

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.”

- St. Francis

the DWWC

World

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries

Winter 2019



Did You Know?

Our SVD vocation directors literally travel from coast to coast meeting with young men interested in becoming a Divine Word Missionary priest or brother. From California to the Carolinas and from Canada to the Caribbean, last year our vocation directors traveled 126,000 miles...by car.

Add in another 20,000 to 30,000 airline miles, and you can say the guys really get around...but always prayerfully.



Divine Word College

Numbers Jump in January

Enrollment in Divine Word College saw a nice increase in the second semester when 20 new students brought the total enrollment to 125. Len Uhal, vice president for admissions, said the new student number includes eight young men who are interested in becoming a priest or brother in the Society of the Divine Word (SVD).

“I think that is a testament to the hard work of the vocation staff for getting out and visiting more venues,” he said. “We have increased our staff by one, so now we have six full-time vocation directors who are helping young men in their discernment, promoting Divine Word Missionaries and Divine Word College.”

DWC also welcomes referrals by Divine Word Missionaries who are working with the people in parishes and elsewhere.

“Those SVDs are our best referral source,” Uhal said. “When a young man is referred to us by a Divine Word Missionary, almost 25-percent of them have entered formation.”

Some referrals come from SVD provinces in other countries who send their young men to

study in the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI), which coordinates the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at DWC.

“We also get referrals from dioceses and other religious communities that send their members here to learn English, and we have another three lay students who live off-campus and commute daily,” Uhal said. “A strong ESL program that is respected by people in this country and internationally definitely helps our enrollment.”

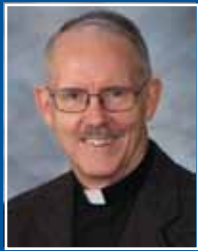
The number of religious sisters who come to study has also increased. The women's dorm at DWC, Megan Hall, is nearly full. By partnering with Dubuque religious sister communities and others, DWC has been able to accept a dozen sisters who commute every day as full time students.

Overall, Uhal says maintaining a consistent enrollment level is a challenge year in and year out. “We’ve seen ups and downs particularly regarding religious vocations and the call to religious life,” Uhal said. “Our job is to accompany young men in discernment whenever we can.”



Len Uhal

A Word from the President:



Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

Students at DWC learn to do many things in the course of their studies. Many learn to speak English, others Spanish. Some study philosophy or theology; others study different cultures. But these are not the most important things young missionaries need to know.

The most important thing is to know how to BE WITH others and to love them.

At the beginning of each semester, I remind students that Jesus knew how to befriend everyone. His love for all humanity, each and every one of us, is more important than any miracle. He showed his love for people who were different from him—prostitutes, tax collectors, foreigners. He loved religious leaders and his own disciples, though they often misunderstood him.

Jesus knew how to be with people and to love them. He loved us all, and gave up his life for us.

If you ever met someone like Bro. Wayne Till, SVD, you can understand how important it is to BE WITH someone. Wayne could do many things, but he was especially talented at knowing how to give his love away to the people he was with.

Fr. Tom

He Did Small Things with Great Love

He had a gift for giving in the small ways that touch your heart, bring a smile to your face or make your job easier. His ministry was of small, everyday things—running an errand, fixing a machine, changing a watch battery, making a new staff member feel welcome, brushing snow off cars, helping ESL students with their English, showing them how to count change, writing a sympathy note to a friend or benefactor—so many missionary acts of kindness.

Brother Wayne Till, SVD, 85, retired missionary and beloved member of the Divine Word College community, died February 8, at Techny, Illinois. The memory of his kindness brought the Divine Word College community, friends and family to the Main Chapel for his funeral Mass on February 16.

“He was like a father or grandfather or brother, he was always joking around,” said Peggy Kass, a member of the kitchen staff. “If you were having a bad day, he could feel that, he was so easy to talk to. He will be missed.”

Born Nov. 19, 1933 on a farm near Bellevue, Iowa, Bro. Wayne graduated from St. Joseph High School in 1951 and entered the SVD’s seminary at Techny, Illinois. Professing perpetual vows in 1960, he was assigned to Australia, where he worked on SVD dairy farms. Always good with his hands, a decade later he trained in mechanics and traveled to Papua New Guinea, where he served the people by keeping their fishing boats, motorcycles and chainsaws working. He went on to serve a variety of missionary roles until 1998 when he returned to the U.S. and joined the development office staff at DWC.

Diagnosed with a terminal illness last year, Bro. Wayne moved to Techny in October. He lies at rest in St. Mary’s Cemetery at Techny.

Sr. Huyen Tran Phan, OCist, a junior in the Philosophy and Religious Studies program, developed a close friendship with Bro. Wayne since her first year at DWC when she was learning English. “I’m still crying because I still feel my loss of him,” she said. “But I am really happy for him because he is happy in God’s arms now.”



This photo from the 2013 Sacred Heart Calendar shows Bro. Wayne with Sr. Sara Juarez Guardado, SSpS, one of many ESL students he enjoyed tutoring at Divine Word College.



Bro. Wayne Till, SVD

Your Support is a Blessing that Lasts for Years



*Guy Vaccaro, Ph.D.
Executive Director
of Development*

Elden Pullin didn't know what he would do without the food pantry at St. Thomas parish.

Organized by its pastor, Father Thien Duc Nguyen, SVD—a graduate of Divine Word College—it is a blessing in the lives of Catholics and non-Catholics alike in Gassaway, West Virginia. Twenty percent of the people in their county live below the federal poverty level. There is a lot of hunger.

One of the best parts of my job as the new executive director of development for the Chicago Province is spending time with Divine Word Missionaries, like Fr. Thien. I get to look over their shoulders as they minister to those in need, like Elden.

The St. Thomas food pantry is open every Thursday. On this day Elden stood in a long line with Elizabeth, one of his three grandchildren. It's been a hard day. His daughter—Elizabeth's mother—was in a head on collision. By the Grace of God she walked away, but the sudden loss of transportation and all the problems that go with such an accident just added to their daily burden of making ends meet.

Finally arriving at the head of the line, parish volunteers filled a large container with food for Elden while Fr. Thien handed Elizabeth a backpack of school supplies and let her choose a donated toy to take home. The little girl couldn't contain her delight, but for her proud, fifty-something grandfather, you could just sense the relief and gratitude. It was a blessing.

In moments like these I see the lasting impact—these blessings—created through your support for Divine Word

College, where Fr. Thien and so many like him come to study. Your support provides them with spiritual growth and religious formation. It gives them a place to learn how to connect and minister to those in need. How many lives have each of them touched because of the blessing of your support?

Another of my favorite tasks is reaching out to donors like you throughout the province. They have stories to tell and they support Divine Word College and the SVD for many reasons. One said it was because the society was the first religious order to operate a seminary for men of color. Another said simply that it made her happy knowing she is helping young men become priests.

Still others are alumni or had family members who attended Divine Word College. Not all who enroll move on to vows, but many, many go on to lead lives profoundly affected by the spiritual and formational experiences they had with the SVD at DWC. They are committed to ensuring our formation and missionary work continues.

That kind of commitment is a great testament to the lasting value of the education and formation that is carried on today at Divine Word College. Thank you for all that you do to make that possible!



*Father Thien Duc Nguyen, SVD
with Elden Pullin and his grand-
daughter Elizabeth, outside the St.
Thomas Food Pantry, in Gassaway,
West Virginia.*



DWC Photo Gallery

Things got scary on Halloween 2018 when two fiercely loyal—sometimes adversarial—pro-football fans pulled a switcheroo. Fr. Tom Ascherman (l)—a staunch Minnesota Vikings fan—swapped caps with equally rabid Green Bay Packers fan, Fr. Ken Anich, SVD. They even wore the other team's colors to underscore the ruse. It wasn't a bet gone bad, it was just Halloween. Oddly enough, despite their costumes, people still recognized them.



Vocation Director Fr. Adam MacDonald, SVD, welcomes a group of area youth at DWC's first Altar Server Retreat and Recognition Day, on November 10. About 20 area servers got a pat on the back for their willingness to support their parishes, while hearing how their volunteerism can lead to a sense of mission the rest of their lives. After lunch, they hit the DWC pool and wrapped up with Mass, where Fr. Adam challenged them to continue looking for ways to serve others.

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The celebration of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass opened with an eruption of color on Saturday, December 8, as students, faculty, staff and SVDs entered carrying the flags of 40 countries, reflecting the multi-national community at Divine Word College. The sheer number of flags helps to emphasize the welcoming nature of DWC and the SVD to those of other countries and cultures.



When incoming freshman Sam Lollar (r) arrived in January, he had senior Wisvel Joseph (l) to show him around and answer his questions. Wisvel is his mentor, one of our experienced students assigned to be like a big brother or sister to an incoming student like Sam. The first days and weeks for a new student can be stressful—especially if they are learning English. Mentors are assigned based on a number of factors, all to help new students adjust to DWC as easily as possible.

Welcome to Our Saints of Perpetual Snow and Ice Seminary! The statues of Saint Arnold Janssen (r) and Saint Joseph Freinademetz, SVD, were shrouded with snow on a cold, clear day in January...one of a continuous string of such days this winter. Heavy snows, high winds, freezing rain, fog—you name it, we got it and it raised havoc with class schedules and put teachers and staff under pressure just to get to work. But spring is right around the corner...let us pray.



Spanning a section of wall behind the podium in the DWC dining room are six, brilliantly colored, stained-glass panels, which tell a story of individual faith and SVD spirituality. Father Toan Vu, SVD, a graduate of DWC now on mission in Ecuador, designed the panels when he was a novice at Techny in 2000.

More traditional stained glass had filled the wall recesses when the college decided to replace them, so the call went out to the wider SVD community to come up with a new design. Novices at Techny are encouraged to explore their creativity as they discern their path to religious life, and this project appealed to the young novice Toan.

“I read books about the SVD,” Fr. Toan said. “I also recalled what I had learned at the college about SVD charism and mission, the mission of the Church, about society, and I put a little bit of everything together in my mind.”

Of the six panels he designed, two relate to personal struggle and faith. They bracket four panels that connect to SVD spirituality.

“This is a story, not just for any missionary, but for any lay person, for religious priests, brothers or sisters,” Fr. Toan said. “I was thinking about everybody.”



Fr. Toan Vu, SVD

Stained Glass Storyline



The first panel, “*Challenges*,” depicts a boat in turbulent waters. Some see it relating to the story of Noah, but in fact, it is about the challenges we face in life—individually or in a wider sense, the church or society.



The second panel, “*Passing Over to Other Cultures*,” depicts the world as a circle filled with colorful and connected pieces, representing its many cultures. It relates to the SVD concept of humbly reaching out—“passing over”—to dialogue with other cultures.

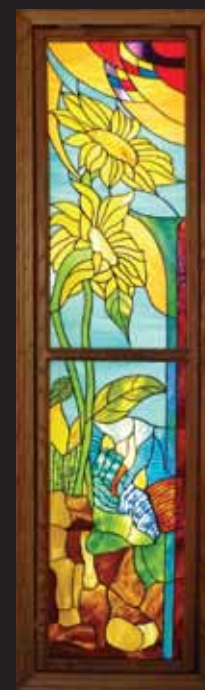


The third and fourth panels, “*Passing Over to Other Religions*,” celebrates the same SVD concept of reaching out, in this case to other faiths, represented by various symbols.

Based on Fr. Toan’s designs, Bro. Ray Albers, SVD, created the six stained-glass panels in his workshop at East Troy, Wisconsin.



The fifth panel, “*Passing Over to the Poor*,” shows a dipper pouring soup into a bowl, which tilts to flow into another bowl. It symbolizes helping the poor, who return the blessing because Jesus identified with the poor, so by helping the poor, we experience his presence.



The sixth panel, “*Humble Openness*,” shows a sunflower blossom upturned and facing a multicolored sun. The sunflower represents each of us and our need to turn our face to God.

Daily Doses of Hope

Dispensing hope may be the most important ministry for pastors of inner city parishes. Father Bob Kelly, SVD, former rector at Divine Word College, grew up on the south side of Chicago, studied at Loyola University and found out about the SVD while student teaching at St. Anselm's, a south side parish of the Chicago Archdiocese.

The SVD has assigned priests and brothers there since the 1930s. A year after graduating, he entered SVD formation and worked at St. Anselm's as a seminarian. That was 1979. Nearly 40 years later, Fr. Bob returned to the parish and is now pastor there along with nearby St. Elizabeth's.

"We have two aging communities of faith, which struggle on a monthly basis to make ends meet," he said. "And violence surrounds us on a regular basis."

Gangs and drugs are a root cause, fueled by poverty made worse by the lack of jobs and investment. Regentrification, where old apartments are restored or torn down and replaced by new ones, drives up costs and taxes. The former St. Anselm's school is being rented as a public school system charter school while the former St. Elizabeth school building is now a job training center.



Fr. Bob Kelly, SVD, baptizing at St. Anselm's parish in Chicago

On the upside, rent from the charter school provides funds for St. Anselm's, which has opened an after school program and a food pantry at St. Elizabeth's helps to fight hunger in the local neighborhoods. There are daily Masses at St. Anselm's and one on Sunday at both parishes. Both parishes collaborate with the archdiocese, other clergy and the police to find ways to reduce violence. But it is a day-to-day struggle for the people.

"I truly believe this is where I have been called to serve," Fr. Bob said. "For me, the important thing is to serve the people in any way I can, listening to their stories, empowering them and giving them hope, daily doses of hope."

Life Among the Rag Pickers



Father Francis Rayappan, SVD

Father Francis Rayappan, SVD, is a vocation director meeting with young men in the U.S. who are interested in religious life with the SVD.

But before he was ordained in his native India, Fr. Francis lived for one year among the desperately poor "rag pickers" of Bhopal, who eke out an existence picking through roadside garbage for anything of value. What little they make goes to buy drugs and just enough food and drink to survive. Living in slums, their stone or brick, rubble-walled huts are covered by leaky roofs of wooden boards and plastic bags. A 10' x 10' dirt-floor hut may be home to six people. Fr. Francis lived among them while he was a seminarian.

"I chose to go to that place because I wanted to experience the life of a rag picker," Fr. Francis said. Their day begins around 4 a.m. when they take containers to a site where a government truck brings water. Allowed only as much as a person can carry, the supply needs to last all day for drinking, washing and cooking. Then each person gets a bag and heads to roadsides where people toss out their garbage.

Beer and alcohol bottles, newspapers, food wrappers, plastic bags, steel, iron or aluminum, anything of value is turned in for money, perhaps \$5 per day.

Fr. Francis worked in an SVD program which asked homeowners to hold onto their trash and allow the rag pickers to pick it up, at minimal cost. The money is placed in individual bank accounts for these poor to use for medical help or other emergencies. The SVDs also organized self-help groups among the rag pickers to educate their children, to encourage better hygiene and to show how to save money. As a vocation director, Fr. Francis shares such stories, a testimony of what it means to be a disciple of Christ in service to the poor.



Alumni Association Reorganizes



Father Thang Hoang, SVD

The Divine Word Alumni Association is reorganizing and tapping into social media to connect with alumni of SVD education in much of North America.

Father Thang Hoang, SVD, rector of the Divine Word College SVD community, is the new director of the association, which is now on Facebook and launching a major initiative—reorganizing the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean into regions and recruiting alums to be regional coordinators.

“Each region will have two to three coordinators to handle communication with alumni and help plan events, while continuing to connect with other alums,” Fr. Thang said. “If you are willing to be a regional coordinator, please email us.”

In 2016, the decision was made to move the association to DWC to take advantage of staffing and other support. Mike Cousins, who was based in Detroit and assisted by his wife Kathy, is retiring as alumni director after eleven years. He said the work of connecting with alums and reuniting old friends had been more a ministry than a job.

“I am thankful that the Society encouraged and gave me a free hand in moving the association forward,” he said. “I am glad to see that we are moving forward once again using the newer resources that are available.”

“Under Mike's outstanding leadership, the alumni association has grown significantly,” said Father Tom Ascheman, SVD, president of DWC and former provincial of the Chicago Province. “We offer him sincere thanks and best wishes in the coming years.”

To find out more about the Divine Word Alumni Association:

Call: 563-876-3353 x385

Email: alumni@uscsvd.org

Go to: www.svdalumni.org

On Facebook:

@DivineWordAlumniAssociation



Alumni Focus: Dr. Richard Mani



Dr. Richard Mani

A pioneer of medical procedures now accepted as commonplace, Dr. Richard Mani spent six of his early years in SVD education and formation. Now retired, he is devoted to his faith—he spends an hour each day before the Blessed Sacrament—while supporting Catholic schools, the SVD and Divine Word College.

“Besides the influence of my parents, everything that I am in many ways, I owe the Society of the Divine Word,” he said. “It has instilled in me gifts that have lasted a lifetime.”

Mani was born in 1930 near Pittsburgh, the eldest son of faith-filled and generous Italian immigrant parents, whose talents always kept them employed during the depression. In 1944, he entered the minor seminary at Girard, Pennsylvania and, except for one year, continued with the SVD until the “juniorate” at Epworth, where in 1951, he decided on a secular life. But during those years, the SVD revealed to him the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Sacrament, the liturgy and Our Lord Jesus. He learned how to appreciate the beauty of classical music and

the arts. He also learned how to deal with daunting academic challenges—lessons that served him well in medical school.

He went on to specialize in diagnostic radiology and serve six years in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. In 1966, he earned a fellowship at the University of California San Francisco in the budding field of neuroradiology where he helped pioneer procedures like angiograms and angioplasty. Retiring in 2004, he now creates religious mosaics in glass, ceramics and marble, 280 of which are in classrooms of San Francisco area Catholic schools. Two are at Divine Word College. In these and many other ways, Mani is giving back with a generosity whose roots stretch back 60 years.



This beautiful mosaic by Dr. Mani hangs inside the main entrance of DWC.

“The example that was set by the priests, brothers and nuns that I had contact with was of constant giving,” he said. “You can’t spend time with people who do nothing but give and not have it influence you.”



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email info@dwci.edu, or visit: www.dwci.edu

Baruch Gives Thanks



Baruch Zinthe
Maoudjlo Zinsou

As a former school teacher, I know that quality education is very expensive. Thank you for supporting Divine Word College. In that way, you are making my education possible. From DWC, I receive more than I expected. I cannot mention all here, but allow me to talk about some of those benefits.

I am Baruch Zinthe Maoudjlo Zinsou, from Benin, in west Africa. I am now an SVD candidate at Divine Word College. In April 2016, I was

waiting for my letter of admission to the SVD novitiate in Ghana when my provincial informed me that I would be continuing my formation in the United States. I was speechless. I was a loyal Francophile and my English was awful. I was not excited to come to DWC, where I would have to learn English.

However, with fear, yet with faith in the accomplishment of God's will in my life, I obeyed my former provincial and

entered the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at DWC in August 2016.

Having the opportunity to learn English is an immeasurable gift I received at DWC. Now I can interact with people in English; I have no language barrier. After successfully passing the ESL program a year ago, I started on a degree in Intercultural Studies in August 2018.

I am also blessed to share my days with people from many countries. I do not just learn about cultures, I experience them. I am not an anthropologist; I am a citizen of the world. I also benefit from DWC's formation program, which has five aspects—human, spiritual, intellectual, cross-cultural community, and missionary ministry—to help me become a true follower of Jesus. So, I would like to thank all of you, DWC's silent yet active partners, for your daily sacrifice, your perpetual support, and your incalculable generosity. You give me the opportunity to prepare to be a good missionary wherever I go in the world.

May God bless you!