

# ALL IN THE FAMILY



The Society of the Divine Word has a common saying to describe the members of the intercultural order, "One heart, many faces." In Fr. John Yangia's case, that face has a big, infectious smile on it. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Fr. John did most of his religious formation in his home country. Then in 2015, he enrolled at Divine Word College to learn English. He was determined to improve his language skills and interact with as many people as possible during his time at the school. As a missionary, Fr. John knew he'd need to learn to connect and engage with people.

One day while riding his bike through town, Fr. John took the opportunity to

meet some local residents. They talked for a bit and he told them about his studies. Soon, a friendship blossomed and before long, he was like a member of the family. He was introduced to parents, siblings and cousins. Fr. John was even invited to join the family for Thanksgiving and on his birthday, they surprised him with a party.

After a year at DWC, Fr. John completed his English studies and moved to Tallahassee, Florida where he did parish work for about a year. In 2018, he moved back to his home country and was ordained. Today, he works in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a vocation director, the director of a spiritual retreat center

and serves as a coordinator for the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Network representing the AFRAM zone.

In January, Fr. John was delighted to have the opportunity to return to the United States briefly. He visited Divine Word College and celebrated Mass for many people who touched his life during his time at the school, including a large group of local residents who have become like a second family to him.

"I was so excited to come back. It was like a dream to me," he said. "I was glad for them to see me as a priest and also to offer Mass for them. It was kind of like a way to say 'thank you.'"

## Discerning God's will for your life

Among the things an SVD candidate must learn in his religious formation is the art of discerning the will of God. Only in patterning one's life after what God wants for himself can a seminarian's pursuit of an SVD religious vocation truly bear fruit.

This idea receives its model and inspiration from none other than Jesus Christ Himself. In the process of manifesting God's will to humanity, the Word-Made-Flesh must first discern what God the Father wants to accomplish in His person through the working power of the Holy Spirit. This discernment process takes place through moments spent alone in prayer and meditation by the Lord, which readers of the four books of the Gospel will notice throughout Jesus' life on earth.

It was through the discernment of God's will that the Founder of the Society of the Divine Word,

Fr. Arnold Janssen, could set about to accomplish what one Catholic bishop reportedly remarked as belonging to a dream of either a fool or a saint! Discerning God's will in founding the three religious missionary congregations has indeed made Fr. Janssen a Catholic saint, whose feast day is on January 15 each year.

Would you like to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? Would you like to trace the missionary path trodden by St. Arnold? Then begin today by discerning God's will for your life. Take some quiet time to reflect on what you are going through in the present moment, what you experienced in the last few hours, today, this week, this month, this year. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to see clearly the presence of God in the midst of things that have taken place. Hold on to that presence and begin to truly live God's gift of life!



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