



Mission work in the U.S.

Divine Word Missionaries are serving in 79 countries around the world. Did you know that the United States is one of them?

A long history

While it may seem strange to think of American ministries as traditional missionary work, the truth is that the U.S. has been an important missionary destination since the first SVDs arrived in the country in the late 1800s. The goal of the congregation is to serve the poor, marginalized, underserved and vulnerable. Those groups exist in America just like they do in other countries. Since the early 1900s, the SVD sought to evangelize among the black community. In 1934, Divine Word Missionaries ordained the first four African American priests to complete their entire formation at a U.S. seminary. They served at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Lafayette, Louisiana, a church that continues to have a strong connection to the religious order today.

An enduring service

The Divine Word Missionaries who work in American parishes often serve in diverse communities. SVD priests and brothers have broad language skills, formal intercultural



Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD with a parishioner at Sacred Heart Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

education and worldly experiences that make them a good fit in parishes that can be challenging for other priests. Today, more than 10 languages are spoken in the parishes where SVDs are serving throughout the Chicago Province! It's not easy for anyone to serve the pastoral needs of such diverse faith communities, but Divine Word Missionaries are able to lend their unique skillsets to provide a global perspective. Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD, recently joined the Divine Word College staff as the spiritual life coordinator. Originally from Vietnam, he graduated from DWC in 1999 and was ordained in 2007. He's spent the majority of the past 15 years working in parish ministry here in the United States. Most recently, he served as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Memphis, Tennessee, for just over 10 years. With a diverse parish community, the church offers Masses in English, Vietnamese and Spanish. Fr. Simon is fluent in all three languages.

He says ministering effectively in a parish like Sacred Heart requires more than just basic communication skills. Parishioners need a pastor who helps them embrace and celebrate the unique aspects of their cultures. In some cases, it also requires an understanding of how to work with immigrants, people living in poverty and those who are outcast by society. "Most Divine Word Missionaries are able to do these ministries because we have our congregation behind us and the training we received during formation years," Fr. Simon said. "Sacred Heart is an inner-city church, so we ministered not only to various cultural and immigrant groups, but also the homeless in the area." Some SVDs in the U.S. serve in roles outside of parishes. They are counselors, hospital chaplains, educators, and more. No matter what their role or where they serve, the common mission of service to God's people unites them all.

Divine Word College recently installed a 250 kW diesel generator designed to provide emergency power to the school's main building in the event of a major power loss. A smaller 20 kW generator was also installed at the nearby women's dormitory known as Megan Hall. Both generators were expected to be operational by mid-February. "We are relieved to know that we can continue operations no matter what Mother Nature throws at us," said Vice President of Operations Steve Winger. The total cost for the two generators, labor and the contractor's management fee was \$205,000. These purchases were made possible thanks to the generous donations of benefactors like you – *thank you for your continued support of Divine Word College!*



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