

# the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries




## WHAT'S INSIDE



Seniors demonstrate  
lessons learned





Can you tell what these eight men  
have in common?

**They are united by their faith and missionary spirit.**

*They each responded to a call they heard in their hearts  
to enter formation with Divine Word Missionaries.*

Each man who considers religious life has a unique story  
about what prompted him to take the first step in his formation.

*You could be a part of that story for someone.*

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*Ways to promote religious life:*

- Pray for vocations.
- Tell a young person why you think he might make a good priest, brother, or deacon.
- Invite young people to join the choir, become a lector, Eucharistic Minister, be on parish council or other parish groups/organizations.
- Plan a mission trip for young people.
- Encourage prayer and provide opportunities for young people to pray, like Eucharistic Adoration or prayer groups.
- Invite speakers to attend youth groups and Confirmation classes to discuss religious vocations.
- Refer a young person to a vocation director.

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*Learn more at [www.svdvocations.org](http://www.svdvocations.org)*  
Contact National Vocation Director Len Uhal

**800-553-3321**

[svdvocations@dwci.edu](mailto:svdvocations@dwci.edu)

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Cover photo of the mission in Mozambique contributed by Fr. Ralph Montalban, SVD.



## DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

This issue of the DWC World Newsletter comes to you as part of our

continuing partnership in the Mission of the Church. The publication invites you to add your own unique perspective to the presence of the Word wherever you are and in whatever capacity you find yourself. As you'll see in the enclosed stories, the common Mission that we take part in is multidimensional. The varied nature of our shared missionary journey takes us to noteworthy formational moments at Divine Word College and Divine Word Theologate, where young missionaries are being prepared for their life-long engagements with the Word in diverse mission fields.

Our journey also extends to the many lives touched by missionary leadership, as described in the stories of Fr. Antonius Waget, SVD in the Asian island nation of Indonesia and of Fr. Giang Tien Nguyen, SVD in the south eastern African country of Mozambique. We can also walk into the silent aspects of the Mission with the story about Fr. James Heiar, SVD, who spent many years working in the DWC Development Office. The Mission is also present in a situation of material need, which calls for our participation, as mentioned in the article about the Megan Hall Renovation project at Divine Word College.

We don't have to limit ourselves to just one aspect of the Church's Mission. Thanks to the compelling presence of the Holy Spirit as experienced at Christ's Resurrection, there are many ways we can all play a role. While each of us may engage in just one dimension of the Church's Mission, it is our individual part in building up the Mission that counts – not our desire to be “all-in-all.” May this missionary newsletter that you are holding in your hands connect you to the Mission of the Divine Word in a profound and personal way.

*Rev. Linh Duy Pham, S.V.D.*





So much has happened since I arrived back at Matoloko Seminary from my studies at Divine Word College in August. When I first returned to my small room attached to a large dormitory, I was one of four priests in this wing. It was very quiet because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dormitory that is usually bustling with hundreds of teenage seminarians was empty.

I spent the first two weeks in self-quarantine in my room. I tried to recreate some of the comforts I had in my room in Epworth, Iowa. I especially missed the hot water shower because Matoloko has a cool, mountain climate. So I bought a kettle in order to have warm water for my bath. Indonesian bathrooms are far different from American bathrooms. Usually in Indonesia, we fill a traditional tiled tub called a bak mandi with cold water and use a ladle called a gayung to shower. In my case, the tiled bak mandi is actually a big plastic container.

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*We try to help students understand that everything they do has a reason and a purpose.*

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While I was away in America, the walls in my room molded due to the foggy climate here and the bathroom tiles needed a good scrub. I organized the wardrobe and added shelves, which took me a few days because I had so many books, gifts, cards, letters and memories to unpack from all of the friends I made while in Epworth.

### **Teaching online**

Immediately after the quarantine, I started teaching in a “new normal.” There were no students in the classrooms. Instead, I sat in front of my laptop creating teaching materials I could send to my 225 junior high students through Google Classroom. Matoloko Seminary also

has a senior high school, so all together there are 606 seminarians. I felt like a fish out of water. I had no idea how to create learning materials using this method. Fr. Nani Songkares, a very experienced senior high school English teacher, took me under his wing. He constantly encouraged me to create interesting educational videos. Since our students were at home, Fr. Nani and I collaborated to produce videos related to basic skills, such as self-introductions. Through these videos, I was able to get to know all of my students by name and see their faces. By the end of the semester, we created 18 videos. Each one took several hours to produce.

Most students do not have internet in their homes, so they had to use internet facilities at their parish priest’s house or look for other internet facilities on hills or higher places. The process of connecting to the internet was extremely time consuming. It made me miss the facilities at Divine Word College.

The search for locations with stronger internet signals to access the learning materials and submit their homework was further complicated by COVID-19 restrictions. Unfortunately, around 20 students were not able to access the online learning materials at all. In order to encourage students to learn and return their assignments on time, I sent reminders via WhatsApp groups and called each student and their parents personally. Now, we have all become good friends.

### **Adjusting to new guidelines**

In early December 2020, the government restrictions were eased. The 606 seminarians returned to the seminary in

three batches. This created another level of “new normal” for me. I was responsible for 104 students from the first group, who returned to live in the dormitories and started their studies face-to-face, but I still had 121 students learning online. I felt constantly pulled in two directions. This lasted until late December 2020 when the remaining students returned to the seminary to live in their dormitories. I was really happy to go back to in-person teaching. Sadly, on February 1, one of our staff, Fr. Bene Daghi, passed away from COVID-19. His death pushed us to create another “new normal.” All of the lay teachers were sent home. All of the students started going to class wearing masks and doing self-study. Everyone who helped Fr. Bene during his sickness, including myself, was required to do a strict self-quarantine following his death. Since we were in close contact with him during the sacrament of anointing of the sick, we had to celebrate Mass privately during our quarantine period. I celebrated Mass on a small alter table next to my bed.

### *Nurturing religious vocations*

After the quarantine, I worked with three other priests and two men in temporary vows to supervise 281 senior high school students living in the dormitories attached to our rooms. We taught them life skills and each day, one of us would oversee the students’ daily activities, which were done under the virtue of the five S’s: Sanctitas or holiness, Scientia or knowledge, Sapientia or wisdom, Sanitas or health, and Socialitas or social. We try to help students understand that everything they do has a reason and a purpose.

We have some activities designed to maintain and increase students’ calls to the seminarian life. They include daily writing meditation, Masses in groups celebrated in Bahasa Indonesia and English, self-reflection, Bible sharing, recollection, retreat, self-evaluation, fraternal evaluation, personal meetings with each formator, book summaries, academic seminars and Masses for opening and closing the semester.

### *Sharing language and culture*

In January, 67 senior high school students joined English Club and I was invited to share about my experience of

studying at DWC. First, I told the students about my struggle to get an American Visa and how I had to go through the interview process five times. Then I showed them pictures of the most amazing places I saw – Divine Word properties in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Washington D.C., New Jersey and California. I followed it up with panoramas of big cities like New York City, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas.

I could see in their eyes that the students were eager to know about the experiences I had in the USA. They asked what they would need to enter the USA, how Indonesian SVD missionaries can work happily and successfully in such a modern country and how to deal with culture shock. After that, I could see that they were more motivated to learn English. I told them I wouldn’t have gone to the United States if I didn’t take my English studies seriously. “I take every moment to improve my English, including when teaching you,” I reminded them. “Every single time I teach you I learn again. And as I am talking with you now, I am learning.”

My English also improved because all the people around me are like “wingless angels” helping me improve since I started learning the language in 1993. I truly owe a debt of gratitude to the SVD family, the students, friends and all of the teachers and professors in Indonesia, Langata College, Kenya, and Divine Word College. After coming back from Epworth, I found that my English is far better and I can express myself freely without thinking much about what to say.

Thanks to Fr. Quang Duc Dinh, SVD, Provincial of the Chicago Province, DWC President Fr. Tom Ascherman and all of the staff and professors at the college, as well as my classmates. And to all of the benefactors for your countless generosity, which made it possible for me to stay and study at DWC. Also, my thank you goes to Fr. Lukas Jua, SVD, the Provincial of Ende Province, who allowed me to study English at DWC. All of you have made me who I am now. I keep all of you in my daily prayers. May God pour down His Holy Spirit upon every one of you and let you reach your dreams for the better life of everybody.





# MEGAN HALL MAKEOVER

*Since it was constructed more than a century ago, the building on DWC's campus now known as Megan Hall has served a variety of roles. An exact history of the structure doesn't exist, but one thing is certain – it has been home to a lot of students!*

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## **EARLY HISTORY**

The DWC campus started as a Methodist school called Epworth Seminary in 1857. According to Epworth historians, a three-story building was built for the school when it opened. After just seven years in operation, the seminary closed. Then a Presbyterian minister reopened the campus as a private school, which only lasted five years before it, too, closed. Next the property returned to its role as a Methodist seminary and this time it flourished, especially between 1880 and 1890. As enrollment increased, more buildings were built to accommodate the growing student body and local historians believe that Megan Hall was among those newly-built structures. Eventually, the seminary closed in 1923. It reopened briefly as Epworth Military Academy and during that time, the building was called Husted Hall.

## **HISTORY WITH THE SOCIETY**

The Society of the Divine Word purchased the site to establish a minor seminary. It was named St. Paul's Mission House and dedicated in 1932. By then, the eight buildings on the site had been vacant for several years. In 1949, St. Paul's transitioned into a junior college. It continued in that mode until 1955 when it became a "belated" school, serving young men from public schools who needed advanced study of philosophy and theology in order to enter the major seminary. In the 1950s, there was a move nationally for accreditation of educational institutions. In the early 1960s, it was decided that the SVD needed a four-year liberal arts college and its property in Epworth was chosen for the site because of its central location in the country. During that time, the Society of the Divine Word razed all of the century-old buildings on the



***Did you know?** The name of the building is pronounced Mee-gan, not Meh-gan.*

property – except for Megan Hall. Nearby, today’s main, all-inclusive building that spans the length of two football fields was built and the Society established a four-year, liberal-arts institution of higher learning called Divine Word College.

#### ***CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY***

In 1999, the cupola that rested atop Megan Hall for more than 100 years was removed and donated to the Epworth Historical Society. It was relocated to what is known as the “Epworth Gateway” and currently tops a brick and limestone arched base that prominently features the city’s name. The gateway greets visitors and residents alike as they enter the town from U.S. Highway 20.

#### ***MODERN-DAY MEGAN***

For the past 20 years, Megan Hall has served as an administration building and pre-novitiate housing. After the first four religious sisters enrolled at DWC in 2006, the number of sisters studying at the college jumped to more than 30 within just three years. To accommodate this new group of students, Megan Hall was transformed into a residence for the religious sisters in 2009.

Today, it is home to approximately 40 religious sisters from around the world who are studying here at Divine Word College.



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### ***Who is Megan and why does DWC have a building named after her?***

Actually, Megan Hall isn’t named after a woman at all! The building is named after Fr. Thomas Megan, SVD. This early American Divine Word Missionary was born in Eldora, Iowa. He entered formation with the Society of the Divine Word near Chicago in 1913 and was ordained in 1926.

Fr. Megan was assigned to work in China and was the first American SVD to be made a prefect apostolic. He spent 22 years serving in China and reportedly felt very connected to his ministry there. Fr. Megan organized relief efforts during the 1940s when countless Chinese people suffered and died from severe famine. He returned to the United States in 1947 and worked in Mississippi until his death in 1951.

His extraordinary efforts in China and dedication to the mission made him an influential figure who seminarians have looked up to for generations.

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# Improving the Living Conditions for Divine Word College Sisters

*Megan Hall has been a worthy structure for many years, but now it needs help. With more than 40 religious sisters living in the only original building on campus, the College has identified repairs and updates that the building needs badly.*

*The old outer stucco is falling off and the thin insulation makes it hard to keep the sisters warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Drainage around the building flows to the building instead of away from it, resulting in water leaking into the bottom floor.*



*Sr. Norelly Rodriguez Manosalva, RCS*

Sr. Norelly Rodriguez Manosalva, RCS has been living in Megan Hall for six years and said the dormitory is a blessing to her.

“I am on campus and know it is a safe place to live,” she said. “On the other hand, we have some challenges due to the many years the building has been used by DWC students. It is clean and nice but an old structure. Overall, the building is still fine, but it needs some repairs before serious structural damage occurs. Hopefully, with the generosity of friends and benefactors of DWC, this place will stand for many more years to come and benefit future missionaries who come to study at DWC.”

## ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Stucco is falling away from the building
- The lower window wells fill with water during significant rain events
- Gutters are deteriorating
- Ice dams form on the ground in early spring during freeze and thaw cycles

## Fixing the problems

To help with energy efficiency, all the stucco will be removed, then the entire building will be wrapped with insulation and covered with vinyl siding. To remedy the drainage problem, the immediate area around the building will be landscaped and tiled to make sure rainwater and melting snow flows away from the building. New gutters and downspouts will also be installed to take water away from the building. The last piece of the project is the installation of a backup generator. The generator will ensure the sisters will always have electricity in case of a power outage and protect against frozen pipes in the winter.

After thoroughly considering a number of options, College leaders determined that the outlined course of action will repair or improve the structure in the most cost effective, long-lasting and impactful way possible. The general contractor, Gronen Corporation, assessed the building and reported that overall, Megan Hall is generally in good condition. The structure may be old, but it has been well maintained and shown much love by its residents over the years.





## What Will It Cost?

The total cost for the exterior updates is approximately \$474,000.

Removal, disposal and replacement of exterior — \$150,200

Landscaping and tiling — \$29,400

Wrap, insulation, gutter and siding — \$114,000

Generator — \$98,600

Construction management/contingency/fees — \$81,800

Devoted donors have already given gifts that will help cover about half of the total project cost. We are thankful for their generous spirit and enthusiastic support of the DWC mission.

You can help the sisters have better living conditions, too! *Your donations always make a difference.*



***To contribute to the Megan Hall project, please contact:***

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***Or send your gift to:***

Divine Word College  
PO Box 380  
Epworth IA 52045-0380

***Or make your gift online at:*** [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)

*Undergraduate students at Divine Word College spend their final semester taking courses while also researching, writing and preparing their Capstone Project, which includes a formal presentation. It is unlike anything else they do during their time here.*

# Seniors demonstrate lessons learned



Fr. John Szukalski, SVD

“The Capstone is not intended to be anything like a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, although some students might imagine it so! The Capstone is a much more modest and focused endeavor that allows students to spend an entire semester researching and developing a well-defined topic under the guidance of an experienced faculty member,” he said.

While it is certainly demanding, there is much to be learned from every scenario that pushes a person past the point of comfort and the Capstone is no exception.

“For me, this is the most challenging paper I ever had, because throughout four years of college, this was the longest paper,” said Phuc Hong Truong, who graduated in

Fr. John Szukalski, SVD, Vice President for Academic Affairs, said the Senior Capstone Project is an opportunity for students to integrate their learning through researching and applying knowledge to contemporary relevant issues in their field of interest.

May with a B.A. in Philosophy. “Dr. (Ron) Condon helped me with my grammar, the overall organization of my paper and offered suggestions.”

The topic of his Capstone was Aristotle on Eudaimonia, or “true happiness” to those of us who are not philosophers.

Phuc said researching and organizing his paper was complex and difficult. He struggled at times to find credible philosophy sources and then connect them in a logical and organized way. “I think these projects help students review what they have already learned in school, learn to write longer papers and practice public speaking in order to prepare them for further studies,” Phuc said.

Sr. Hien Nguyen, LHC, used her Capstone Project to research and



Sr. Hien Nguyen, LHC

present on a topic that is of great importance to her congregation back in her home country of Vietnam. It was titled, “A New Approach to Human Formation Program for The Lovers of the Holy Cross of Ba Ria: A Renewal of the Understanding of Self-awareness.”

**During her years of study at DWC, Sr. Hien learned that self-awareness enables an individual to be aware of the people around him or her while showing them respect and appreciation. A quote from Tina Lifford that resonated with her was, “When you know yourself, you are empowered. When you accept yourself, you are invincible.”**





*Phuc Hong Truong*

She selected the topic after discussing her experience at DWC with a superior from her congregation. The undergraduate student was encouraged to explore the aspect of human formation further. Soon it became the spotlight of her congregational plan for 2021-2025 and the subject matter of her Capstone. Sr. Hien said she wanted to do research that could have practical applications for the members of her order. In her research, she explored the ways that women religious can benefit from human formation and personal development.

“Human formation is the foundation for spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation,” she said. “Self-awareness is the first step to personality development and spiritual growth. Self-awareness is important not only for those who are in formation but also for perpetual-vowed members in their ongoing formation.”

During her years of study at DWC, Sr. Hien learned that self-awareness enables an individual to be aware of the people around him or her while showing them respect and appreciation. A quote from Tina Lifford that resonated with her was, “When you know yourself, you are empowered. When you accept yourself, you are invincible.”

Sr. Hien said part of the reason she selected her Capstone Project topic was because she believes it can help religious

sisters in her congregation balance between apostolic works and spiritual life.

“Self-awareness helps them know their weaknesses and strengths so that they can develop their personal identity, a healthy personality and the skills needed to live harmoniously in community,” she said.

The end-of-semester public presentation allows Senior Capstone students to showcase an aspect of their project with the wider campus community.

“My hope is that students appreciate Capstones less as a feared trial by fire and more as a meaningful culmination of their academic career at Divine Word College,” said Fr. John.

Since graduating with her B.A. in Theology and Religious Studies from DWC in December, Sr. Hien has been studying for her certificate in Spiritual Direction and a Master of Arts in Ministry at St. John’s School of Theology and Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota. Once she finishes her studies, she plans to return to Vietnam and help with her congregation’s formation program by serving as a spiritual director. She hopes to apply what she’s learned both intellectually and spiritually to help the sisters in her congregation.

# COLLABORATION KEY TO SUCCESS FOR MISSION IN MOZAMBIQUE

*For the past five years, Fr. Giang Tien Nguyen, SVD and the other Divine Word Missionaries serving in the southern African nation of Mozambique have been working alongside residents in the community to help feed their bodies and nourish their faith. Hoping to create long-lasting, sustained change, the missionary team developed a relief model that includes the people in the community so they can be a part of the solution.*

*Originally from Vietnam, Fr. Giang moved to the United States with his family in 1991 when he was 8 years old. He graduated from Divine Word College in 2006 and professed perpetual vows in 2014. During his formation, Fr. Giang spent three years in Mozambique learning the language and doing pastoral studies. After his ordination in 2015, he moved back to Mozambique for his first missionary assignment.*





### *Stronger together*

Since September, Fr. Giang said Divine Word Missionaries in Mozambique have focused most of their efforts on hunger relief. Farming is the main source of income for people in the village of Liupo where he was working. In the past two years, poor weather conditions crippled crop production, which is devastating since families rely on the food they grow for survival. When crops are destroyed by drought or other natural disasters, there's not enough food like corn, beans and peanuts, to last through the year. There's not even cassava, a popular and cheap starchy root vegetable, for the Macua people. The Divine Word priests, a brother and three Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters look for ways to improve life all around them. Women, especially young mothers, were quick to reach out and ask for a job working on the farm operated by the missionaries. Fr. Giang said the women proved to be dedicated and hard-working. By inviting the local people to join the mission efforts, it allows the missionaries to stretch their aid farther and reach more people. It also teaches the workers valuable skills and gives them a sense of dignity because the assistance is not a hand-out. Many of the mothers join the missionaries in the fields, working the land and preparing it for planting. In return, they earn money or food for their service. Everyone involved benefits.

### *Creative solutions*

The Society of the Divine Word first established a mission in Mozambique in 1911 but it ended due to World War I. The order returned to the country 24 years ago. Missionaries have been trying to find ways to minimize the burden on the community during seasons when food is scarce. One initiative they started is a seed bank. Since the price for planting supplies climbs each year when demand is high, the seed bank ensures that the missionaries and many locals can access affordable seeds when they need



them. They also lend the seeds to those who can't afford them, and ask them to return them at harvest time to maintain the seed bank. The missionaries partner with representatives from Caritas Internationalis in the Diocese of Nacala to get information about where to find the best supplies at the lowest prices. Caritas is a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organizations. By networking, Fr. Giang said they're able to maximize all available resources and ensure that nothing goes to waste. They're also constantly finding ways to preserve local foods, like mangos and fish, so they may be eaten months later. When Divine Word Missionaries have money from donations, Mass stipends and other sources, Fr. Giang said they use it to buy additional food. Then they sell it to residents for a lower price than the markets, which is especially helpful in remote communities far from the main village. Working with others locally and abroad ensures that the missionaries and farmers not only store, spread and plant the seeds to produce food, but they're also constantly spreading and planting the seeds of hope in difficult times together.

### *Accepting limitations*

Sometimes, even despite their best efforts to prepare for all scenarios, Fr. Giang said they find themselves in difficult times. He's learned from the people of Mozambique that it's important to help one another when times get tough. He's also understanding the value of finding a sense of balance in life. "I'm learning to celebrate in the moment," he said. "I'm there with the people. It's not about what I'm giving, what I'm teaching in the homily but the presence of being there with one another. That's

the greatest gift that the people can offer to me. To share the moments together instead of worrying about what needs to be done." Fr. Giang frequently travels with other missionaries to celebrate Mass and teach the Bible to children in communities throughout the region. He hopes that by working with the youth of the community, he can develop future leaders who will share their knowledge, serve as missionary partners and be active in finding their own solutions to the challenges surrounding them. Other recent mission projects include the construction of a small kindergarten in Maputo, installation of two solar pumps in Nampula to bring water to a community run by the Missionary Brothers of Charity and a major seminary, and the development of several small business initiatives that they hope will bring income to the families involved. "Only God knows the impact of our work and whether it will continue to bear the fruits of our efforts," he said.

### *Giving thanks*

When asked what motivates him in his mission work, Fr. Giang said the answer is simple – gratitude. He's thankful to all who help support the mission and his religious vocation. "I look at how much money was invested in me to be formed as a missionary, as a person of the Church, how much the benefactors have invested at the college so I could study there and at the Novitiate and the Theologate," he said. "There are people who made sacrifices and I'm the recipient of those sacrifices. Now I have the opportunity to be that bridge, to be that hand, to be that presence, to be in solidarity with those people." He's also thankful for the lessons he's learned from the people in Mozambique. Even when they face hunger and difficult circumstances, Fr. Giang said they still find joy in life and never give up. "We helped them with seeds for food, and they helped us in spreading the seeds of hope," he said. "It's a win-win for all."

# Reflecting on a life dedicated to mission

Interview conducted and transcribed by Guy Vaccaro, Ph.D.,  
Executive Director of Development, Chicago Province

*Fr. Jim Heiar, SVD lives at the Retirement Residence in Techny, Illinois. Here, he shares his memories about formation, serving in cross-cultural ministries and his work in the Development Office at DWC.*

## Early life

I was born about 30 miles south of Dubuque, Iowa and went to high school nearby in Bellevue. After my sophomore year, I felt a calling, not just to the priesthood or religious life, but in particular to the missionary way of life. Where did that come from? It is hard to say. There was Bro. Wayne Till, SVD and Bro. Larry Kieffer, SVD who were from the Bellevue school ahead of me. They may have had some influence on me.

I found that my high school years went quickly, and it was soon time to make up my mind about going to the seminary. I enjoyed having a partner for the prom my junior and senior year, and I knew there would be no prom in the seminary!

After more reflection and prayer, I decided to seek entrance into the Society of the Divine Word. They directed me to the Society's gentlemen who met with young men considering a vocation. Eventually, I got to see our campus in Techny, Illinois. One of my uncles drove us out from Iowa. I sought entrance and was told to report to Miramar in Massachusetts for college in 1962.

## Formation

When it was time to leave, I came to Techny and picked up the bus, which was taking candidates like myself to Miramar. I recall driving through the state of Indiana. I was feeling very homesick. I thought to myself, well, if I turn around and walk home from here, I could make it in 30 days! Nonetheless, I kept going to Miramar.

It took time to adjust to the East Coast, to the whole group of young men and to the studies at the college level. But I persisted, and got good grades the first semester, so I just kept it up. After two years of college at Miramar, I went to Conesus, New York for a year of Novitiate. That was an entrance into the SVD way of life in the sense of learning prayers, wearing the religious habit, a lot of softball, a lot of gully climbing and a lot of outdoor life when we could manage it.

While in Novitiate, we learned that we would resume college in Epworth, not Miramar. I picked out English and American literature as my preferred majors. Of course, there would be philosophy and theology as well, and some other subjects.



We got off the bus and I was back home again in Iowa. It was a new building at the time. It was nice to be able to get home every once in a while. One of the things I loved to do was to go raccoon hunting. On Friday nights, I would take one of the guys and we'd go for supper somewhere. Then we would join my uncles in hiking around the hills of eastern Iowa. We enjoyed it.

In other months, we would go fishing. I remember one time that the guys had to make a choice. They could either go to Techny and attend an ordination ceremony or stay in Iowa and go fishing. Two of them decided to go fishing. One of them was from Brazil. When it came time to go fishing, we arrived at the river, and he turned around and said to me, "Is this the Mississippi River?" I said, "Yes." He almost kissed the water. He was so thrilled because he had heard all about the Mississippi River when he was back home in Brazil the same way we have heard about the Amazon River here.

After graduating from college, I completed my years of theology at Techny and our new Theologate at Catholic Theological Union on the South Side of Chicago. At the end of Theologate in 1970, I remember going home for vacation. I think I spent 10 days sitting in the lazy chair and looking at the wall and doing nothing else. My brain had been fried! There was no alternative but to let it rest for a while.

Ordination arrived quickly on December 19, 1970. Following that was a period of pastoral care with supervision at St. Elizabeth's Parish on the South Side of Chicago. From there, I went to East Troy, Wisconsin to teach in the seminary for one year.

### *Missionary service*

I had been determined from the outset to serve in the Philippines, but that was preceded by a desire on the part of my superiors to send me to other places. Once you get a theology degree, they are jumping all over you! I was asked to go to the seminary in Papua New Guinea where they needed someone to teach theology. I turned them down and said, "No, I want to go to the Philippines."

Then, about a month before leaving for the Philippines, I was given a chance to walk around the seminary grounds with Fr. John Musinski, SVD, our Superior General. He wanted me to go to Ghana to teach in the regional seminary there. I kept thinking I wanted to go to the Philippines. Besides, I did not have any pastoral experience behind me to warrant my teaching theology with some pastoral sense. I said, "No, Fr. Musinski, I think I'll continue to seek to go to the Philippines, in particular to Divine Word University there." We had a good school there and eight or 10 SVDs were living together. I wanted to start out in that kind of setting.

I was finally given the assignment and when I arrived in the Philippines, I landed on a morning in which a typhoon had just hit the city. There was water everywhere. Trucks and buses were turned over. I took my suit and coat off real fast because it was hot! I had arrived August 17, 1973 and it was good to be in there. That led to 12 years of being in the Philippines teaching theology and literature and so forth.

They were the happiest days of my life.

After the Philippines, I returned to the States and taught at East Troy for another year. Afterwards, I was asked by Bro. Leonard Bauer, SVD to consider coming to Epworth to do development work. I said yes because I wanted to work in some form of communications. I thought that would be a good way to start. I

loved to visit people. I ended up attending a lot of wakes in the area. I wrote up my visits so anybody who would have the position after me would have something to go on.

I started in development at Epworth in 1992 and continued there for 24 years until 2016. Development work is long term. It means getting to know people and getting to know where the resources are. That all takes time.

Actually, I consider myself to still be in development today in the sense of having an interest in what's going on out there, and getting regular updates from Mark Singsank, the Associate Director.



# President's Annual Report

## We needed a new roof



Fr. Tom  
Ascherman, SVD

About two years ago, there was bad news. Bro. Vinh Nguyen SVD, our maintenance director, came to my office to let me know that the main College building really needed a new roof. It could not wait any longer. Needing a new roof is definitely bad news for a homeowner. It is a pricey item, but it can't be ignored.

The roof on Divine Word College is huge! Our building was constructed so that all the different departments are interconnected. There are three residence halls, an administrative block, an academic building, a kitchen, dining room and a sports area. It was like putting a roof on seven buildings all at once! The cost was about \$1 million! To complicate matters even further, the COVID-19 pandemic was just getting underway. I wondered how we would be able to pay for such an investment.

Years ago, when I worked in Mexico I was faced with a similar problem. The church I was serving was in a densely populated, poor barrio (district) on the outskirts of Mexico City. The people had already laid the foundations and built up the walls of the Church with their own hands. It was a big building. Still, there was no roof. That kind of project cannot be handled by weekend volunteer workers, no matter how skilled they might be. The cost for a professional installation was about \$35,000. Our usual weekend collection was only \$500. So, we sold raffle tickets and tacos, held a beauty pageant, and begged for donations in the market. In the end, we had enough for the roof.

The same worry faced us here at Divine Word College. Where could we find enough money for a roof? We held a raffle, we begged for donations from kind and generous benefactors, we even held a golf outing! As you can see in the accompanying financial information, our benefactors came through in a big way, despite the pandemic. Last year, 2020, was amazing. The gifts we received exceeded previous years by more than \$1 million dollars.

The founder of the Society of the Divine Word, St. Arnold Janssen SVD, always insisted, "St. Joseph always sends just as much as we need." I have found that to be true throughout my life as a missionary.

DWC has a new roof now. So, where will we find the money to put new siding on the Megan Hall residence for the religious sisters? I'm sure that St. Joseph will inspire many benefactors to help keep the sisters warm and dry.





# President's Financial Report

## Unwavering support sustains the mission

It's no secret that the past year has been difficult. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have touched all of our lives and caused us to lean on one another like never before.

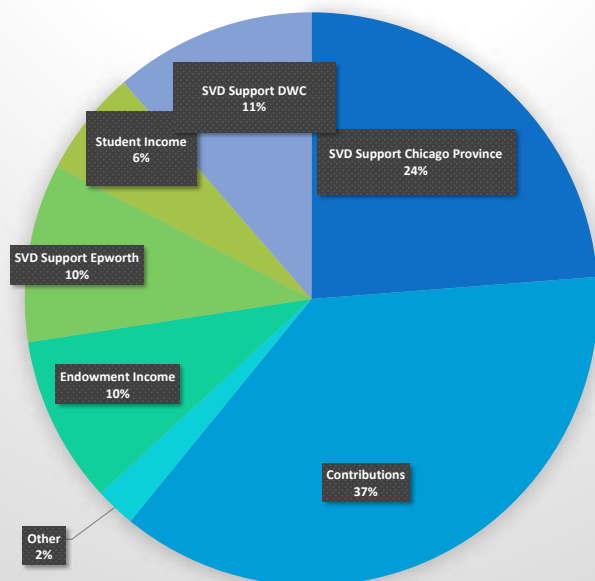
Yet, despite these troubling times, you – our benefactors – have confirmed your belief in our mission through your generous gifts and prayers.

Thank you for your confidence in our ability to educate missionaries for the Catholic Church. We take your support seriously and will continue to journey with our students as they discern their vocation to God and His people.

***You are incredible!***

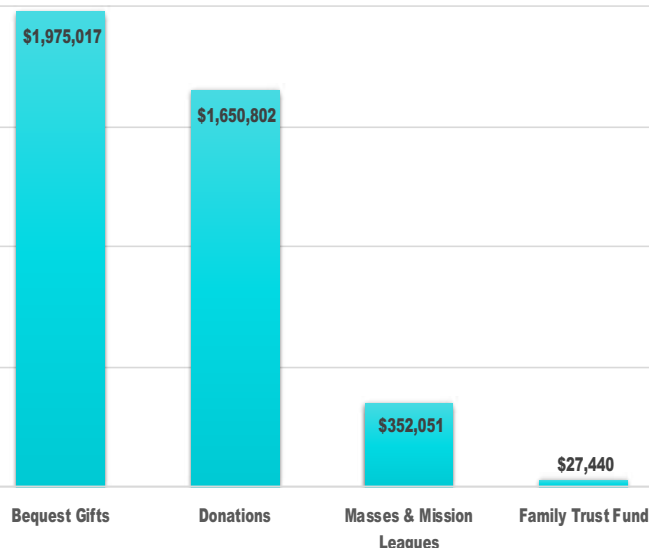
Around here, we like to say that, ***"His mission is our mission."*** We know that the mission would not be possible if not for the outpouring of generosity from benefactors like you. From all of the students, faculty and staff at DWC, we'd like to say **THANK YOU!**

### Divine Word College Income 2020 Fiscal Year



SVD Support Chicago Province	\$2,502,000
Contributions	\$3,905,000
SVD Support DWC	\$1,196,000
Endowment Income	\$992,000
SVD Support Epworth	\$1,059,000
Student Income	\$631,000
Other	\$239,000

### Benefactor Contributions 2020 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 \$1.86 million in scholarship assistance.

*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 2020-2021 academic year.*

*The Divine Word Missionary formation program is designed to guide young men as they discern their call to religious life. Pray that God continues to strengthen the vocation in our seminarians and in all who He has called to religious life.*

# PRAY FOR OUR MEN IN FORMATION

— Growing in community with the Divine Word —



Frt. Ryan Agbim, SVD



Deacon Edoh  
Adolphe Anato, SVD



Mr. John-Edeve  
Augustin



Frt. Betenora  
Bako Liba, SVD



Mr. Junior Jean  
Baptiste



Mr. Berson Bien-Aime



Novice Michelet  
Boncoeur



Mr. Khoa Bui



Mr. Antz-Carly Cadet



Frt. Thinh Cao, SVD



Frt. Christian  
Castro, SVD



Frt. John Cho, SVD



Mr. Jaehyeok Choi



## EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Frt. Cruz Colunga, SVD



Frt. Marc Declama, SVD



Deacon Minh  
Anh Dinh, SVD



Mr. Hoang Do



Mr. Wisno Elie



Mr. Max Darly Emile



Frt. Kodjo Emon, SVD



Frt. Giresse-Mecene  
Etung, SVD



Novice Joubert Felix



Mr. Ladouceur  
Flarissaint



Mr. Peterson Forestal



Frt. Arnold Formbi, SVD



Frt. Carl Gales, SVD



Mr. Omar Gonzalez



Frt. Martin Herrera, SVD



Mr. Wilson Joseph



Novice Wisvel Joseph



Frt. Brian Junkes, SVD



Deacon Akizou  
Kamina, SVD



Frt. Roger  
Kyaw Thu, SVD



Novice Samuel Lollar



Frt. Manie  
Manuel, SVD



Mr. Franciste Mervil



Mr. Cederick Morando

## EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Frt. Joao  
Pinda Neto, SVD



Frt. An Nguyen, SVD



Frt. Derek Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Ha Si Bao Nguyen



Mr. Hoang Nguyen



Frt. Hoang Quang  
Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Hung Nguyen



Mr. Hung Duc Nguyen



Frt. Huy  
Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Long Nguyen



Mr. Nam Nguyen



Mr. Quoc Nguyen



Mr. Truong An Nguyen



Novice Tu Nguyen



Mr. Tuan  
Hoang Nguyen



Bro. Vincent  
Nguyen, SVD



Frt. John  
Kofi Nkum, SVD



Mr. Friday Onoja



Deacon Hai  
Pham, SVD



Frt. Quang  
Ngoc Pham, SVD



Frt. Engelbert  
Salmon, SVD



Deacon Fransiskus  
Santoso, SVD



Frt. Pedro  
Saveia, SVD



Mr. Nay Kaw Sho



## EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Frt. Boromeo Shwe  
Pyi Soe, SVD



Frt. Zachary Smith, SVD



Mr. Khang Tran



Frt. Thong Tran, SVD



Mr. Phuc Truong



Mr. Do Tuang



Mr. Marc  
Anderson Vaval



Frt. Tin Vu, SVD



Mr. Tung Vu



Mr. Vuong Minh Vu



Mr. Duc Vuong



Frt. Andrew  
Wang, SVD



Frt. Jorge  
Zetino, SVD



Novice Baruch  
Zinsou



# Divine Word Missionaries

### Formation Houses:

Divine Word College  
Epworth, Iowa

Divine Word Novitiate  
Techny, Illinois

Divine Word Brother Formation  
Chicago, Illinois

Divine Word Theologate  
Chicago, Illinois

### Contact Us:

800.553.3321

[svdvocations@dwci.edu](mailto:svdvocations@dwci.edu)

[www.svdvocations.org](http://www.svdvocations.org)



# ALUMNA GUIDES STUDENTS ON FAMILIAR PATH

Sr. Anna Trang Mai, IHM recently became the first religious sister to graduate from Divine Word College and return as a member of the seminary's staff. During the spring semester, she served as a formation and spiritual director. Her job was to encourage students to develop their personal prayer as a means of growing in their relationships with God. Luckily for the DWC students, Sr. Anna's personal and professional experiences make her uniquely qualified, since she recently walked the same path.

## *Early life*

Born and raised in Vietnam, Sr. Anna entered the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregation when she started high school. In 2008, she professed perpetual vows. Sr. Anna worked for several years first as a vice-principle and later as a principle at IHM Kindergarten schools. She was passionate about her work with the young students and their families. The job was fulfilling and she felt sure of herself in the role. Then came a request she didn't expect. Her superior asked her to move to the United States and enroll at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa to learn English.

She didn't feel confident enough to accept at first. Sr. Anna says she didn't have a natural ability for languages and didn't have any interest in learning English. Still, her superior persisted. If she agreed, it would mean making a six-year commitment to an education in America without any home visits. "It's like being dropped in the biggest, deepest ocean in the world and not knowing how to swim," she recalls thinking at the time. She prayed about it and consulted a monsignor whom she trusted. He urged her to

go and told her that God would be with her on the journey. Convinced but still hesitant, she recalls her hand shaking as she signed the paperwork to enroll at DWC.

## *Travel*

Before leaving for the United States, Sr. Anna spent 30 minutes learning how to introduce herself in English. Having never flown before, she arrived at the airport with another religious sister who was also flying to the United States. Dressed in their habits, they each wore a small sign that said, "No English. Need help."

They nearly missed their flight from Vietnam to Hong Kong because they didn't know where to go. By the time their second flight from Hong Kong to Los Angeles arrived at its destination, airport officials were aware that two women were arriving without any English skills. Sr. Anna and her travel companion were met by a woman sent by the airport staff to translate and help the sisters fill out necessary paperwork. Sr. Anna recalls the woman chastising her for coming to America without any knowledge of the English



language and telling the sisters they brought shame to all of Vietnam for their ignorance. She was disheartened by the encounter, but knew they had to keep going. Once they arrived in Chicago, Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD, now the rector at DWC, picked them up. Pulling into Epworth for the first time, Sr. Anna said she felt confused by the sights and smells of the rural farming community. Her whole life, she imagined the United States as bustling metropolitan cities with high-rise buildings. The images in front of her challenged everything she thought she knew.

### *New Home*

In no time, home sickness settled in and Sr. Anna says she felt isolated. She couldn't communicate with the people around her. She avoided the dining room because the people at the tables always wanted to strike up a conversation.

During her first day of ESL classes, Sr. Anna listened in confusion as the instructor spoke in English. She sat in her seat with tears streaming silently down her face. When class was dismissed, the instructor approached her and embraced her warmly. She suspects that the instructor asked why she was crying, but she couldn't understand the words. However, the meaning of the hug was clear.

In the coming years, she prayed and studied with faith. She hung a paper on her bedroom wall with words from the Gospel of John 15:15 that often helped lift her spirits and reminded her to trust God, "without me, you can do nothing."

Despite a difficult start, Sr. Anna continued with her studies and finished the ESL program in two years. Then she entered the undergraduate program and in 2015, she graduated with a B.A. in Intercultural Studies and a minor in Theology and Religious Studies.

### *Life after DWC*

After leaving DWC, Sr. Anna moved to Chicago where she earned her master's degree in Spirituality and Spiritual Direction from Loyola University in 2017. Upon graduation, she went to Vietnam for seven months to be with her congregation and visit family. Then she went back to Chicago where she studied religious formation at the Catholic Theological Union.

When her studies were complete in 2019, she went back to Vietnam again. This time she worked in her congregation's novitiate program and later in a parish where she was learning about various ministries when her congregation received a request from Divine Word College. Her alma mater needed a spiritual director and formator.

Fr. John Szukalski, SVD, Vice President for Academic Affairs, says Sr. Anna came to mind when he was considering who may be able to fill the position.

"The solid academic and religious formation at DWC prepares graduates like Sr. Anna to serve as leaders in the Church worldwide as missionary disciples," he said. "In Sr. Anna's case, her studies and formation at DWC built on her personal qualities as a person of prayer, spiritual discernment, and joyful community presence." Sr. Anna trusted God's plan for her and left Vietnam for the United States once again.

### *Home again*

DWC is a place where Sr. Anna grew up in many ways so returning to the college felt like home. Each day during the spring semester, she woke up motivated to guide her formation group of 11 sisters who were each in temporary vows. She often asked herself, what did I need in this situation as a student?

"I really have a special passion for the religious sisters because I feel like I can help them become more mature, free and confident women," Sr. Anna said. Fr. John said Sr. Anna's personal journey helps her relate to students.

"Her initial struggles with English and U.S. culture and ultimate intercultural competence lend her credibility and effectiveness as a spiritual director and formation director," he said.

Throughout her education, Sr. Anna was blessed with the generosity and support of various people and religious congregations. The Society of the Divine Word and DWC benefactors helped make her time at the college possible. After graduation, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubuque, the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart Philadelphia and the New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, Iowa all supported Sr. Anna as she completed her graduate studies. She also learned from each order's charism and spirituality. "I appreciate the benefactors who support this program for religious sisters," she said. "I hope that more religious sisters continue to come here."

Her work at DWC provides Sr. Anna with more experience in spiritual direction, formation and teaching in a professional environment. It's also an opportunity to continue refining her English skills. This fall, she'll begin teaching theology. The instructors who were her teachers just a few years ago are now her colleagues. Sr. Anna said they've welcomed her back with the same warmth she experienced on her first day of ESL classes. She's come to realize that if you trust in God and do your best, all things are possible.

*"Our God is a surprising God," she said. "My returning here was a surprise. We never know His way."*



## READY TO HELP wherever needed

Most Divine Word College students don't have the opportunity to go home to see their families for summer break, Christmas break and other special times of the year, especially those from other countries. Junior Ha Nguyen is from Vietnam and his family – parents, one sister and two brothers – still lives there.

Since he can't go anywhere else, Ha usually stays on campus during the various breaks, but he's never bored. The maintenance staff keeps him busy by letting him help with numerous projects. It's something he loves to do.

"I like to go around fixing things, or any kind of activities that make my body work. I also like to play instruments. Since I came to Divine Word, I have had a lot of chances to try and play many instruments."

While still in high school in Vietnam, Ha was faced with the same decision all high school students face, what should he do after high school. Ha came to a very profound decision for a high school student.

"I was considering what colleges I should go to after I graduated from high school. But, somehow, with many things that happened to me at that time, I felt that going to college, making money and having a wealthy life didn't seem like it would really make me feel happy. I thought being with the poor and helping them in terms of spirituality is more important than anything else. Then with the motivation of the Holy Spirit, I decided to be a missionary."

Since Ha's uncle was a Divine Word Missionary Priest and there is an SVD house near his hometown, joining the Society of the Divine Word was an easy decision.

Ha will graduate in May 2022. He said being at Divine Word College has helped him become a good missionary. He has grown intellectually and spiritually, and learned a lot about intercultural living and service to others.

Ha hopes to one day be a Divine Word Missionary Priest.

"As a sinner, I feel very shy and guilty when I go to confession. Sometimes I feel afraid, too. I think there are a lot of people who have that same feeling. So, I think, as a priest, I can go to them rather than waiting for them to come to confession."





## Monthly donors support DWC students as they discern their call to religious life

They don't remember exactly when they started, but Pat and Shari Curran, from Lansing, Iowa, have been sending Mass intentions and donations to Divine Word College for at least 50 years.

"My mom used to send Mass intentions, so I think that's probably how we knew about Divine Word," said Pat. "I know other older parishioners also sent requests for Masses to Divine Word," mentioned Shari.

The Currans live on a farm between Harpers Ferry and Lansing, Iowa. The farmland has been in Pat's family since the first immigrants came to this region from Ireland in 1848. Pat thinks his mom was sending Mass intentions to Divine Word 70 years ago.

Pat and Shari continue that tradition because they know how badly priests, brothers and sisters are needed around the world.

"I think, knowing the need for priests, and that we are all called to be mission minded, since we ourselves can't go out to a missionary country, this is the best way we have to support missionaries," noted Shari. Not only have the Currans been donors to the college for 50 years, they have also been monthly donors for the past 20 years, because as Shari said, "I think it's important for the college to have a monthly income, not that our donation is that great, but to have an idea what you can budget for. Plus, we always have monthly intentions to pray for."

Even though the Currans have never visited Divine Word College, they feel they know the students and want to continue to help them. "We know there is a shortage of priests and from reading your newsletters and monthly donor letters, the young men who are there are discerning whether or not they want to be a priest or a brother. We think it's important to support them and that's why we support the college."

### Monthly Donor Club members receive:

- Your special intentions remembered at Mass on the last day of each month
- A monthly letter sharing current happenings in the lives of our seminarians
- Your name prominently displayed on the Wall of Honor near the front entrance
  - Convenience of giving in smaller amounts throughout the year
- Opportunity to use Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) option for monthly gifts
  - Fewer appeal letters if you choose

For more information, contact Mark Singsank, Associate Development Director at 563-876-0097 or [singsank@dwci.edu](mailto:singsank@dwci.edu)

# Building Bonds That Last

*“Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together.”*

— President Woodrow T. Wilson



Fr. Thang  
Hoang, SVD

One of the primary objectives of the Divine Word Alumni Association is to provide space and opportunities for the members to build friendships. As president Wilson insightfully said, that's the only way we can build the world. And we all know that it's friendship that makes life joyful and meaningful.

Despite the pandemic restrictions, the Alumni Association has tried to connect members together through a few virtual and in-person events.

## **Scholarship celebration**

The first notable event was the celebration of the Rev. William Shea, SVD Scholarship. After watching the livestream, one alumni member commented that it was almost as if the whole world came together to witness the occasion. Viewers logged on from Brazil, Paraguay, Mozambique, California, Vietnam, the Philippines and more. The event and the scholarship honor a great role model who, through his gentle kindness and dedicated service, has united them all in a beautiful friendship. Furthermore, this scholarship foundation will serve as a way to continue Fr. Shea's legacy and extend that friendship to all who receive the benefits of this endowed fund for generations to come.

## **Staying connected**

In another effort to provide mutual connections, the Alumni Association created a monthly e-newsletter in 2019. This fall, we plan to start a quarterly paper newsletter to reach those who do not use email. We're also excited to share the inauguration of the new Divine Word Alumni Association website, in which members can easily search for fellow alumni, connect with friends, and plan for reunions and gatherings.

As the pandemic restrictions ease, regional alumni groups will soon resume in-person gatherings in the United States and hopefully other countries will follow soon. We also plan to organize regional virtual gatherings to help alumni

reacquaint and reconnect with one another, especially with those who are in other countries, and prepare for the excitement of in-person reunions.

## **New members**

The Alumni Association welcomes its newest members, DWC's 18 graduates and 16 other students who finished their ESL studies this year or decided to take a different route in life. Let us pray that we will each have the strength and courage to reach out and build friendships with others, especially those who are different than us, because the kingdom of God can only be fully realized when all are connected in genuine friendships.

Check out the new  
Divine Word Alumni Association website at  
[www.svdalumni.org](http://www.svdalumni.org)



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD and Fr. Bill Shea, SVD cut the cake at a celebration for a new scholarship named after Fr. Bill.



Let's Celebrate our

# Class

OF 2021

Eighteen men and women graduated from Divine Word College this year. Their hard work, dedication and focus during a time that was anything but ordinary is to be commended.

***Congratulations to each and every one!***



**Mr. Hoang Duy Khanh Do**

Originally from Vietnam, currently residing in California

- B.A. Philosophy and Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I applied to the Society of Divine Word Novitiate. I will spend my summer at an SVD community

in Riverside, California.

- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson is to be a servant and a companion, rather than a “leader” to others.



**Mr. Wisno Elie**

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

- B.A. Intercultural Studies
- Minor in Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will continue my formation with the Divine Word Missionaries as a novice in Techny.

- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* When I first came to DWC, I was impressed by the way the SVD Priests and Brothers live. Coming from a high-context culture, it was a shock for me to see the SVDs collaborating with students during activities and eating with them in the same dining room. The formation program also helped me with personal development and prepared me to serve society in any aspect that might come my way.



**Sr. Hien Thi Nguyen, LHC**

Ba Ria - Vung Tau Province, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Religious Studies
- Minor in Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* Since graduation, I have been continuing my graduate work at St. John's School of Theology and Seminary in Minnesota.

- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?*

The greatest lesson I have learned at DWC is the example of the humble service of the SVD priests and brothers as the image of God's service. I also learned how to live, interact and work in harmony with people within a culturally diverse environment. With self-awareness, I learned to be open with self-honesty to everyone, especially to the spiritual direction that helps me overcome many difficulties and enrich my religious life.



**Mr. Nam Nhat Nguyen**

Sioux City, Iowa

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I will go home to spend some time with my family and continue discerning my vocation.
- *How do you plan to share your faith*

*with others in the future?* I will share my faith with others by continuing to live and work with everyone with a sincere heart every day of my life.

**Mr. Truong An Duc Nguyen**

Originally from Vietnam, currently residing in Seattle, Washington

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to go to novitiate.
- *How has your experience at DWC*

*impacted your faith?* I learned more about the church and her sacraments as essential nourishment for my faith journey.

**Mr. Tuan Hoang-Minh Nguyen**

Originally from Vietnam, currently residing in Dallas, Texas

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* My plan is to spend time with my family during the

summer before going to Techny for the novitiate.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I understand that in order to have the ability to share my faith and turn someone's heart toward Christ, I have to live a godly life, that is, to live my faith faithfully. I must constantly pray for God's guidance as I'm following God's call.

**Sr. Xuyen Thi Nguyen, OP**

Hai Phong, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Religious Studies
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I am pursuing a Master of Arts degree in ministry at St. John's School of Theology and Seminary in Minnesota.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* Studying at DWC has deepened my understanding of God and the Church's mission by exploring new aspects of the Bible, the Church's history, the Church's teaching, psychology and pastoral care. Through that, my faith is nourished and strengthened.

**Mr. Friday Onoja**

Nigeria

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Theology & Religious Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I look forward to beginning my novitiate year in August.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* One of the most important lessons is to love. The vocation journey is a challenging one, but if we don't love what we are called into, there is no way we can become a missionary. And when we do, God's grace will lead us and sustain us in every step of our journey.

**Sr. Hong Thuy Pham, LHC**

Can Tho City, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Religious Studies
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I will continue to study for a master's degree at Boston College.
- *How do you plan to share your faith*

*with others in the future?* I really want to share what I learned at DWC with the sisters in my community and the people I meet in my ministry. I want to show them how God loves them and help them strengthen their faith in God so they can live their lives happily and enjoy it even in the midst of difficulties.

**Sr. Huyen Tran Chau Phan, OCist**

Dong Nai, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Religious Studies
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I will come back to California for my ministry to help some Vietnamese communities

in San Francisco and study more about Spiritual Direction at Mercy Center Burlingame in Burlingame, California.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* I think the DWC community is like drawing a picture of how heaven looks. Indeed, the atmosphere of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, cultures and nations at DWC opened my mind to have a bigger picture of the kingdom of God with acceptance and respect for other people who are different from us. The program provides a basic understanding of our Catholic theology that prepares us for our faith and ministry in the future.

**Sr. Kim Cuc Thi Tran, LHC**

Vietnam

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Theology & Religious Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* Since graduating from Divine Word College

in December, I have been studying at St. John's University in Minnesota.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* For me, Divine Word College was a good environment to live and study. Not only did I get a good education in the field that I need, but my religious life was also cultivated by the strong faith life of each member of the Divine Word College community.





**Sr. Tuyen Thi Thanh Tran, FMI**

Ban Me Thuot, Vietnam

- B.A. Intercultural Studies
- Minor in Theology & Religious Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I have applied to a few master's programs and I am waiting for results. I hope to receive good news and continue my studies. If not, I

will work in my community for a year before going back to Vietnam.

- *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* What I have perceived, especially in DWC, I will assuredly use to serve, love and be a witness for my faith to all people through my encounters in my ministries.



**Mr. Phuc Hong Truong**

Morrow, Georgia

- B.A. Philosophy
- Minor in Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I plan to continue my studies in a different field.

- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* It has helped me to know more about my faith.



**Mr. Duc Minh Vuong**

Vinh Long, Vietnam

- B.A. Intercultural Studies
- Minor in Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to continue discerning my vocation.
- *How has your experience at DWC*

*impacted your faith?* I appreciated all formators who accompanied me on the road of my faith, and other experiences. I could see exemplary lives of prayer and service from our older SVDs.



**Frt. Thinh Quoc Cao, SVD**

Ha Tinh, Vietnam

- A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I will continue to pursue my SVD vocation by studying theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago in the spirit of listening to God's call.

- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* Living in a diverse community could be challenging, however, the experience strongly strengthened my faith as the community gave me a sense of belonging, which raised my awareness that we are all brothers and sisters, all created in the same image of God.



**Frt. Joao Manuel Domingus Pinda Neto, SVD**

Nzeto, Zaire, Angola

- A.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will move on to theological studies at Catholic

Theological Union, which is the next step of my formation.

- *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson I learned at DWC is the sensitivity required to respect cultural differences. I also learned a sense of service, simplicity, cooperation and responsibility from the SVD community.



**Frt. Pedro Francisco Saveia, SVD**

Cazengo, Angola

- A.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will go to Chicago to continue my formation at the Catholic

Theological Union.

- *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* As a missionary and a future priest, I want to announce the good news in the future wherever my congregation sends me. And I will also denounce injustices and work with the marginalized by sharing what I learned during my formation.



**Mr. Tung Cao Vu**

Kien Giang, Vietnam

- A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to go to the SVD Novitiate in Chicago.
- *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* I think serving the

poor is the aspect that impacts me the most.







1. Welcome to the year of the Ox! Students and the SVD Community rang in the Lunar New Year with a colorful and festive gathering.

2. Graduates took one last opportunity to laugh and relax before entering the chapel to attend commencement and receive their diplomas.

3. COVID-19 impacted a lot this year – even Ash Wednesday. The DWC community gathered in two chapels to achieve social distancing and the ashes were sprinkled to eliminate direct contact.





4. The Easter Vigil is considered the pinnacle of the Easter Triduum. From darkness to light, the fire lit in the dark of night reminded the community of God's transforming light and warmth.

5. ESL students recited the famous Wizard of Oz line, "Lions and tigers and bears, oh my," while walking through the hallway in unison during a lesson on rhythm.

6. Talk about giving of yourself! Sr. Norelly Rodriguez Manosalva, RCS was just one of the DWC community members who generously donated at the spring Blood Drive.

7. Graduates and other students preparing to leave DWC got a taste of what it's like to be a member of the Alumni Association at a cookout held by the group during finals week.

8. The African-Caribbean Student Association organized a joyous celebration for the Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was a slave in Sudan before being freed and becoming a religious sister.



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*President's passion for flowers in*

# FULL BLOOM

At the end of a long day filled with many decisions and meetings, DWC President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD likes to retreat to a place of deep spirituality – the garden.

If you've ever noticed the bright, cheerful blooms across the college campus, there's a good chance that Fr. Tom literally had a hand in putting them there.

His lifelong enthusiasm for gardening started at a young age. It was a direct result of growing up with a father who was an agricultural scientist. The late Dr. Robert Ascheman, PhD, spent his career focused on corn and soybeans, while his son delighted in growing beautiful and colorful plants, like tulips. Under the careful guidance of a masterful grower, Fr. Tom developed a gift for gardening and an appreciation for creation.

"I love to take care of the flowers because they remind me of God's beauty and the beauty of God's kingdom that is growing up all around us," Fr. Tom said in his homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the 2021 graduates. He likes to joke that God is the gardener and he just pulls the weeds. Judging by the stunning flowers across campus, Fr. Tom and God make a pretty good team!

