

# the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



## WHAT'S INSIDE



Innovation & Adaptation

## *A SIGN OF THE TIMES*

Some day when we look back at photos from the 2020-2021 academic year, we will see visible signs that it was very different from years prior. Even with masks covering our faces and six feet of distance separating us, the purpose of this mission college remains the same.

Above is a glimpse at what the Mission Sunday celebration looked like at DWC this year. It was closed to the public, so the chapel wasn't filled to the brim with visitors and the lines for the multicultural feast were much shorter than usual. Still, the desire to unite in prayer and renew our commitment to missionary activity remained. We hope that soon we will all gather again safely and share in the traditions that bind us. Until then, we will adapt.

## The Mother of Invention?

*A popular proverb, sometimes attributed to Plato, reminds us “necessity is the mother of invention.”*

At DWC, we have certainly experienced some of that old wisdom during this past year of COVID restrictions. The stories in this newsletter tell about a few of the “inventions” that necessity has inspired us to discover. I am sure you, too, have also been reinventing many parts of your life in the past months.

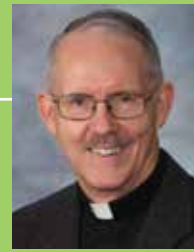
For missionaries, adapting and innovating are like breathing in and breathing out. We learn new languages and cultures; we find new friends who become like family; we try to find new hope through the Spirit as we share our lives with people living in desperate situations. St. Paul wrote about his own journey of faith in Jesus: “We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...” (2 Cor 4:7-9).

Biblically, we all look forward to the fulfillment of a great promise for the end of time. The Book of Revelation (Rev 21:5) tells us that God, seated on his throne, will say: “See, I am making all things new.” Though God’s plan for creation and for all of us may have been detoured by sin and death, we are not afraid nor discouraged.

God’s plan for a New Creation will be the greatest invention ever imagined.

Perhaps it would be better to say: God is the mother of all invention!

*Fr. Tom*



Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD

## Faculty learn remotely, too!



Fr. Ken Anich, SVD

Just like the students at Divine Word College, many faculty members also found themselves poised for virtual learning as a result of the pandemic this school year.

In December, Fr. Ken Anich, SVD, semi-retired professor of counseling psychology, attended a virtual conference for the first time in his 46-year career in education. The Evolution of Psychotherapy is a premier event in the field that’s usually held every four years in California. Instead of traveling to attend the conference as he did four years ago, this winter Fr. Ken planted himself in front of his computer for five days of online presentations.

After months of travel restrictions and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fr. Ken says he was already resigned to the fact that he wouldn’t be traveling for this year’s conference. So when he learned that it was moved online and attendees would receive access to all presentations for a full year, he deemed the opportunity too good to pass up.

Fr. Ken said the digital format allowed him to attend more sessions than he could get to in the past. The line-up of presenters included several heavyweights from the world of psychology. “I was exposed to some of the most recent research in the various psychological fields and will continue to access presentations throughout 2021,” he said. “I was able to pick up 37 contact hours of instruction in five days.”

While Fr. Ken acknowledged that he missed networking in person with fellow professionals and friends he’s made in the field, he said the experience was overall very positive.



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email [info@dwci.edu](mailto:info@dwci.edu), or visit: [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)



# online videos help **SPREAD THE WORD**

To watch the  
“Theologate  
Talks” series,  
go to:

**Youtube.com/  
DWTchicago**



Deacon Minh Anh Dinh, SVD  
(left) talks with Frt. Brian  
Junkes, SVD (right) in a video  
for the YouTube series  
“Theologate Talks.”



Communication was a key contributor to the early success of the Society of the Divine Word and continues to be a focus for the congregation today. Founder St. Arnold Janssen published a mission magazine that helped expand the reach and support of the group in its early days. Throughout its 145-year history, members have used a variety of mediums to share their messages, but since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, online videos have emerged as a safe, affordable and effective means of reaching a wide audience.

A group of SVD candidates studying at the Theologate in Chicago started a video series on YouTube called “Theologate Talks.” Most of the men involved are former DWC students. They use a two-person interview format to give viewers a glimpse into the lives of men who are in formation with Divine Word Missionaries. Candidates share about their experiences in the congregation’s Cross-Cultural Training Program, interview formation leaders and discuss their personal insights about discernment. Another former DWC student, Frt. Giresse-Mecene Etung, SVD, is also

contributing to a unique form of communication. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Frt. Giresse moved from Epworth to Chicago at the beginning of 2020 to serve at St. Anselm Parish. Just a few months later, churches closed to protect people from the virus. Giresse started using his phone to capture video of the services to post online.

“The Mass is the center of Christian life. To see many faithful people were only able to participate via video made me think of an initiative which would allow them to participate fully and get the graces needed,” he said. With the help of new video equipment, Frt. Giresse continues to stream services on YouTube and the church’s Facebook page.

“Bringing the Mass to these faithful people is my contribution to building the Kingdom of Heaven, which we are all called to do,” he said. From the “Theologate Talks” video series to livestreaming Mass, SVDs are continuing the legacy of using a variety of mediums to promote the mission and share the Word of God.

## *You are amazing!*

St. Arnold Janssen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), was well-known for his ability to “think outside the box.” When he decided to start a new religious order in 1875, he was forced to leave his native Germany because of strong anti-Catholicism feelings in the country at that time.



Mark Singsank,  
Development  
Office

So what did he do, he found a beautiful spot across the border in The Netherlands. St. Arnold was able to adapt and move forward with strength and conviction inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Everyone at Divine Word College has also had to “think outside the box” and adapt in a year unlike most of us have ever seen. In the Development Office, we can no longer travel to visit you or hold events for you to visit us. Fortunately, we are able to make phone calls and send letters. It’s not quite the same as visiting in person, but it works.

Even with the pandemic and other issues we have had in 2020, your generosity last year was amazing! Thank you so much for your donations and prayers to help our students as they prepare for life as Catholic missionaries. Without your help, they would not be here. The pandemic has

also caused a few changes in the tax laws for 2020 and 2021 for you to consider. Keep in mind that you can use the \$300 universal, above-the-line, charitable deduction for non-itemizers through 2021; joint filers may deduct up to \$600. This deduction only applies to cash gifts. And, even though required minimum distributions from your IRA are not required this year, they are always welcome as donations to the college, as are gifts of appreciated stock and gifts from Donor Advised Funds.

Thank you again for your financial help and prayers. Know that you are remembered in the daily prayers of the Divine Word College community.



# Innovation & Adaptation

## FACULTY, STUDENTS FORGE NEW PATH TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS DURING PANDEMIC

There's been a lot of talk about "thinking outside the box" over the past year as leaders from nearly every industry scrambled to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Divine Word College, administrators worked tirelessly to evaluate the school's ever-changing risk and determine the safest way to ensure the continuity of students' educations. As positive cases of the virus popped up, the college switched to virtual learning for short periods of time until it was deemed safe to return to the classrooms again.

Through these unpredictable times, many instructors and students have managed to embrace the uncertainty, break the mold and find innovative ways to teach and learn, no matter what the format.

### VIDEOS BLEND VOICES

Dr. Evelyn Dias is an assistant professor of music and the liturgical music coordinator at DWC. She said in her opinion, this is no time for hesitancy when it comes to new technologies and teaching methods.

In the past year, Dr. Evelyn taught herself the basics of video production in order to safely share musical performances from a distance. She even made her own green screen from sheets of paper and green tape, thanks to the guidance provided on YouTube tutorials. It allowed her to record students singing or playing instruments one at a time in front of the background. Then she used software to digitally combine the audio, create a virtual background and unite the video images of the students.

"We were all bombarded with so many videos of people singing together on Zoom with the grid boxes and I thought, that's nice but it's kind of unnatural. So I wanted to put them together in a more organic way," Dr. Evelyn said.

The results are music videos that can be shared via social media, YouTube and at school Masses, since on-site singing has been prohibited for several months.

"Every single video taught me more and more, upping something I already knew," Dr. Evelyn said.

### VIRTUAL LEARNING REQUIRES NEW SKILLS

For online classes, Dr. Evelyn started making short videos of herself explaining the basic concepts for daily lessons. She posts the videos early so students can watch them prior to the virtual class. Dr. Evelyn said she quickly noticed that her students were asking far fewer questions during class. For those who are not native English speakers, she said it's an opportunity to listen to the explanation more than once, slow it down, or stop the video and research unfamiliar words. "To make a video is so much work, so I have to be really deliberate and very clear about what exactly I want them to learn, how exactly I want them to visually see it and which words I choose so that there is no wasted time," she said.

"It's a lot of work but then you really have something concrete to show for it and you can use it again."

In fact, Dr. Evelyn said she plans to continue using the videos even after classes return to the regular face-to-face format. DWC Senior Frt. Joao Pinda Neto, SVD said he didn't know much about the video conferencing site Zoom before the pandemic, but he's used it so

much during virtual learning that he's practically an expert these days. Even after leaving DWC, Frt. Joao said he thinks he and his classmates will benefit from their proficiency with video conferencing services. The thing that impresses him most about online classes is the way students are able to perform group presentations, taking turns as they speak. "It is so fascinating that two or three students can present on the same topic but in different places at the same time," he said.

### TUTORING MODIFIED FOR SAFETY

The Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) at DWC adapted its tutoring program during the second half of the spring 2020 semester. Traditionally, local tutor volunteers would meet on campus with ESL students to help them learn the language and culture.

In order to protect students and tutors from COVID-19, the program was reimagined. Faculty enlisted new tutors who could meet with students exclusively online for now, though they hope to invite the former tutors back as soon as it's



*"It is so fascinating that two or three students can present on the same topic but in different places at the same time."*

*- Frt. Joao Pinda Neto, SVD*



*Sr. Nhung Hong  
Thi Tran, LHC*

safe. This semester, the online English Conversation Partner Program has 14 tutor volunteers who meet with students through video chat. Most of them are students at colleges or high schools in the nearby city of Dubuque. In the fall, ESL student Sr. Nhung Hong Thi Tran, LHC was matched with a tutor who's a student at Emmaus Bible College in Dubuque. The two enjoyed their online conversations so much, that Sr. Nhung asked to be paired with the same tutor for the spring.

"Through this program, I have learned more about American culture, such as holidays and cuisine," she said. "In addition, I have been improving my speaking and listening skills." She said her tutor is an active and energetic person who is also gentle and patient with her. She is thankful for the opportunity to safely continue the tutoring program and create a lasting friendship.

### ACCEPTING LIMITATIONS

Despite the many inventive ways the DWC community has adapted to recent changes, there are some things that are simply more effective when done in person. For Dr. Evelyn, piano lessons come to mind.

She said the audio quality is challenging when she watches live video of a student practicing piano. She also struggles to see her student's posture and fingers at the same time. Even when classes are in-person, Dr. Evelyn stands outside the practice room wearing a mask and face shield while her student sits at the piano several feet away. Still, she is grateful for those opportunities.

Looking back over the past year, Dr. Evelyn said she's learned a lot.

"There has been some positive stuff – personal growth, time to think, an opportunity to use every avenue of communication and all the resources that we might have been ignoring," she said. "But I still do look forward to the personal attachment and actually being there in class again."



*To view the music videos  
Dr. Evelyn produced  
featuring DWC students with  
the help of a green screen,  
go to [youtube.com/dwVocations](https://youtube.com/dwVocations)*



Dr. Evelyn Dias guides Frt. Engelbertus Salmon, SVD through his second piano lesson from a safe distance.



## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



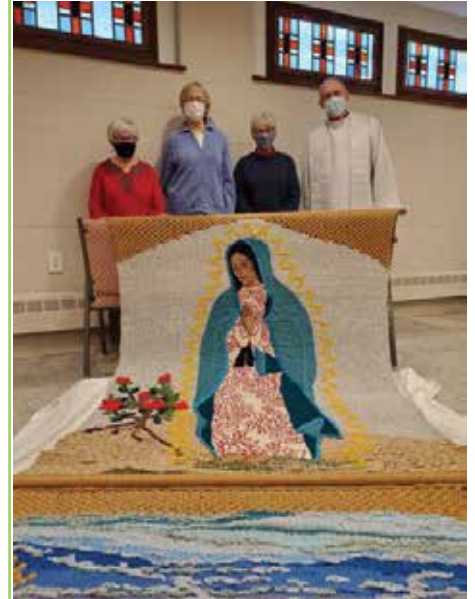
### *Staying fit is the GOAL!*

Divine Word Missionaries have always emphasized the importance of physical activity and that message is even more important during the pandemic. To keep in shape, students play soccer, volleyball, utilize the school gymnasium or hit the hills with their sleds in the wintertime! Bro. Mike Decker, SVD, serves as the Health Services Coordinator for the college and oversees the overall health and safety of the community. He also treats minor sports injuries when they arise.



### *Mission Sunday Food Festival*

In an effort to ensure safety, the International Food Festival that traditionally follows the Mission Sunday Mass had a different twist this year. Rather than having students cook their favorite cultural dishes to share, the Divine Word College kitchen staff generously crafted a culinary collection of recipes from across the globe. DWC community members entertained diners with a night full of musical and theatrical performances as everyone indulged in familiar flavors from home!



### *Tapestry woven with love*

Three Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary recently gifted the college with this intricate tapestry of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary to an indigenous farmer in Mexico named Juan Diego in 1531. The image now adorns the Reina de las Americas chapel on campus. Sr. Ruth, pictured second from the left, was the principal artisan. The generosity and talent that these sisters shared with the DWC community is greatly appreciated.



### *Space to learn*

Small class sizes have always been an advantage for Divine Word College students, who can count on individualized attention from instructors. This year, those small classes have also been helpful as they allow for adequate space between students in classrooms. This ensures that everyone can maintain proper distancing and adhere to the campus COVID-19 safety policies. In this photo, Fr. Paul Aquino, SVD is teaching students the early basics of guitar. There are many benefits to attending Iowa's smallest college!

# Persistence pays off for DWC senior



*Truong An Nguyen*

**It takes courage and faith for a young man to answer the call to religious life, but that's just the first of many steps in the formation process.**

**For one Divine Word College student, acknowledging God's plan for him was easy compared to the next step – finding a congregation to accept him as a candidate.**

Truong An Nguyen was just 12 years old when he first started feeling called to the priesthood. Growing up in Cam Ranh City in Vietnam, his grandparents encouraged him to be an altar server at church and he was inspired by the priests.

At 18, he took an entrance exam for a major seminary in Vietnam but wasn't accepted because he was studying chemistry in a different city. Then Truong spent a short time living and working with the Don Bosco Salesians in the city of Da Lat before moving with his family to Seattle, Washington in 2009. With few connections in the United States, he took a job at a dollar store that had a Vietnamese owner. A few months later, he accepted a position at a hotel where he worked for the next four years. Then in 2014, a Vietnamese priest from the Redemptorists congregation in Dallas, Texas contacted him about doing a Come and See visit. Truong quit his job at the hotel and pursued the opportunity, but was ultimately not accepted because he didn't have a degree in English. It was another roadblock.

He returned to Seattle to study English but could only afford to attend one quarter at the community college. For the next year, he mostly stayed home and took a month-long trip to Vietnam. After returning, he was hopeful that he may move forward in his formation as he attended a Come and See visit with the Benedictine congregation. Again he was

rejected. Next he participated in a weeklong spiritual exercise with the Jesuits and they also said "no" to his discernment. In need of employment, Truong briefly worked at an airport base before switching to a job at a commercial trucking company in Utah. Hoping to drive 18-wheel trucks, he passed the computer test required to obtain a Commercial Driver's License, but the company sent him home because of his limited English skills. After being denied again, he started working as an in-home caregiver for the elderly.

That's when he got a call from Vocation Director Fr. Anthony Cong Nguyen, SVD and finally found the "yes" he'd been waiting for. By pure coincidence, a family friend of Truong's knew Fr. Anthony and shared his contact information because she knew the young man felt called to religious life. He enrolled at DWC in August 2016 and earned his English as a Second Language (ESL) Certificate of Completion in May 2017. Now at age 31, Truong is a senior at DWC and looking forward to graduating in May. He has met the criteria for the Academic Dean's List nine times during his studies. He says he's also developed a love for philosophy, theology and intercultural studies. Truong is looking forward to moving on to the next step in his discernment after graduation. "I hope that what I have learned so far can help me on my way to follow God and to serve others," he said.



# STORY OF HEROISM FUELS AUTHOR'S MISSION



Fr. Jean d'Amour  
Dusengumuremyi

The inspiring true story of a woman named Félicité Niyitegeka made such an impact on Fr. Jean d'Amour Dusengumuremyi that he's dedicated himself to ensuring the world never forgets this selfless martyr from his home country of Rwanda. During the tragic genocide perpetrated against the Tutsis by Hutu extremists in 1994 in Rwanda, Félicité worked to save as many

Tutsis as possible. She was an Auxiliary of the Apostolate, which is a consecrated laywoman of the Catholic Church, and worked at Centre Saint-Pierre, a center for spiritual retreats, meetings and formation. Félicité provided shelter and helped the Tutsis escape across the border to the Democratic Republic of Congo for safety.

As a Hutu herself and the sister of an army colonel, Félicité was warned when the militia found out what she was doing. She had enough notice to leave and save herself before the soldiers would arrive, but wrote a letter to her brother saying that she would not abandon the people she was protecting. The letter, which was written in Kinyarwanda, is translated below. Félicité and the refugees were transported to a mass grave where the soldiers made her watch as they shot and killed the others before turning the gun on her.

"She tried to save all who came to her for help, and when the Hutu extremists attacked her residence, she accompanied those who were seized simply for being Tutsi to their deaths, and so was put to death, too," Fr. Jean said. In 2001, Félicité was proclaimed a national heroine in Rwanda. That's when Fr. Jean first learned of her martyrdom and felt compelled to

share her story with a wider audience. Félicité became a role model for Rwandans and an example of overcoming hatred. Fr. Jean carefully gathered testimonials from Félicité's family, people who knew her, and even some of the people who she bravely protected. In 2015, he published a book about her life titled, "No Greater Love." It has been translated to English and is widely available where books are sold.

"She demonstrated her love, modeled after Jesus' love, even at the price of her life," Fr. Jean said. "Her life demonstrates her belief that all people have value and dignity." Students come to Divine Word College in hopes of achieving a variety of goals. Fr. Jean, who is a diocesan priest, wanted to improve his command of the English language and expand his book about Félicité. Having recently completed his ESL courses, he's now working toward an associate degree in Intercultural Studies. He's been thoughtfully adding to the publication during his downtime at the college. Fr. Jean said he hopes her story will encourage readers to stand up for what is right and advocate on behalf of people who are unjustly persecuted.

*"Love is stronger than death and perfect love casts out fear," he said. "Our life is not measured by days but love."*

**Felisita  
Niyitegeka**  
*Abamuzi baramuvuga  
koko ni intwari*



Jean d'Amour Dusengumuremyi

*Dear brother,*

*Thank you for your desire to save me. But instead of saving my life by abandoning the 43 people dying, I prefer to die with them. Pray for us that we may arrive in heaven and say goodbye for me to our mother, brothers and sisters. Once arrived in heaven I will pray for you to God. Thank you very much for thinking about me. And if God saves us as we hope, we'll see one another tomorrow.*

*Your sister, Félicité*