

STEP BY STEP

Men in formation with the Society of the Divine Word share about the path to religious life.

01

PRE-NOVICE



Franciste Mervil

The first formal step in the formation process with the Society of the Divine Word is a year called pre-novitiate, which most candidates at DWC participate in during their final full year of studies. **Franciste Mervil** was in the pre-novitiate program this year. During this step, candidates learn about the skills and education needed to be a successful missionary while living in a multi-cultural community. They live together in a small house that’s just a short walk from the college’s main building. Franciste says the past year has been unlike any other during his six years at the college. He learned to meditate and found peace in the structured daily routine of the house. The support of his fellow pre-novices and newly-strengthened personal faith even helped him deal with the tragic death of his younger brother in January.

“It’s like you see life on a deeper level,” he said. “It helps you to be more mature, not just in your vocation, but from all aspects of life. All of these things helped me to know and to discern my vocation at a deeper level.”

02

NOVICE



Wisno Elie

Wisno Elie was born in Haiti and graduated from Divine Word College in 2021. He spent the past year on the second formal step of formation known as novitiate. This year-long process provides time for prayer, reflection and study of consecrated religious life. It’s also an opportunity to learn about the unique characteristics of the SVD community with a special focus on discernment.

“The novitiate is an essential step in my training. Living occasionally with solitude and silence, the novitiate unfolds over one year and allows me to take root, to experience profound interior changes, and to mature in my choice of religious life,” Wisno said. “I was very excited to begin my novitiate, because this is the precious time that I have been waiting for. I think it is a particular time of grace for me, since I want to commit myself to this life.”

03

TEMPORARY VOWS
THEOLOGATE STUDENT



Fr. Samuel L. Lollar, SVD

Candidates who continue to feel called to religious life as a Divine Word Missionary after novitiate profess temporary or “first” vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Then they spend several years living in community at the Divine Word Theologate with the other candidates, continuing their religious formation and pursuing graduate studies at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago.

Priesthood candidates

Now a member of the Society of the Divine Word, priesthood candidates in this stage are known as “fraters.” **Fr. Samuel L. Lollar, SVD** studied at DWC from 2019 to 2020. He professed his first vows in July 2021. “I felt overjoyed and like I had finally become what I had wanted to be for so long — a Divine Word Missionary,” he said.



Bro. Joubert Felix, SVD

Brotherhood candidates

Men who feel called to a life as a religious brother take the same temporary vows as priesthood candidates after the novitiate year. They are referred to as “brother” at this point in formation. “I am working toward a master of arts in ministry with an intercultural concentration, so I am learning a lot,” said **Bro. Joubert Felix, SVD**. “After that, I am looking forward to specializing in a field beneficial to the Society of the Divine Word.”

04

CROSS CULTURAL EXPERIENCE



Fr. Brian Junkes, SVD

After their second year of theology, candidates take part in a Cross-Cultural Training Program.

Fr. Brian Junkes, SVD graduated from DWC in 2018. In September, the Florida native moved to Chad for his Cross-Cultural Training where he'll likely stay for two years. He says the practical experience of serving at a mission site overseas has helped him see the bigger picture of what life is like for Divine Word Missionaries.

"Going outside of the U.S., seeing how the SVD work, and participating in the mission is a great experience for me," Brian said. "This will help me learn more about what it is to be an SVD and to continue to discern my vocation."

05

DEACON



Fr. Carl Gales, SVD

After CTP, candidates return to the Theologate to complete their studies, profess perpetual vows and finally they are ordained deacons. This is the final step before priestly ordination.

"What I learned during my diaconate year is that ministry is more about listening than anything else. If you listen with your heart, you will know how best you can serve others," said former DWC student Fr. Carl Gales, SVD who was a deacon for the past year. In May, he was ordained as a Divine Word Missionary Priest.

SVD formation weekend

Nearly 60 men in formation with the Society of the Divine Word gathered at Divine Word College this March for the first-ever SVD Formation Weekend. Attendees met to foster their fraternal friendships.

Several SVD candidates gave presentations about their most recent experiences in formation, revealing valuable insights for younger discerners. It was an opportunity for old friends to reunite and for newer candidates to learn from those who have already walked parts of the formation path that remain

in front of them. The weekend included a social gathering, a Mass presided by former DWC President Fr. Tim Lenchak, SVD and it all culminated with a rousing round of athletics in the gymnasium. Nothing secures the bonds of brotherhood like a game of dodgeball!

