



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 “Fratr.” 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.