

Your Support is a Blessing that Lasts for Years



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

