and they don’t really interact unless it’s necessary. But when we came here, everyone was treated as an equal.” The missionary aspect of the SVD was also attractive. Fr. Roger said he was drawn to the way the SVDs learn from each other’s cultural differences and work to enrich one another with their diversity.

After finishing his studies at Divine Word College, Fr. Roger moved to Chicago to continue his formation. He studied at the Catholic Theological Union and participated in a Cross-Cultural Training Program in West Virginia. That experience presented some challenges as Fr. Roger found the people in the area guarded at first. In time, they opened up to him.

“One of my struggles was that I didn’t want to get attached to people and then have to say goodbye,” he said. “But at a certain point, I said maybe it’s worth getting to know people and then being heartbroken rather than to not try.” By the end of his time in West Virginia, Fr. Roger opened his heart and was welcomed warmly by the parishioners he served. He learned a valuable lesson about how to build a sense of community within a parish and connect with people.

Finding Freedom

When Fr. Roger arrived in the United States, he expected to improve his English skills and learn some philosophy. What he did not anticipate was the lesson he’d learn about freedom during his time here.

Living in America taught him the importance of critical thinking and empowered him to express his opinions confidently, both in academic settings and in his personal life. As a child, he learned to stay quiet and accept others’ opinions without protest to avoid criticism. This led him to suppress his talents and potential out of fear and shame for many years. Everything changed for him when he joined DWC, as he began to embrace his true self.

“It’s a freedom I’ve never experienced in my whole life – freedom to think, freedom to speak up,” he said. “Living



Roger (left) and Boromeo (right) with National Vocation Director Len Uhal (center) when they arrived in Epworth 10 years ago.

in fear is something that I dealt with my whole life until I came here and I still have that trauma. I feel a liberation in a way. I've been afforded the freedom to be myself."

Fr. Roger emphasizes that his ability to explore new freedoms in the United States was enabled by the generosity of individuals who support the Divine Word Missionaries. Without this financial assistance, he would not have had the opportunity to attend Divine Word College or continue his formation in Chicago.

"It's not just about me, it's about all these people who have allowed me to be here," he said. "Because of their decision to give and the choices they made, I'm here. I am really grateful for their sacrifice and their contributions to this college."

Returning Home

In May 2024, the two young men from Myanmar who nervously entered the English program at Divine Word College in 2014 stood side by side again. This time it was at their priestly ordination.

Fr. Boromeo will remain in the Chicago Province for his first assignment. Fr. Roger applied to join the relatively new SVD mission in Myanmar.

About five years ago, Divine Word Missionary Priests from Vietnam and India started working in a region of Myanmar with less conflict. One of them provides social services, builds homes for poor families and constructs churches for small villages. The other priest teaches in the seminary and offers counseling services.

Fr. Roger is aware of the risks, but despite the unrest in Myanmar, he remains steadfast in his decision.

"I have a desire to go back," he said. "I have been away from home since I came here almost 10 years ago. Honestly, I really wanted to be with the people in my home diocese because that's one of the most devastated areas by the war. About two thirds of the population there has fled. If I had the choice, I would prefer working there at least for a few years, but I know the SVDs have a plan for me in Yangon. Everyone there is struggling economically right now because of the political turmoil."

Fr. Roger anticipates needing to adapt to the culture upon his return, despite it being his own. "People here like it when you are authentic and speak your mind," he said. "That could be challenging when I return."

Fr. Roger's parents and six siblings eagerly anticipate his upcoming return, but they also worry about his safety. With the backing of his loved ones, he is ready to confront the new obstacles ahead. Following 10 years of formation by Divine Word Missionaries in the United States, he has come to realize that his family now extends beyond the borders of Myanmar.

"In some ways, I've felt like I didn't have family over the past few years, but I actually have a bigger family because the SVDs are my family now and everywhere I go, they treat me like family."

For further information on the mission in Myanmar, contact Fr. Linh Pham at lpham@dwci.edu

Fr. Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD following his priestly ordination. Beside him is the Most Rev. J. Terry Steib SVD, bishop emeritus of Memphis.



SPIRIT OF SERVICE ALIVE IN ALUMNI

Tim Mayworm DWC Class of 1974 Executive Director of Journey House

Tim started his studies with the Divine Word Missionaries as a high school student at the Brother's candidate minor seminary at Techny, Illinois. He continued at novitiate programs in New York and Mississippi before enrolling at Divine Word College in Epworth.

After graduating from DWC in 1974, Tim earned a master's degree in Religious Education from Loyola University in Chicago. He was assigned to a parish in Los Angeles and found great joy in his work. During his time there, he also served as a chaplain at juvenile detention facilities.

In 1979, Tim joined the De La Salle Christian Brothers and transitioned into teaching high school. By 1983, Tim felt called to engage more deeply with probation youth. With community support, he opened Journey House, a six-bed group home in Pasadena, California. After more than 30 years of vowed religious life, Tim left the Christian Brothers to work full time at Journey House. Today, he and his staff work with more than 300 emancipated male and female foster youth who are over the age of 18 and pursuing higher education. Tim has served as the Executive Director of Journey House for four decades.

"I loved my years with the SVDs," Tim said. "It instilled in me the call to be a missionary to the underserved and underprivileged. Today, I continue that missionary call to serve in an underserved and underprivileged community of former probation and foster youth."

Long after leaving the classrooms of Epworth, Divine Word College students continue to answer the call to missionary service for the Church. Whether they pursue religious vocations or serve as laypeople, they are united by their generosity of time and talent. Their dedication to making a positive impact on the world continues to be a testament to the values instilled during their time at the college. Their efforts not only enrich the communities they serve but also inspire others to contribute to the common good. From small acts of kindness to significant societal contributions, the spirit of service that began at Divine Word College continues to thrive, creating ripples of positive change across the globe.

Paul Danen DWC Class of 1987 Volunteer with Catholic Charities



In his junior year at Divine Word College, Paul relocated to further his studies at Divine Word University of Tacloban in the Philippines. "Some of my favorite memories while studying with the SVD include my friendships with the amazing and gifted people that are part of the SVD family," he said. After completing his sociology degree at DWC, he joined the novitiate and later discerned out of the formation program.

He went on to get married and have two daughters. With a career spanning over 30 years, Paul dedicated himself to working with children and adults coping with serious mental illness and those involved in the legal system.

He's been an active volunteer at Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada, St. Vincent's Program, assisting with food packaging and distribution. Additionally, he serves in various capacities at Holy Cross Church in Sparks, Nevada.

Paul says his spirit of service was ignited during his time with the SVD. "My first volunteer experience started with Divine Word College where I volunteered at a local nursing home, hospital, soup kitchen and thrift store. I can't say it was easy, but it gave me the start or willingness to volunteer today," he said.



Fr. Thanh-Tai Peter Nguyen
DWC Class of 2006
Parochial Vicar at Christ Our Savior in Santa Ana
and Founder of An Binh Charity Foundation



Originally from an undeveloped area of Vietnam, Fr. Thanh-Tai recalls his family facing hardships when he was just a boy. With limited income, his parents struggled to afford school fees for their kids. Some of his

older siblings had to leave elementary and middle school to find work and support the family.

Fr. Thanh-Tai later moved to the United States. He studied at DWC from 2000 to 2006 and continued to the Novitiate program in Techny. “The SVD taught me how to become missionary no matter who you are and what you do. They taught me about brotherly love and fellowship,” he said. After his father died, Fr. Thanh-Tai decided to return to his home diocese in California, where he studied theology and

was ordained in 2012. Over the years, he has ministered at various parishes in the Diocese of Orange and served as the Bishop’s Secretary for four years.

Driven by a profound commitment to assist families facing educational challenges similar to those his parents encountered, Fr. Thanh-Tai founded a non-profit called the An Binh Charity Foundation. The organization provides educational opportunities and basic medical assistance to underprivileged children, regardless of their religion, gender or race, to help them reach their full potential, so that they, in turn, can enrich and have positive influence in the lives of others. It also assists in promoting vocations and providing healthcare for retired clergy. Each year, the group provides more than \$100,000 in scholarships to help underprivileged children.

During the Covid pandemic, Fr. Thanh-Tai launched a YouTube channel featuring interviews with clergy members, religious figures, and musical performances to promote spiritual engagement, particularly within the diocese. The channel has more than 600 videos and nearly 90,000 subscribers. “I can’t believe that my YouTube channel has reached so many people and has enriched their spiritual lives,” he said.

Sr. Skolastika Wea, SSpS
DWC ESL 2014-2015
Vocation Promotion Directress for SSpS Chicago Paraclete Province

Originally from Indonesia, Sr. Skolastika came to Divine Word College for the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. “As a new student there, I felt so much support and encouragement from the Divine World College community,” she said. Next, she moved to Illinois and studied at College of Lake County for two years. She spent the following 10 months in a program preparing to profess Perpetual Vows in 2018. Her first mission appointment was to the SSpS community in Memphis, Tennessee, where she worked in a parish and volunteered at a nursing home.

From 2020 to 2022, Sr. Skolastika returned to her studies, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in theology at Loyola University in Chicago. Since then, she’s been focused on her current mission appointment – promoting vocations. She travels to religious vocation conferences around the country to represent her congregation and meet with young people.

“Meeting and creating friendships with many people – such as young women, families, and parish communities from different parts of the United States – is most rewarding,” she said. “Collaborating with other vocation directors and learning from one another to be better in doing this ministry is a growth process. Above all, I feel privileged to listen to many stories and accompany young people in discerning their vocation.”

Religious life provides her time to nurture her spiritual life and build a deep relationship with God. “As a religious missionary, I try my best to love others by joyfully living in an intercultural and international community and we enrich each other in so many ways,” she said. “Together, we love and serve the Lord through our religious life commitment and various ministries that we have been doing for God’s people.”





In May, Divine Word College honored the graduating class of 2024. The commencement speaker was the Most Rev. Pabilito M. Tagura, SVD, and the valedictory address was given by Sr. Francisca Doofan Aorakaa, SON. May these graduates be blessed with wisdom, courage, and strength as they move forward to the next phase of their lives.

MAY 2024 GRADUATES



Sr. Hilda Alonyo, LSMIG

Kiryandongo, Uganda

B.A. Theology & Mission and B.A. Intercultural Studies

• *Plans after graduation?* After four and a half long years, I am excited to return home to Uganda, reunite with my loved ones, and follow whatever ministry God has in store for me.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I intend to approach everyone I minister to with a deep sense of humanity and recognize them as God's cherished children and acknowledge the goodness in them, regardless of their backgrounds or origins. Above all, I strive to be the best version of myself, as per God's creation.



Sr. Francisca Doofan Aorakaa, SON

Lessel Benue State, Nigeria

B.A. Philosophy and B.A. Theology & Mission

• *Plans after graduation?* I will return to my country, Nigeria, and I am willing to share what I have learned with my fellow sisters.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My faith has been strengthened and deepened through community activities, such as the formation program, ministries, classes, retreats, conferences, recollections, and meaningful Mission Sunday and Holy Triduum celebrations, which have helped me comprehend the profound meaning of what I am called to be.



Sr. An Linh Thi Hoang, LHC-QN
Daclak Province, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *Plans after graduation?* I will return to my country and continue my ministry.

• *What is the greatest lesson you*

learned at DWC? The greatest lesson I learned at DWC is a willingness to accept differences from other cultures.



Hung Cong Nguyen

Originally from Vietnam and currently residing in Riverside, California

B.A. Philosophy

• *Plans after graduation?* I will enter the SVD Novitiate program in Chicago and continue discerning

God's call for me.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* Before, I thought a leader had to show authority and power and tell people what to do. I learned during my time at DWC that a good leader listens. To serve is not to be served.



Long Hai Ngoc Nguyen

Nha Trang, Vietnam

B.A. Philosophy

• *Plans after graduation?* I have been accepted to the SVD Novitiate and will continue to discern my vocation.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I will try to strengthen myself by gaining more knowledge and building up my social skills, so I have a strong foundation for later ministries.



Sr. Tram Huyen Thuy Nguyen, LHC-TD

Buon Ma Thuot City, Vietnam

B.A. Intercultural Studies

• *Plans after graduation?* I plan to work toward a master's degree in special education.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* At Divine Word College, the greatest lesson I learned was the importance of serving others with humility, compassion, and dedication. Through the college's emphasis on mission work and community service, I gained a deeper understanding of the transformative power of selfless acts and the profound impact they can have on individuals and communities alike.



Sr. Thoa Thi Pham, OP-BC

Nam Dinh, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *Plans after graduation?* I am going to Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California to earn a master's degree in pastoral theology.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I will continue to improve what I have learned at DWC and be ready to serve God's people, especially those who are marginalized and poor.



Frt. Engelbertus Salmon, SVD

Manggarai Barat, Indonesia

B.A. Philosophy

• *Plans after graduation?* I will continue to study at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* Although each student at DWC is different in many ways, we are one in the call to live in Christ and bring His love to every heart.

Congratulations
GRADUATES



Sr. Thao Thanh Thi Tran, LHC-KT
Buôn Ma Thuot City, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will go back to Vietnam to spend some time with my family before returning to my congregation and waiting for my assignment.
- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* Living in a multicultural community has impacted my faith in ways that I appreciate the people around me, and their shared culture has helped me realize that we are brothers and sisters walking in the same journey as missionary disciples.



Marc Anderson Vaval
Petit Goâve, Haiti

B.A. Philosophy

- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will study nursing at NICC.
- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* Divine Word College shares the world with you in a single campus. My experience here taught me how to connect with people from different backgrounds and build a community based on mutual respect and understanding.



Sr. Magnouwedeou Rose-Ange Woulaou, PSP
Kemerida, Togo

B.A. Intercultural Studies

- *Plans after graduation?* I am looking to do Optional Practical Training before continuing with my master's degree.
- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My experience at DWC has deepened my faith by exposing me to diverse perspectives and cultures, enriching my understanding of God's work in each person as an image of God.



Fr. Telesphore Dusabe
Gakenke, Rwanda

A.A. Intercultural Studies

- *Plans after graduation?* Getting experience on how the Catholic Church in America works by serving as the parish priest at Holy Rosary Cluster for the Archdiocese of Dubuque in northeast Iowa.
- *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* My way to share my faith is to be faithful to Jesus Christ, who called me to the priesthood.



Uriel Rhys Briones
Ottawa, Illinois

Certificate in Pre-Theology

- *Plans after graduation?* My plan is to continue to enrich my spiritual life; I want to continue this journey with complete trust in God's providence and will for me. I can be within my home community or elsewhere where God may lead me, but I pray that I can be part of ministry duties to whomever I'm asked to serve.
- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* Perseverance, hope, charity, team building, genuine respect of others, also learning how to handle stress and anxiety. But above all these the greatest lesson is learning how to completely surrender to God, trusting in God's wisdom and goodness. God's love is real, abundant, ever present...and must be shared.



Hoang Son Vu
Originally from Vietnam, currently residing in California

Certificate of Pre-Theology

- *Plans after graduation?* I will fly back to Vietnam for six weeks to celebrate my brother's wedding then return to California. Then I will continue with the SVD by entering the Novitiate.
- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson I learned is my English skills. I moved to the U.S. in 2016. I learned a lot from people like Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD and Bro. Mike Decker, SVD and other native English speakers. In three years here, I learned more English language and American culture than I did in the five years I lived in California. It's essential for me.



Sr. Scovia Okello Apiyo, LSMIG
Gulu, Uganda

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I have been engaged with the ministries of my congregation.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I plan to share my faith with others by advocating and uplifting each person's dignity first before offering them any services to easily embrace the divinity of Christ in them.



Antz-Carly Cadet
Cerca-la-Source, Haiti

B.A. Philosophy

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* Since graduation, I have been studying at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. This summer, I

will join the SVD Novitiate as I continue discerning God's call to religious life.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* At DWC, the greatest lesson I learned was that no one is alike, yet everyone is the same, and we are called to journey together as God's beloved children.



Sr. Paschaline Kengran Dzelimnyuy, SST
Bamenda City, Cameroon

B.A. Philosophy

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I plan to be instrumental in the education of the people in my country

and around the world at all levels.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson I learned at DWC is to live unity in diversity, appreciate cultures different from mine and to love all people because they carry with them the image of God. I will forever remain grateful to DWC for the person I am today.



Sr. Tinh Le, LHC-V
Vinh, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I have been studying for my master's degree in social work at Marywood University in Scranton, PA.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* It was caring for the needs of others as the DWC community and its benefactors have been doing for students through their generosity and care.



Sr. Dung Kim Thi Mai, LHC-TV
Buon Me Thuat, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* Post-graduation, my plan is to further my studies at Loyola Marymount University in California, focusing on pastoral ministry.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My experience at DWC has profoundly impacted my faith, molding me into a missionary dedicated to serving the underprivileged with love and fostering a sense of community.



Sr. Angela Onyeche Omola, SON
Ugbokolo, Nigeria

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I will go for perpetual vows in August. By September, my congregation will send me to Jos, Nigeria for the formation program.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* As a future formator, I will share my faith with others by incorporating all that I learned from Divine Word College into my role. To create an environment for those who are interested in sisterhood to explore and deepen their faith journey.



Sr. Tuyet Thi Pham, OP-BC
Ninh Sa, Vietnam

B.A. Intercultural Studies

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I am going to achieve a master's degree in theological studies with a concentration in sacred Scripture.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* During my time at Divine Word College, I have learned that DWC is a place for connecting and sharing the whole world.



Sr. Dien Thi Vu, LHC-V
Vinh Province, Vietnam

B.A. Theology & Mission

• *What have you been up to since graduation?* I am pursuing a master's degree in education at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan.

• *How did your experience at DWC impact your faith?* When I enrolled in theology classes, I discovered God in many different ways. For example, through knowledge, I could learn how to reflect deeper on recognizing God's love and applying it in my daily life. I am grateful for that.



Choosing Brotherhood:

A Candidate Discovers His Path

Bro. Vincent Tri Nguyen, SVD, felt a strong sense of calling to religious life during his teenage years.

In 2012, his family relocated from Vietnam to the United States, and the following year, he started his studies at Divine Word College Seminary in Epworth, Iowa. It was only after joining the formation program with the Society of the Divine Word that he began contemplating becoming a religious brother.

Discovery

“When I sat down with my vocation recruiter, he asked me if I wanted to be a priesthood or brotherhood candidate, and I chose the priesthood candidate because I thought it was my vocation,” he said. “It was also because I didn’t have any idea about the brother vocation.”

“The reason why I changed to the brother vocation was because I felt that I couldn’t handle philosophy courses,” he said. “Besides, people told me that if I became a brother candidate, I would be allowed to apply for a university that had the subject that I was interested in. But things didn’t happen the way I expected. When I applied for the brother vocation, I was told that the program had been changed, and I would have to take

courses at DWC. Because I still wanted to continue my discernment, I decided to apply for it, and I took intercultural studies (instead of philosophy) as my major. Even though it was not my interest, I was able to manage the intercultural studies better than philosophy.”

As time went by, Bro. Vincent gained a deeper understanding of the Divine Word Missionaries and religious life, which helped him grasp the essence of life as a brother. Interacting with SVD Brothers who resided and worked at the college, he began to distinguish the differences between their lives and those of priests. He observed that the brothers seemed to operate unnoticed or behind the scenes. Although this lifestyle didn’t align precisely with Bro. Vincent’s aspirations, he recognized the brothers as individuals committed to community service and held them in high regard.

Practical Experience

In 2018, Bro. Vincent graduated from Divine Word College and also obtained his U.S. citizenship. He entered the SVD Novitiate program and professed first vows in 2019 as an SVD Brother. Next, he spent a year in theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, followed by two years at Loyola University studying sacred music. Over the past two years, he participated in the Cross-Cultural Training Program (CTP) in Ghana.

“For most of my life, I’ve been involved in the music ministry wherever I am because I recognize that God has given me the gift of music, and He invites me to use it as a service to the community,” he said. During his time in Ghana, Bro. Vincent was involved in helping the youth choir and in teaching music to the children at St. Luke parish, Lebanon-Ashaiman. He also learned about Ghanaian culture and how to speak in Twi (a local language in Ghana).

Bolstering Brotherhood

Bro. Vincent notes that many faithful Catholics are unfamiliar with the brother vocation, a situation he also encountered before beginning his formation. He hopes



that more people will begin to “understand and accept” the role of religious brothers, and recognize that brothers, like priests, serve humanity and reflect Jesus Christ’s love worldwide, albeit in a non-sacramental capacity. He also advocates for increased promotion of the brother vocation and for Divine Word Missionary Brothers to have a more visible presence, enabling people to recognize their contributions and ministries.

“I wish that people would come to understand and accept the brother vocation and consider it as a way of life and of service to others and to the Church,” he said. “It is a unique vocation with its own goodness and beauty.”

A Future of Faith

Since returning from Ghana, Bro. Vincent is working to complete his final year in the formation program before professing perpetual vows next year. The past 11 years of training have been transformative for him, bringing growth and change. Despite encountering challenges during the discernment journey, he developed a deeper understanding of his vocation and self with the help of God and his community.

“When I look back at my discernment journey, I’m confident to say that God has called me to become a brother, and He has made me the person I am today,” he said. “My hope for the future is that God will continue to guide me in my life and make me a better missionary according to His will so that, through my life and service, God will be able to reach out and touch the hearts of people around me,” he said.

Did you know?

After a priesthood candidate professes his First Vows, he is addressed as a “Fratel.” Upon ordination, he is then granted the title of “Father.” On the other hand, brotherhood candidates are designated as “Brother” after professing their First or “Temporary” Vows.



Scan the QR code to listen to a series of short reflections Bro. Vincent recently recorded.

Where in the World are Divine Word Missionaries?

In 1875, a trailblazer named St. Arnold Janssen kickstarted an international missionary order called the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), to spread the Word of God across the globe. Fast forward to today, and 5,965 Divine Word Missionary Priests and Brothers are out there spreading love and hope in 80 countries, giving a helping hand to those in need. The heart of this mission beats at Divine Word College, drawing in students from around 20 countries each year. Through thick and thin, the SVD and Divine Word College keep the faith alive, all thanks to extraordinary people like you.

The Society of the Divine Word was founded 149 years ago. Today, it is the sixth largest Catholic men's religious congregation in the world.

Mission Priorities

Biblical Apostolate – Studying, praying and preaching from the Bible

Communication – Dialogue, especially between different people, groups, and cultures, in order to spread the good news of God's Kingdom of love

Mission Animation – Helping laypeople become aware of missionary activity and encouraging their participation in it

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) – Offering services in social justice causes, peace efforts and care of our planet

80 Countries

The Society of the Divine Word serves 80 countries in four zones:

- Americas
- Europe
- Africa
- Asia-Pacific



Bro. Bernie Spitzley, SVD

Jamaica

DWC Class of 1977

Biblical Apostolate – Bro. Bernie has spent more than 25 years serving in Jamaica. He's the administrator at Holy Rosary Church and leads a Bible Sharing group for parishioners.



Fr. Fransiskus Xaverius Magung, SVD

Hungary

DWC ESL program 1999-2000

JPIC – Fr. Fransiskus serves as provincial of the Hungary Province. Divine Word Missionaries there work with the Romani gypsy communities to provide education and skilled training to this poor and marginalized group that suffers from widespread unemployment and poverty.



Fr. Giang Nguyen, SVD

Mozambique

DWC Class of 2006

Communication – Fr. Giang promotes collaboration and sharing of limited resources through projects like building a long-range Wi-Fi network to share the internet with nearby parishes, schools, and a local community radio station to improve education and communication. He also helped to train parishioners to install solar pumps for water and promote sustainable, small business initiatives.



Fr. Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD

Myanmar

DWC Class of 2018

Mission Animation – Following his recent ordination, Fr. Roger plans to work in parish ministry in his home country of Myanmar for his first assignment. He hopes to encourage parishioners to remain active and hopeful despite the turmoil in the country.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Fr. Tom
Ascherman, SVD

The Mass is Ended, You've Got a Job to Do!

Every one of Jesus' disciples is called to mission, to help spread the good news. At Mass, Jesus gives every one of us a job.

Three images come to mind.

First image: When I was about 10 years old, I went to fetch some bottles of 7-Up. (It was long ago – there were *glass bottles!*) I had been thinking about pistons, who knows why. So as I walked along, the bottle in one hand would go down and the bottle in the other hand would go up. When those “pistons” really got moving, the bottles suddenly exploded! That must be why we call it soda **POP**.

Second image: I am an uncle many times over. I used to tease my youngest sister that I planned to sugar up her kids and then send them home! Now imagine something much more frustrating... give a six-year-old nephew plenty of chocolate, sour candies, and some apple juice. Then tell him that he has to sit quietly on a chair and do absolutely nothing. What a torture!

Third image: You are invited to a club meeting. As the group gathers, you are instructed to sit quietly, not talk, having no responsibility at all. Unless they give you something to do, I doubt you would visit that club very often.

These images help us focus on what happens at Mass. Jesus fills us with an “explosive” mixture of His Word, His Body and His Blood. Unfortunately, we can get the impression we are supposed to do nothing, sit in silence, and then leave in silence. So sad! That's not the way it is supposed to go.



At the end of Mass, after the blessing, the priest or the deacon announces the dismissal. Sometimes it is: “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” That is a direct translation of the centuries-old Latin formula, *Ite, missa est*. In 2007, Pope Benedict

XVI wrote a long letter to all the members of the Church about the celebration of Mass. It was entitled, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity). At one point he noted that over the centuries, the word *missa*, which originally had the simple meaning of **dismissal**, has come to mean **mission**. Pope Benedict stressed that the Mass (*missa*) doesn't end with a dismissal. Instead, Mass is just getting started as we carry the good news into all the other parts of our life. This is mission **ANIMATION**.

The Pope endorsed some newer mission animation forms for the dismissal: “Go in peace;” or, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” At Divine Word College, no matter the formula we use, I imagine the dismissal to be a mission-sending: The Mass is ended, now you've got a job to do! Or, the Mass is ended, say hello to somebody! Or, following Jesus' words at the multiplication

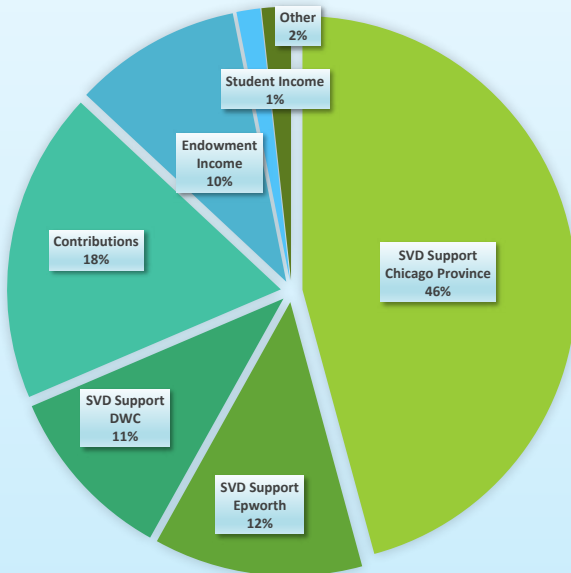
of the loaves and fishes, the Mass is ended, “you yourselves, give them something to eat” (Mt 14:16).

Benedict concluded his letter with a promise that Jesus made: “I am with you always, until the end of the world” (Mt 28:20).

PRESIDENT'S FINANCIAL REPORT



Divine Word College Income 2023 Fiscal Year



SVD Support Chicago Province	\$4,156,270
Contributions	\$1,669,288
Endowment Income	\$900,126
SVD Support Epworth	\$1,119,903
SVD Support DWC	\$950,814
Student Income	\$127,703
Other	\$156,890

Benefactor Contributions 2023 Fiscal Year



Most DWC students have limited financial means, but no one who is seriously considering religious life is turned away for lack of money.

Last year, DWC students received more than **\$1.1 million** in scholarship assistance.



PRAY FOR OUR MEN IN FORMATION



Frt. Ryan Agbim, SVD



Frt. Betenora Bako Liba, SVD



Novice Junior Jean Baptiste



Frt. Michelet Boncoeur, SVD



Mr. Peter Brungardt



Mr. Antz Cadet

Growing in Community With the Divine Word

These are the men who were in formation at Divine Word College Seminary in Epworth, Iowa; the Divine Word Novitiate in Techny, Illinois; and the Brother Formation Program and Divine Word Theologate in Chicago during the 2023-2024 academic year. The Divine Word Missionary formation program aims to support young men as they discern their calling to a religious life. Please pray that God will nurture the vocation in our seminarians and all those who have been called to a religious life.



Frt. Christian Castro, SVD



Frt. John Cho, SVD



Frt. Cruz Colunga, SVD



Frt. Marc Declama, SVD



Frt. Augustine Dery, SVD



Frt. Hoang Do, SVD



Frt. Wisno Elie, SVD



Frt. Kodjo Emon, SVD



Bro. Joubert Felix, SVD



Mr. Ladouceur
Flarissaint



Frt. Arnold Formbi, SVD



Frt. Martin Herrera, SVD



Frt. Brian Junkes, SVD



Mr. Benedict Pau Mun Khual



Deacon Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD



Novice Franciste Jean Mervil



Frt. Joao Pinda Neto, SVD



Mr. Andrew Nguyen



Mr. Bao Luis Nguyen



Frt. Cong Van Nguyen, SVD



Frt. Hoang Huy Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Hung Cong Nguyen



Novice Long Cao Nguyen



Mr. Long Hai Ngoc Nguyen



Frt. Nam Nguyen, SVD



Frt. Quoc Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Tan Duy Trinh Nguyen



Bro. Vincent Nguyen, SVD



Deacon John Kofi Nkum, SVD



Frt. Friday Onoja, SVD



Mr. Chinh Cong Pham



Mr. Kim Hoa Pham



Mr. Kentory Philippe



Mr. Angel Rodriguez Fuentes



Novice Miguel Romo Romo



Frt. Engelbert Salmon, SVD



Frt. Pedro Saveia, SVD



Novice Joseph Simbre



Deacon Boromeo Pyi Soe, SVD



Deacon Zachary Smith, SVD



Mr. Steve Telisma



Frt. Thong Tran, SVD



Mr. Do Tuang



Mr. Marc Anderson Vaval



Frt. Tin Vu, SVD



Mr. Hoang Son Vu



Mr. Vuong Minh Vu



Deacon Andrew Wang, SVD



Frt. Rafael Yescas, SVD



Frt. Baruch Zinsou, SVD

Formation Houses:

Divine Word College
Epworth, Iowa

Divine Word Novitiate
Techy, Illinois

Divine Word Brother
Formation
Chicago, Illinois

Divine Word Theologate
Chicago, Illinois

Contact Us:

800.553.3321
svdvocations@dwci.edu
www.svdvocations.org

Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service

Rev. John Donaghey, SVD, dedicated much of his life to Divine Word, first as an instructor and later as dean of students, vice president of academic affairs, president and a longtime member of the Board of Trustees. The award was established in 1999 to honor those who have shown a long-term commitment to Divine Word College.



Epworth Dentist Honored for Restoring Students' Smiles

For two decades, Dr. Kim Kissell, DDS offered discounted services to Divine Word College students who faced serious dental problems. The local dentist retired in 2022 but in April, Divine Word College honored him with the Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service for his consistent kindness and generosity of time and talent.

For years, Kissell and his staff at Epworth Family Dentistry worked together to identify and resolve students' oral health issues. Sometimes communication was challenging. DWC students come from all over the world and some are at the college to learn English. Kissell and his staff took time describing dental procedures, working with interpreters and using photographs to explain conditions to students.

Some patients didn't have any prior experience with dentists, while others arrived with botched dental treatments that needed repairs. The hygienists reviewed general oral hygiene instructions with each person and did their best to set them up for future dental success.

"We took care of it and did our best to right the wrongs that had been done and to return their mouths to a healthy state," Kissell said.

The staff at Epworth Family Dentistry even accommodated students outside of regular business hours when dental emergencies arose. Due to financial limitations, Kissell said he couldn't provide comprehensive dentistry for all students or achieve cosmetic perfection for them, but he could ensure that their conditions were stable and healthy.

Kissell said his relationship with DWC was mutually beneficial.

"The diversity was a great thing because it allowed me to have experience with people who I wouldn't experience if this was just regular small-town Iowa," he said. "Most of the students were extremely grateful for what we did and that in itself makes me feel so good."

FROM LOST to FOUND

Seminarian Discovers Happiness in Religious Formation

After high school, Angel Rodriguez Fuentes took a gap year and moved to Mexico to live with his grandmother. He needed time to think about his future.

He pondered his purpose, questioned his faith and wondered about the essence of happiness. After some time, Angel turned to God and prayed.

“I said ‘God, show me – if you’re real, let me feel something or let me see you or something.’ And I remember during those periods, I felt so much love that I can’t even explain it,” he said. “It was love and happiness and peace. The feeling was beautiful.”

Angel felt that he had his answer.

➡ Searching For a Place to Belong

After that, he started attending Mass daily. A person at church noticed and invited him to join vocation meetings. Curious to learn more, Angel went to a few monthly sessions before returning to Texas to be with his family.

He took a job at the oil refineries and continued his regular Mass attendance. Angel decided to return to Mexico, the homeland of his parents and his childhood, to enter a seminary. He visited one, submitted his application and was accepted. Things seemed to be falling into place.

But the week before Angel was set to begin his formation program at the seminary in Mexico, he got very sick. The doctors told him he’d need surgery to fix his stomach issues. Since he had American health insurance, he was sent back to the U.S. and advised to reapply to the seminary again the following year after his recovery.

Once he was back in Texas, Angel underwent further



“I said ‘God, show me – if you’re real, let me feel something or let me see you or something.’ And I remember during those periods, I felt so much love that I can’t even explain it.”



medical tests. Doctors identified a minor issue that could be easily resolved. Although he was initially disappointed about missing the opportunity at the seminary, Angel now believes this was part of God's intention for him.

The plan all started to unfold when Angel learned that his hometown priest was being reassigned and the parish was going to be managed by Divine Word Missionaries. Intrigued by the charism of the congregation, Angel delved into learning more about the Society of the Divine Word. Just a few years earlier when he was 15, his family had taken a trip to Europe that sparked a desire in him to explore the world.

After connecting with a vocation director and visiting Divine Word College, Angel quickly noticed a distinct difference in the dynamic between the priests and seminarians compared to the first seminary he considered. It felt like everyone was on the same level.

"The Divine Word Missionaries talked to everybody and they were so nice," he said. "I was like, wow, if God calls me to be a priest, then I want to be like that."

➡ **Navigating Cultural Differences**

Angel started classes in August 2023. Looking back at his first year of school, he appreciates that the formation program is designed to form candidates spiritually, intellectually and personally. As the only Mexican-American student on campus, he's learned a lot from the diverse student body. The interculturality has proven to be both the most challenging and the most rewarding aspect of his experience at DWC.

"We're all different but I've learned many things from those differences, which I'm really grateful for," he said.

Angel made friends with a group of Burmese students who have been teaching him about their culture. They shared a traditional snack with him called lapet thoke, a tea leaf salad. They explained that it's customary in Myanmar for people to make this dish when friends come over and share it while they catch up. Angel liked the concept so much that he went to the Asian market and bought ingredients to make the dish for his friends so he could return the favor.

"I found a group of friends who I can be myself around and we talk about these cultural issues," he said. "It helps us all grow."

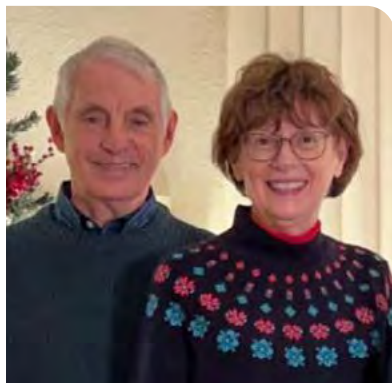
➡ **Serving God and Others**

When he visits his home parish, Angel said he's a little uncomfortable being held up as an example because he doesn't see himself as any different than the other young people at his church. He's just looking to find the right path and right now, he believes God is calling him to religious life as a priest.

"It doesn't matter what vocation we have," Angel said. "It doesn't matter if you're a priest, married, a layperson or anything. I just want people to know that we all can serve God in many ways. And just by pursuing the priesthood, we're not more special than people who have a family. We can all show Christ in ourselves, by our actions and by the way we live our daily life and help others."

Bagbys Learn From Helping DWC Students

There are many ways to be involved with the mission of Divine Word College and to help our students. For Diana and Don Bagby from Dubuque, Iowa, their first exposure to Divine Word College was through friends.



“The opportunity to become part of Divine Word College’s mission was introduced to us by Paula and Terry Friedman, friends of ours from the Church of the Resurrection community. We felt called to get involved and wanted

to sponsor the students. It was a great way for us to give back and to help further the students’ educational, spiritual and social experiences,” said Diana.

The Bagbys became part of the Divine Word College FAN Club (Friends Across Nations) and were matched

with two students, Matthew and Santino. They were part of the Lost Boys, a group of refugees fleeing the civil war in Sudan. One of their first outings was taking them to dinner at a local restaurant. The students were excited about the experience, one of them asking the waitress if she had made the straw placemats at the table as they reminded him of home.

That experience made the Bagbys reflect on what so many people take for granted in the U.S. and was a heartwarming moment. They attended various events together at Divine Word College including picnics, game nights and most vividly the celebration of the Lunar New Year.

Not only was the FAN Club experience a learning moment for Diana and Don, their son also enjoyed the opportunity. “Our son learned about their culture while we introduced Matthew and Santino to ours,” Diana said. “We are so thankful to have been part of the FAN Club, we continue to pray for and support the Divine Word community.”

We felt called to get involved and wanted to sponsor the students. It was a great way for us to give back and to help further the students’ educational, spiritual and social experiences.

Priesthood Ordination



Photo credit: Frt. Tin Vu, SVD

On May 25, four men were ordained Divine Word Missionary Priests at the Church of the Holy Family in Chicago. Front Row (left-to-right): Fr. John Nkum, SVD, Fr. Roger Kyaw Thu, SVD, Fr. Zachary Smith, SVD, Fr. Boromeo Shwe Pyi Soe, SVD. Back Row (left-to-right): Provincial Fr. Adam Oleszczuk, SVD, Most Rev. J. Terry Steib SVD, bishop emeritus of Memphis, Theologate Rector Adam MacDonald, SVD. Please keep these newly ordained priests in your prayers as they begin their first missionary assignments.



*You
will be
missed!*

Long-Time Associate Development Director *Retires and Says Goodbye*

After 19 years here at Divine Word, I have decided to retire at the end of July.

As I prepare to leave my role as Associate Development Director, I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering support and generosity. Your commitment to the mission of Divine Word College is the key to our students' success.

You have helped our students prepare for whatever path God takes them on after they leave here. Each of your donations is proof of your belief in our mission, and for that, I am eternally grateful. Because without your help, our students would not be here.

As I begin the next chapter of my life, I take with me the many wonderful relationships and memories made during my time at Divine Word. I have been able to visit many of our benefactors around the United States. I have enjoyed meeting you and learning about your connection to Divine Word Missionaries and Divine Word College. I will miss visiting with you either in person or on the phone.

Thank you so much for being part of our mission. You may not realize it, but your impact extends far beyond Epworth. It is evident in the lives touched because of your kindness – the lives of God's people all over the world. Please continue to help our students as they prepare to carry the Gospel to all corners of the world.

I have been truly blessed to have been part of the Divine Word community since 2005. I will miss you!

With heartfelt appreciation,

Mark Singsank

P.S. If you ever feel like contacting me, you can reach me at:
mssingsank@gmail.com or **563-543-8618**

GO OUT

To all the World



In 1935, Bro. Larry Kieffer, SVD was born in a quiet little town in eastern Iowa. Growing up on a farm, that young boy from Bellevue could never have imagined the things that life would have in store for him.

Now at age 88, Bro. Larry lives at Divine Word College in Epworth. He's not far from where he was raised, but a big piece of his heart will always be in Papua New Guinea, where he served for 46 years as a Divine Word Missionary.

Early Life

Bro. Larry's parents both died when he was in his early twenties. In 1958, at the age of 23, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He trained in Colorado and Georgia before being sent to Germany for a year and a half. It was his first time on an airplane. "It helped me get away from home and see the wider world," he recalls.

During his service abroad, Bro. Larry spent some time in the Army chapel. That's where he found Catholic magazines that caught his interest. "In one magazine, I saw 'Become a missionary with the Society of the Divine Word - priest or brother.' I checked 'brother' and within two weeks I got information from a vocational director."

After his discharge in 1960, Bro. Larry waited patiently for September 12, the date that he could join the next

class of young men at the SVD major seminary in Techny, Illinois. During his formation, priests and brothers from the missions regularly gave talks to the novices about their experiences. At first, Bro. Larry wasn't interested in that lifestyle. Then, during the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church announced plans to send more religious men to the missions.

"I decided that I didn't want to be left alone in Techny, so I applied for the mission in Papua New Guinea," he said. "My approval came quickly."

By then, Divine Word Missionaries had already been working in the island nation for more than 70 years. They were instrumental in the development of the country, helping to build roads, open schools, start health centers and establish parishes since the end of the 1800s.

Bro. Larry professed Final Vows in 1969 and the following year he received his first assignment.

Mission Life

In 1970, Bro. Larry flew to Papua New Guinea, just north of Australia. It took him a few months to learn the language. He spent the next 46 years managing plantations and producing coconut and cocoa for worldwide markets, the profits of which supported the missions and the local church. Over the years, his life was

enriched by kind people, healthy living and a lifestyle that was vastly different from the one he knew.

“It was a great experience, living in a different culture with very friendly people, seeing how they live, I always enjoyed their company,” he said. “Many of the workers came from villages in rural areas and the plantation was a way for them to earn money. I saw it as my vocation to help them. I supervised the entire operation, taking care of the workers, their pay and selling their produce at the local buying points. In general, I looked after all the activities of the plantation.”

In 1975, he witnessed the country gaining independence from Australia. There were parties to celebrate and a peacefulness that Bro. Larry appreciated. “Papua New Guinea is one of the few countries that never had a civil war when they gained their independence,” he said.

Eventually, he became the general manager of five plantations, all producing coconut and cocoa. The two crop species exist well together. The tall coconut palms create the shade in which cocoa plants thrive.

Rising early, his day began with Mass and breakfast and then it was off to the plantation to meet the workers at 6:30 a.m. They started at 7 a.m. and went until noon. After an hour lunch break, they worked another two to three hours in the afternoon. For some jobs, workers preferred a “work mark,” a line that showed what they needed to get done for the day and then they could go home.

The climate had a big impact on the workers. Located near the equator, Papua New Guinea is hot, humid and rainy year-round.

“It’s a tropical country and to work steady all the time is very difficult for them,” Bro. Larry said of his workers. “You have to learn to slow down a little bit, you can’t hurry up too much.”

The work was five days a week, with weekends off. That’s when he’d do odd jobs around the plantations and the workers could spend time in their own gardens. With fresh fruit like papaya, bananas and pineapple, it led to a simple but healthy diet.

Looking back

Six years ago, Bro. Larry decided to retire and move back to the United States. Living at Divine Word College in Epworth keeps him close to his hometown, where his nieces and nephews live. He helps out with the mail at the college and inspires students with his stories about the missions. He still misses the warm island climate, especially during the Iowa winters.



***“The time went so fast.
I guess when you like
everything, time goes faster.”***

During his time in Papua New Guinea, Bro. Larry says he learned what’s most important in life. Even though the people there were not rich, they were generous in spirit and would share anything they had. Friendship is a very important aspect of the culture.

“When you serve the needs of the people and live in a third-world country, you learn to prize life more than possessions,” he said. “I don’t collect many things.”

Having spent more than half of his life in Papua New Guinea, Bro. Larry can’t help but to grin when he talks about it. “It was wonderful,” he sighs. “The time went so fast. I guess when you like everything, time goes faster.”



The Word

DIGITIZED

Two Divine Word College students stepped outside their comfort zone in Epworth this spring to put their communications skills into practice at a professional conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sr. Hilda Alonyo, LSMIG and Sr. Comfort Nguyongo, SON shared a paper about their experiences in a podcasting class. Their instructor, Assistant Professor of Communications and English Dr. Joshua Young, entered them as presenters at the Central State Communication Association Conference.

The paper is titled, “The Word Digitized for the Modern Church: Exploring the Empowering Potential of Podcasting.” In it, the students discuss the potential of podcasting for mission, the benefits of podcasting for missionary education, and the barriers to effectively engaging with the technology.

In the fall, the sisters took Dr. Joshua’s Digital Public Witness class. At the end of the semester, they realized that the lessons they learned could be used as tools for missionaries to reach more people. Dr. Joshua asked all of his students if they were interested in sharing their experiences by writing an autoethnography – a qualitative research method that connects personal experience to cultural, social, and political understanding. Recognizing the scarcity of research on podcasting in higher education and limited articles on the experiences of international content creators and women, he encouraged them to share

their insights. “I also know that when students present at academic conferences, they’re more likely to be accepted to graduate studies and to receive better financial aid offers,” Dr. Joshua said. “Sr. Hilda and Sr. Comfort were the only students who wanted to take on the challenge.”

REACHING THE MASSES

During the class, Dr. Joshua asked students to create their own podcast episodes. Sr. Hilda remembers feeling a mixture of excitement and fear as she prepared for the first recording session.

“Thankfully the hard work paid off when I saw a positive reaction, as many listeners tuned in and left comments saying how much they enjoyed the program. This feedback drove all subsequent episodes during the semester,” she said. “It motivated me to keep making content that audiences would appreciate. I was glad that my attempts were not for nothing, and I was pleased to create something that resonated with people.”

For Sr. Comfort, the Digital Public Witness class helped develop her communication and writing skills. It also boosted her confidence in engaging with fellow students on diverse topics. “The experience of being a content creator and podcaster gave me a strong sense of belonging and a different perception of podcasting channels,” she said.



(left to right) DWC student Sr. Comfort Nguongo, SON, President of Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Dr. Ahmet Atay, Executive Director of CSCA Dr. Tiffany Wang, DWC student Sr. Hilda Alonyo, LSMIG and Assistant Professor of Communications and English Dr. Joshua Young. Sisters Comfort and Hilda are seen here receiving their certificates for presenting as part of the Undergraduate Honors Research Conference.



Originally from Nigeria, Sr. Comfort used to tune into Catholic podcasts. However, she gradually lost interest as she found it challenging to grasp the speaker's accent or reading pace. "But with recent developments and the involvement of other people on the podcasting channel, one would now have the ability to tune in to any station of their choice for a better understanding and reception of the message," she said.

SHARING THEIR FINDINGS

Podcasts offer a cost-effective, accessible, and convenient way for listeners to engage at their own pace. During their research, the sisters delved into the potential of podcasts to tackle gender role imbalances in religious leadership. Reflecting on their own experiences as women facing such disparities in religious settings, they saw podcasting as a platform to bring attention to these issues and collaborate on finding solutions.

With the guidance of their instructor, the two sisters got to work writing their paper. They used a shared file as they researched after the fall semester and throughout Christmas break. The finished paper was 25 pages long. Once it was complete, Dr. Joshua submitted it and was pleased to learn that it was selected for its exceptional undergraduate research. The sisters were asked to present it at the conference's Undergraduate Honors Research Conference, which included a panel featuring student

papers. Four other college students, along with their instructors, also presented papers at the panel.

The students from Divine Word College were the last presenters to share their paper. Sr. Hilda said with each passing presentation, her nerves diminished. When it was time for her and Sr. Comfort to present, they felt fully ready. Standing together with their notecards, they shared their experiences smoothly, receiving positive feedback at the end.

Dr. Joshua says that he was very proud of the sisters. Afterward, people in attendance asked for links to the podcast so they could listen and learn about the Church's mission and Divine Word College from the students.

"What struck me is how Sr. Hilda and Sr. Comfort really lived the mission while attending the conference," Dr. Joshua said. "They never seemed to meet a stranger. They are true missionary disciples."

Even though the class and the presentation are finished now, Sr. Hilda said she may explore more podcasting opportunities in her future now that she has graduated.

"The whole experience presented a valuable learning opportunity, giving me the confidence to pursue my passion for podcasting further in the future," Sr. Hilda said. "Following this experience, I look forward to developing more material for future episodes while continuing to explore meaningful topics through this medium."

Campus Connections



1



2



Development Office:

Fr. Linh Pham, SVD
Director of Development

563.876.3353 x243 • lpham@dwci.edu

102 Jacoby Drive SW • PO Box 380
Epworth, Iowa 52045-0380

1

The Weyland Art Gallery at Divine Word College hosted an exhibit by Erin Moroney LaBelle this spring. The artist offered a photography workshop for students that focused on finding the sacred in ordinary surroundings.

2

Just when students thought winter was over, Mother Nature dealt a surprise winter blast in April! Seizing the opportunity, these students went sledding on the hill in the front of campus, a favorite cold-weather pastime.

3

The Epworth Fire Department conducted CPR and AED training for Divine Word College students and staff, providing them with essential life-saving skills. The collaboration between the fire department and the college is an example of community partnership at its best.

4

Excitement filled the air as students and staff eagerly awaited the total solar eclipse on April 8. For a few minutes, everyone gazed upward, united in their fascination of what unfolded above them.

5

Some days when the sun is shining and the DWC courtyard is in full bloom, instructors take their classes outdoors. On this beautiful day in May, several classes were held under trees and on picnic tables.

6

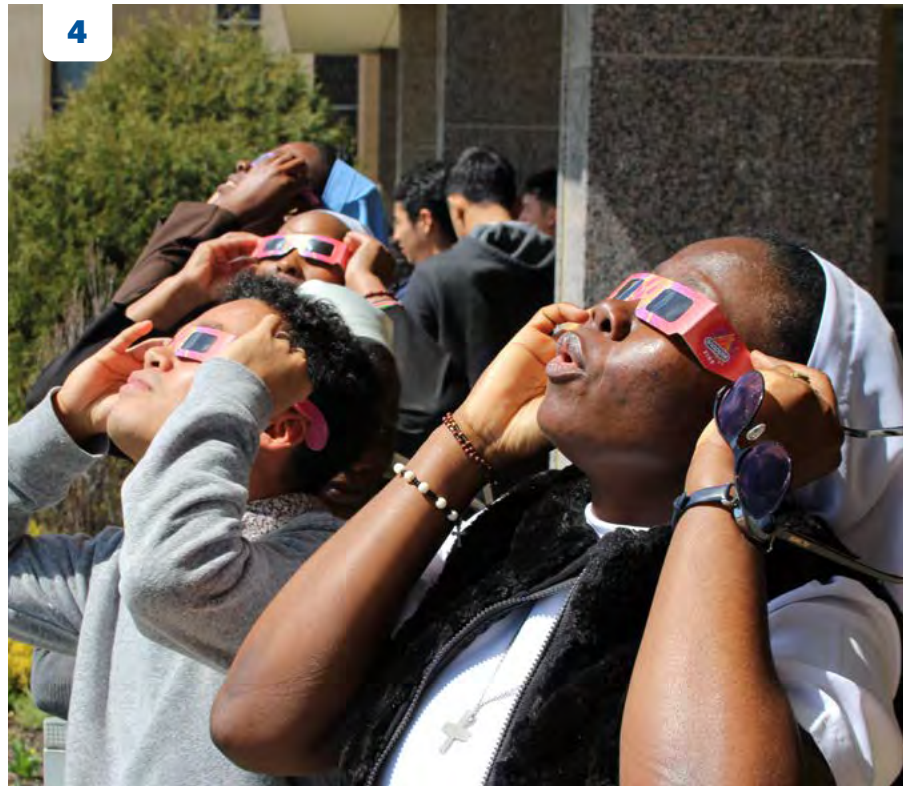
Every spring, the DWC student body conducts an election to select the Student Senate cabinet for the following year. Candidates deliver speeches during lunch to outline their objectives and plans before the voting takes place.

7

"May I interest you in a sandwich?" ESL students infused creativity into their asking and offering lesson by organizing a tea party for faculty and staff members. These lessons are essential in preparing students for everyday English interactions.

8

This spring, ESL students and instructors took a field trip to Madison, Wisconsin, where they explored the Chazen Art Gallery and the State Capitol. The group learned about the state government and the legislative process.



YOU WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Your gifts help our students with their educational expenses and help us pay the bills. A majority of our students don't have the financial means to pay for their education. That's why your gifts are so important.

There are many ways you can help our students with their education:

- 1) Donations to our appeals
- 2) Become a member of our Monthly Donor Club
- 3) A gift of a portion of your IRA's required minimum distribution
- 4) A donation from your Donor Advised Fund
- 5) A donation of appreciated stock
- 6) Remembering Divine Word with a gift in your will

If you would like more information about any of these opportunities, please contact Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD at **563-580-5764** or hcthang@dwci.edu or go to www.dwci.edu/giving

Thank you for your financial support and prayers. You make our mission possible!



*All proceeds support the
Divine Word College Student
Scholarship Fund*

FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2024
Timberline Golf Course, Peosta, Iowa

10TH ANNUAL BENEFIT GOLF OUTING

\$25,000 PRIZE FOR A HOLE-IN-ONE ON #3

18 hole Four-person Best Shot - 1pm shotgun start
\$80 per person – includes golf, cart, dinner and prizes
\$25 for dinner-only guests

To register your foursome, sponsor our event or for more information, please contact Mark Singsank at Divine Word College: **563-876-0097** or singsank@dwci.edu