

the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



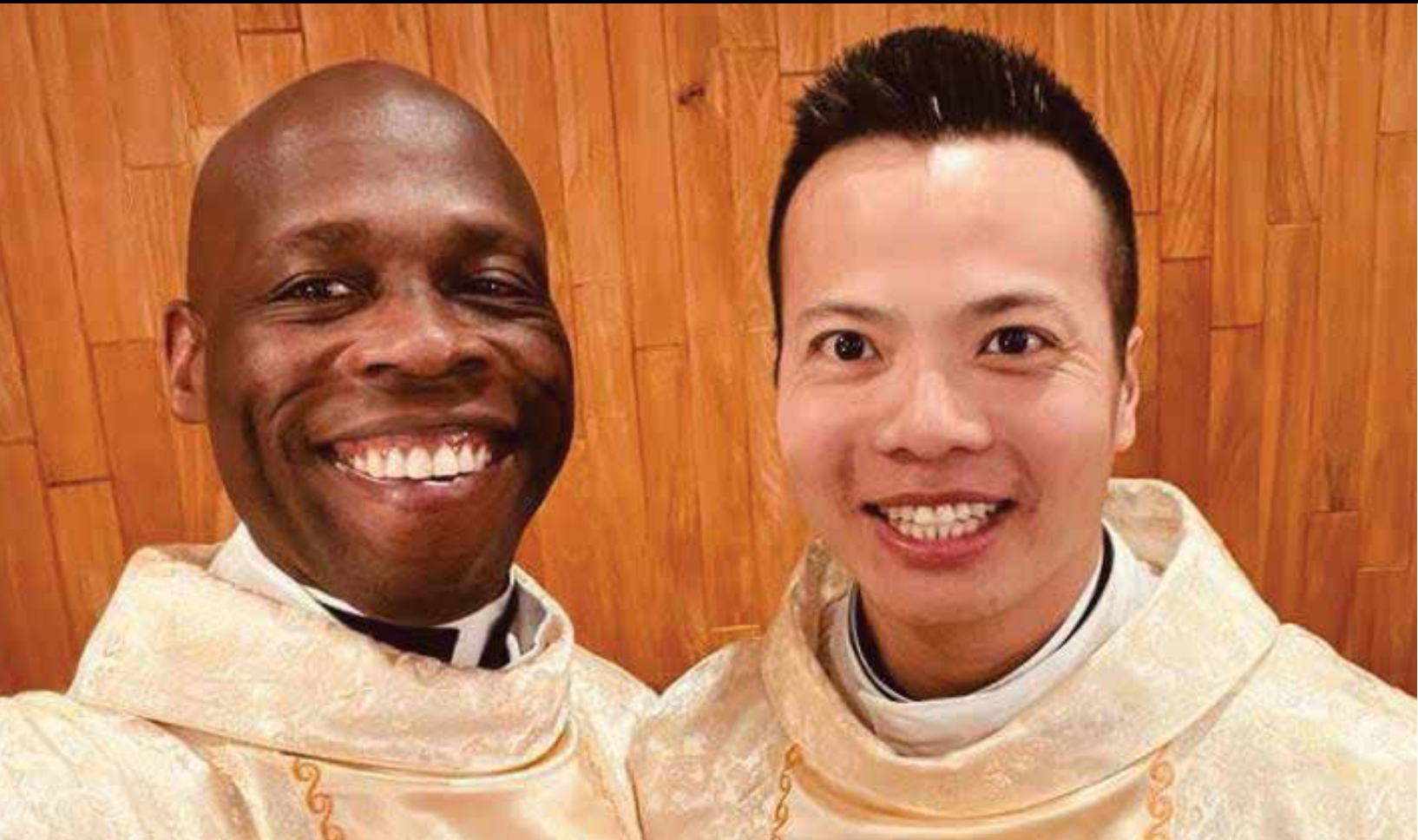
WHAT'S INSIDE



SVD Formation
Weekend

*A few years ago, these men were studying at Divine Word College
and discerning their calls to religious life.*

This May, they were ordained as Divine Word Missionary Priests.



You can help someone recognize a call to religious life!

Pray for vocations.

Tell a young person why you think he or she might make a good priest, brother, deacon or sister.

Invite young people to join the choir, become a lector, Eucharistic Minister, be on parish council or other parish groups/organizations.

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.

Invite young people to get involved in service and encourage them to volunteer at their parish.

Plan a mission trip for young people.

Learn more at www.sdvocations.org
Contact National Vocation Director Len Uhal

800-553-3321

sdvocations@dwci.edu

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Cover photo of DWC student Vuong Minh Vu receiving Communion at the first SVD Formation Weekend.



DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

*You make it possible for all
of them to be successful!*
From St. Patrick's Church in

Epworth, Iowa to the streets of Jakarta, Indonesia, 10,000 miles from here, and many places in between, Divine Word College students and Divine Word alumni share God's Word and help people in need.

In this edition of our summer newsletter, we share stories about the ministries of our current students in the Epworth area, alumni who are working in other parts of the world, and a Divine Word Missionary who is enjoying retirement after working for many years. You will also learn the process for a young man to become a Divine Word Missionary Priest or Brother. It can take many years from the first day he walks into Divine Word College until he is ordained a priest or takes final vows as a brother. But, the commitment to reach that goal is very strong.

Our 15 graduates featured in the newsletter are beginning the next step on their journey of service. Some will continue with their education and some will begin a new ministry. All of them have been and will continue to be successful, because of your help. Just as our students are committed to their education and ministry, you are committed to helping them. Ron and Pat Schueller have been helping Divine Word students for more than 30 years. They also share their story in this issue. In the middle of the newsletter you will find the President's Annual Report. You once again inspired us with your generosity during the last fiscal year. Divine Word College would not be here without your help.

We are truly grateful for your generosity and belief in our mission. It's because of you, Divine Word students are able to fulfill their dreams of ministering as Catholic priests, brothers and sisters throughout the world. Thank you very much for all you do for our students. May God bless you always.

Mark Singsank

Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

My name is Truong Minh Nhlen, and I'm a Divine Word Missionary Priest serving in Ecuador. I am originally from Vietnam.

I started my studies at Divine Word College in Epworth in 2006 and continued my formation with the Society of the Divine Word after that.

On May 25, 2013, I was ordained at Techny Towers in Chicago.

Ministering To Venezuelan Immigrants

Here in Ecuador, the year 2020 started with sadness and confusion as a result of the suffering and loss of human life caused by COVID-19. Many faithful people were fearful at that time, causing pastoral activities in the parish to wane. There was also an order in place that made churches close for a period of time and curfews were implemented at all religious and social activities.

I received a call from my superior asking if I would accept a mission serving at a new parish in Huaquillas, a district that borders Peru at the southern end of the Ecuadorian coast near the Pacific Ocean. There are approximately 47,706 residents in this diverse community that is made up primarily of black, mixed-race (mestizo), and indigenous people. This frontier mission is quite an adventure for a missionary like me!

On January 28, 2021, Bishop Ángel Sánchez installed me as the pastor of the María Madre de la Iglesia parish, which belongs to the Diocese of Machala in the province of El Oro. In 2018, the Montfort Missionaries celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of the parish. They continued to serve here until I arrived as the new pastor from the Society of the Divine Word in January 2021. Very early in my new mission, I observed the emerging migratory transit of the Venezuelan population in Huaquillas. This group was essentially paralyzed due to the closure of the border and the militarization by the Peruvian government. Venezuelan immigrants whose migratory plan was to move to Chile and Peru found themselves unable to continue their migratory journey for various reasons. So they settled in border cities, such as Huaquillas, searching for food, shelter and healthcare, especially those in the most vulnerable populations. As a result, there's a need to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to homeless immigrants and make their immigration journey safer and more dignified.

On May 5, 2021, I presented a project to provide care and services to immigrants in transit on the southern border in Huaquillas, Ecuador. As soon as the Society of the Divine Word approved the concept, we got to work. We installed a kitchen, built another floor for more space, added a wall with new paint and set up more tents for a waiting area where we could receive incoming immigrants. We prepared tables, chairs, shelves, pots, pans, a refrigerator and a freezer. We changed the water pump, installed a security camera system and prepared the items necessary for a community kitchen. We also formed two teams of volunteers to serve the kitchen. Each team has 10 volunteers: four cooks, two waiters, two who go out

in the community to invite the immigrants to the kitchen and two who clean.

In our soup kitchen, we provide hot dishes and basic services so the immigrants can recover from their lack of main meals, rest a bit and continue with their transit. In the morning, the volunteers come to the soup kitchen at 8 a.m. to clean, set up tables and prepare food to cook and serve. At 9 a.m., two volunteers meet the immigrants on the streets or in the parks to get to know them and to invite them to come to our kitchen. The cooks start preparing hot dishes, such as rice, chicken, meat, noodles or salad. The immigrants arrive and sit in front of the door to listen to a welcome message and a thought for the day. Tickets are then presented in order to sit at the table to be served with a hot plate and a cup of coffee. At this time, we also approach the table to talk with them. If they need to see a psychologist, volunteers from the Jesuit Refugee Service are there to accompany them. While they eat, volunteers prepare clothes that are donated by the faithful of the parish and offer them to the immigrants when they are finished. In addition, children are given diapers. Before the immigrants leave, our volunteers give them a cheeseburger and bottle of water that serves as a travel kit for the next part of their journey. Serving our Venezuelan immigrants in Huaquillas is a new mission in the Diocese of Machala, and also a pioneering SVD mission in Ecuador.

This ministry gives us the opportunity to love and serve our brothers and sisters. We are all very willing to serve as a team with great enthusiasm and joy. We all serve with love and charity, giving testimonies of God's love to others. It also gives us the feeling that we are not only listening to the Word of God, but that we are putting it into practice, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Our simple joy is to see the immigrants who often show their appreciation for our services and enjoy the hot meal, since they miss that comfort so much while they're in transit. They are especially satisfied when they get the opportunity to take a cold shower.

Perhaps our biggest concern is that we can help them by providing food to fill their empty stomachs, we can offer them a space to talk about their suffering and we can listen to their psychological or spiritual problems, but that's not always enough. Many immigrants arrive with health problems that we cannot afford to help them with because the medications and doctor visits are expensive. We considered trying to organize a voluntary medical team who could check their physical health and try to cure problems like headaches or pains in their legs and feet from walking for days and nights. We also encountered drug addicts who may need a recovery center. For now, we simply give thanks for the services that we can offer to these immigrants seeking safety for their families and do our best to provide for them with the means that we have.





Omar Gonzalez tutors a Spanish-speaking immigrant who is preparing for his citizenship test at the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque

A PRACTICAL PURPOSE

Students gain hands-on experience while serving the community

The lessons taught within the walls of the classrooms at DWC are carefully planned, delivered and evaluated. They're crafted to fit a particular curriculum and meet the outcomes of the academic programs.

Still, nothing compares to the opportunity to put these lessons into action through practical experiences. A ministry practicum affords participating students the opportunity to serve the surrounding community and work directly with people in need while also sharpening the skills they'll need for a lifetime of service.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, most off-site ministry work was halted for more than a year. This academic year, most efforts came back online.

"The practical experience of ministry outside the college is an essential part of the education and formation of our

students," said ministry coordinator Fr. Raymond Akumbilim, SVD.

In pastoral care class, students learn about the virtues they'll need for ministry. They explore the importance of patience, compassion, prudence, wisdom and respect for boundaries.

"It is only in the practice of ministry that these virtues are developed and tested," Fr. Raymond said. "You can know all about compassion, but if one is not exposed to a situation that demands one's compassionate response, then one may never actually develop this virtue. We therefore, believe our ministry practicum provides our students this unique opportunity to grow in their vocation and ministry." The college offers students a variety of service opportunities. They connect with residents at local nursing homes, volunteer their skills to area religious communities,

offer language support to immigrants and serve food to people in need. For some, this is their first real experience of practical ministerial engagement. For others, it builds on the experiences they already have from previous ministry assignments.

For the past year, Sr. Nhiem Thi Nguyen, LHC, offered her time on Fridays at the Epworth Community Meal. Each week, she and four other DWC students work alongside local volunteers to prepare and serve more than 150 meals. The food is distributed on site, delivered to the homebound and also available for carry-out.

“Doing this ministry for a year, I have learned how to value food and share time with others. Moreover, I admire other volunteers who give time and energy joyfully to continue this ministry,” she said.

Peterson Forestal is part of group of students that visits a nearby nursing home regularly to help facilitate activities like bowling and bingo with the residents. Each week, the DWC students play games, interact and pray with the men and women who live at Accura Health Care in Cascade, Iowa.

“It is not only my presence that brings joy and support to the residents but seeing them brings a lot of joy to me, too. When I interact with them, it almost appears like they

do not have any suffering or handicaps,” he said. “Doing this ministry in Cascade has taught me to be patient, and to be humble when it comes to serving the marginalized, the poor, and the sick.” Each week, students reflect on their experiences and at the end of the semester, the group gathers to share what they’ve learned. For some students, the ministry practicum helps them discern and clarify their religious vocation.

“The off-campus ministry is also the College’s way to reach out to our neighbors in loving service, recognizing that we owe our education and formation to the generosity of many people,” said Fr. Raymond.

“The overall goal is that through this ministry, students can develop the practical skills and virtues necessary for ministry within and outside the church that takes into account the socio-cultural and religious context of those they are called and sent to serve.”



Peterson Forestal assists a resident at Accura HealthCare in Cascade as she lines up her shot for bowling while Sr. Isabel Mula, CPS cheers



DWC student Sr. Nhiem Thi Nguyen, LHC, serves a bowl of soup at the Epworth Community Meal



This academic year, 15 students graduated from Divine Word College. Frt. Vinh Phuc Nguyen, ICM was the valedictorian speaker and Ms. Donna Puccio, the retiring Executive Secretary to the President, was the principal speaker during the commencement exercises.

Congratulations to all of our graduates!



Sr. Dieu Tuyet Thi Nguyen, LHC

Hue, Vietnam

- B.A. Intercultural Studies

• *Plans after graduation?* I will help my sisters do ministry in Des Moines.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* DWC has provided me a good environment with many activities, especially for spiritual life. I am very grateful.



Mr. Nay Kaw Sho

Fort Worth, Texas

- B.A. Philosophy

• *Plans after graduation?* After graduation, I will

probably work and do some traveling.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson I learned at DWC was being a leader, which I never thought I was capable of.



Mr. Ha Si Bao Nguyen

Cam Lam, Khanh Hoa, Vietnam

- B.A. Philosophy

• *Plans after graduation?* I will

continue to study.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* To be balanced in everything in life.

**Mr. Hoang Huy Nguyen**

Phoenix, Arizona

- B.A. Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* My plan for after graduation is to enter novitiate and continue my formation with the Society of the Divine Word.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* With the help of the formation program, I have been able to live out my faith through daily Mass, prayer, and reflections. Through those experiences, I have learned to deeply reflect on scripture, applying it to my daily life. I formed a better understanding of myself and through that experience, formed a more intimate relationship with God.

**Mr. Quoc Dinh Nguyen**

Qui Nhon City, Vietnam

- B.A. Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to visit my friends and then move to Chicago for novitiate with the SVD where I'll

continue discerning my vocation.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My experiences at DWC taught me lessons that helped my faith grow. In the multicultural environment at DWC, I learned how to worship God through Mass in various cultures, which helped me have a different view of my faith.

**Sr. Tuyen Thanh Thi Nguyen, IHM**

Nha Trang City, Khanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

- B.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I am working toward an M.A. degree in social work at Clarke University.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* Being called as a disciple of Christ, I will share what I have learned at DWC with others in my future ministry. I cultivate a community of faith wherever I serve. Sharing my faith with others means guiding them to imitate Christ, who is the model of Christian life. I will bring His love and make His name known to those I encounter.

**Frt. Vinh Phuc Nguyen, ICM**

Ninh Thuan, Vietnam

- B.A. Philosophy
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to continue my theology studies.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* At DWC, I learned and realized many important things. Truly, without learning at DWC, I would not have had the opportunities to discover them. For me, DWC is a good environment to build up and develop a missionary. In addition, I am also impressed by the intercultural worship from many areas around the world, which I will share with others.

**Sr. Thuan Kim Thi Phan, LHC**

Ha Tinh Province, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Mission
- *Plans after graduation?* I am applying for an Overseas Training Program to teach catechism in Arlington, TX. My further plans are still under consideration.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* Each of my experiences at DWC – whether it was encountering people, attending liturgical services, attending classes or joining other activities – nourished my faith in various ways. I found God in knowledge, in people from different cultures and in the activities at DWC.

**Sr. Norelly Rodriguez Manosalva, RCS**

Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

- B.A. Theology & Mission
- *Plans after graduation?* Since March 16, 2022, I have been working at St. Francisco de Sales College in Soledad,

Atlántico, a city on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia. I worked there previously for 7 years.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My experience at Divine Word College has significantly impacted my faith as I have had the opportunity to review, learn and rekindle my faith in the diversity of cultures and perceptions of faith at DWC. Theology within its theory and practice made my growth in faith possible. I am grateful to the members of the Society of the Divine Word: They make a difference in our lives!



Sr. Duong Thuy Thi Nguyen, LHC
Dak Lak Province, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Mission
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to serve my small community in Des Moines for a period of time.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* As a sister, I plan to share my faith with those who I have the opportunity to work, serve and live with. My faith in God's love and mercy will be shared while working with kids and encountering parishioners. I believe that by doing little acts of service for God's people, my faith can inspire others in their journey of faith.



Sr. Tram Thu Thi Tran, IHM
Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa, Vietnam

- B.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I will study for a master's degree in social work at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa.

• *What is the greatest lesson you learned at DWC?* The greatest lesson I learned at DWC is that living in an intercultural community not only opens our hearts and our minds so that we can share with others what we have, but it also allows us to accept and respect the differences in each other, like who we are.



Sr. Tho Thi Trinh, ICM
Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

- B.A. Theology & Mission
- *Plans after graduation?* I am pursuing an M.A. degree in Christian spirituality with a concentration in spiritual direction at Loyola University Chicago. I plan to finish this program in two years.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* I don't think I could find another college where everyone is so friendly and knows one another by name despite their different positions, professions, races, or ages. As I reflect on my six-year journey at DWC, I strongly believe my faith became more mature in my relationship with God through relationships and friendships with others. Even though DWC is a small college, it contains huge challenges, as well as great opportunities for a missionary to grow maturely if she/he wants to be a disciple of Christ.



**Fr. Jean d'Amour
Dusengumuremyi**
Burera District, Northern Province
of Rwanda

- A.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I plan to join Saint John's University, in Minnesota to

further my studies in theology, focusing on reconciliation and guidance.

• *How has your experience at DWC impacted your faith?* My experience at DWC has impacted my faith, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist each morning, accompanied by rich reflections on the Word of God. I had wonderful opportunities to listen to different preachers and each one inspired me, as everyone has a personal gift to interpret the Word of God. For a priest, it's very helpful to have this opportunity to listen more than to speak or to preach. I was also touched by the vocation stories that many students shared. I realized that each person has a sacred history and if we are open to one another, God speaks to us through our neighbor.



Fr. Polycarp Khaw Nei Thawng
Falam (Khuangli), Chin State, Myanmar

- A.A. Intercultural Studies
- *Plans after graduation?* I'll go to Rock Island, Illinois, for my Overseas Training Program in preparation for further studies.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I have nothing other than my way of life – sharing my life and serving others.



Mr. Khoa Kinh Bui
Costa Mesa, California

- Certificate Pre-Theology
- *Plans after graduation?* I will continue my priesthood discernment at a theologate seminary.

• *How do you plan to share your faith with others in the future?* I think each of us is called to participate in the mission of the Church through ordinary pastoral ministry, bringing people to the Church, and sharing Christ with those who haven't known Him.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE BREAK

Even when students have time off from class during their summer, spring and Christmas breaks, many of them spend their days lending a hand through acts of service in Divine Word Missionary communities across the United States. These activities help them hone the skills they'll need to be effective missionaries and provide an opportunity for networking with members of the Society of the Divine Word.

In March, five Divine Word College students spent their spring break at St. Joseph the Worker parish in Wheeling, Illinois. They worked alongside Fr. Marcin Karwot, SVD and Frt. Boromeo Soe, SVD, who are assigned to the parish.

Frt. Engelbertus Salmon, SVD and the other students reflected on the experience after returning to DWC and said they felt that it helped them realize just how important teamwork is in parish ministry. The men learned to rely on one another and appreciate the passion and commitment that each individual contributed daily. They also had a chance to experience a multicultural environment outside of the walls of Divine Word College, since the parish is made up primarily of Spanish speakers, people of Polish descent

and Americans. "With such an array of different cultural backgrounds, we learned how to embrace these differences with respect, care, and appreciation for another culture in order to be united in community and faith," the group wrote in their reflection about the experience.



Vuong Minh Vu

"The spring break project is a great opportunity and approach for students to find out more about SVD parish ministries. Working with Fr. Marcin and Frt. Boromeo for a week gave us a better understanding of embracing a diverse community to unite in faith," Engelbertus said.

During the summer of 2021, DWC student Vuong Minh Vu lived at the Society of the Divine Word's American headquarters known as "Techny" in Chicago. He spent his days working outside on the property and helping the SVD community. He said the stories he heard from senior members of the Divine Word Missionaries inspired him. "Their stories served as examples and guidelines to help me understand and be more sure about my vocation to be among the next generation following Jesus's footsteps in the field of mission as part of the 'hero' SVDs," he said. It's not the average way to spend a break from college classes, but then again, these aren't average college students.



Ladouceur Flarissaint, Frt. Engelbertus Salmon, SVD and Kim Hoa Pham pitch in during their spring break at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Wheeling, Illinois

“HIS MISSION is OUR MISSION”

A REFLECTION IN PARAGUAY

My name is Viet Quoc Hoang. I'm also known as “Padre Juan” or “Padre Juancito” to the people who I currently minister. I was born in Vietnam and moved to Wisconsin as a child. I professed perpetual vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 2017 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2018. Currently I'm serving my first assignment in Paraguay.

Paraguay is known as the heart of South America. Our province in Paraguay is divided into five districts: Itapúa Sur; Itapúa Norte; Alto Parana; Canindeju; and Asuncion. Our district, Itapúa Sur, includes various parishes, a primary and secondary

school called San Roque Gonzalez and the central retirement house for our SVD confreres. I have been lucky enough to have the opportunity to serve in all three parishes that our Divine Word congregation is responsible for in the Diocese of Encarnacion.





Looking back at my journey as a Divine Word Missionary in Paraguay over the last few years, I've learned to be open to the needs of the Paraguayan province and to be creative in the ways I minister to the people that I'm called to serve. I've learned to be thankful for all the grace-filled moments that I've received in the mission. For example, when the province of Paraguay confirmed my appointment as district superior in 2020. I was a bit nervous when I heard the news of my appointment because I'm the youngest member in our district. I was reflecting on how our team could be effective in leadership for the next three-year-term. It reminded me to always respond positively to the needs of our province.

In 2018, when I arrived in Paraguay, the province assigned me as an associate parish priest. The main purpose was so I could learn the culture and pastoral work. I accepted this assignment with an open mind. It was challenging when Covid-19 hit Paraguay. The world stopped. Activities, economics, political life, travel, entertainment events and sports stopped. Public religious life also stopped. The Bible message in Matthew 25 inspired me to look at creative ways to minister to the people. How do we, as Divine Word Missionaries, respond to the needs of the people we are called to serve. Matthew 25 gives us a central and repetitive message: take care of the humble, the hungry and thirsty, the poor, the sick, abandoned and discriminated against. But why? Because in our daily lives, we often pass by these people or our gaze prefers not to come across such a scenario, because it bothers us and demands a response. Thus, it is not Jesus who prevents us from entering the Kingdom, but our practice of not welcoming the other, the blindness that prevents us from recognizing the face of Christ in the little ones.

Today more than ever we must try to help ourselves to live and act in the way of Jesus, because the justice of the Kingdom is not achieved by observing norms and prescriptions, but by welcoming those in need. Rather, let us seek to share what we have, seeking justice and the common good. That is why during the pandemic, I started a ministry called "olla popular" where we offered hot meals

for families with kids and elderly three times per week. The number of families that needed help grew each day. By the time I received my transfer assignment at the end of the year, we were preparing 2,000 plates of hot food each week.

In 2021, the province once again assigned me to another parish. This time they sent me to San Pedro Apostol where I have been serving as the pastor in the countryside of San Pedro del Parana. The parish has a population of 42,000 and 86 mission chapels. Some chapels have Mass once a month, while others have Mass every two months.



Mrs. Maria Trinidad

I was overwhelmed at first, but I also received many grace-filled moments. For instance, there is an 88-year-old woman named Mrs. Maria Trinidad who has always faithfully participated in the Masses in her community of San Blas. One day in May, during the moment of the first reading, she said "Padre Juan voy a leer" (Fr. John, I will read). There was silence in the chapel. I looked at her and thought to myself "can she still read? Is it possible without her glasses?" She then asked me for the reading, and I indicated to her where to start. I was worried because the first reading was a little bit longer than usual. I sat down and couldn't help but to be doubtful. She began the reading with a voice so clear and crisp just like the spring water. Every pronunciation was perfect. I felt like I was in an orchestra, and everything went smoothly.

Mrs. Maria finished the reading and just like the Bible says in Luke 4:20, "Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. While the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him." All the eyes in the chapel of San Blas were fixed on Mrs. Maria Trinidad with admiration. As for me, Mrs. Maria had left me astonished, all my doubts vanished and I once again believed firmly what Matthew 19:26 says, "With God, all things are possible." From that experience, Mrs. Maria taught me not to judge a book by its cover. I need to get to know the people who I am called to serve on a personal level. I must be willing to give each of them an opportunity because each of them have gifts and talents. We can collaborate in the mission.

THREE-TIME PROVINCIAL LOOKS BACK

Interview, editing, and photos by Guy Vaccaro

My name is Fr. Ray Lennon. I was born in Philadelphia in 1936 and I am the second oldest of eight children. I first learned about the Divine Word Missionaries at a vocational weekend at my Catholic high school.

I wrote a letter to them, but never received a response. One Sunday night, I returned home from the movies and as I was walking up to my front porch, I saw a priest sitting in my living room. I immediately felt a guilt complex. Did I do something wrong in school? I tried to enter quietly through the door on the side of the house, but as I was going up the stairs, my mother called to me. She said that a priest from the Divine Word Missionaries was there to see me. He asked me, "Did you ever think about becoming a priest?" I said, "Well, it crossed my mind. I think it crosses everyone's mind." He said, "I'll come back after Christmas and we'll talk."

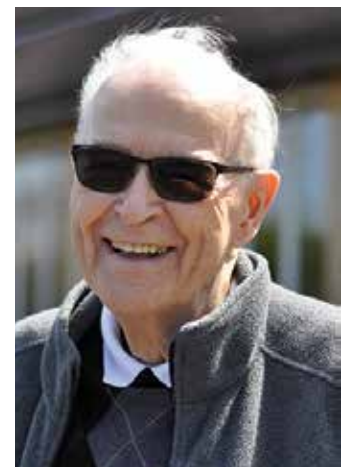
After he left, my siblings started laughing. "You become a priest! That would be the last thing!" The next night we were having dinner and the doorbell rang. My sister got up and answered it. She said, "It's the same priest who was here last night." I thought, "What's he want?" He said, "The director at the high school seminary in Bordentown, New Jersey said if you're really interested, you should come now. You can finish high school with us." I said, "Okay I'll try it."

After finishing high school, novitiate, juniorate, and philosophy, I was assigned to Brazil. I really didn't like it at first. It was all so strange, but then I fell in love with it. I fell in love with the language and the people. I completed four years of theology there and I was never homesick.

After my ordination, I was sent to China, and while there, I became interested in the Trappists. I visited their abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts and it was wonderful. One day we were taking a barn down and I had the only real mystical experience I have ever had in my life. I literally heard God say, "Listen. Get back to your own group. This is not where you belong!" It was so powerful, that I literally dropped my hammer, and took off my apron. I went back to Brazil and spent five more happy years there.

At one point, a group of parishioners came to me and said, "We're going to lose the property we have for a church because we were given the land on the condition that we build a community center or a church on it." I went to the archdiocese and asked the vicar general if he would come out and meet with us. He did, but he told us, "We can't help you at all. If you do decide to go ahead with it, you do it on your own." The parishioners asked me, "Would you help?" I said, "I'll do what I can with the seminarians." We had to do it clandestinely because we couldn't get all the papers approved. Every Saturday and Sunday that we were free, the seminarians and I would work with the people mixing cement. I was the one who went around to the brick, cement, and steel factories. The workers said I had

to go because they would trust me when it came time to arrange for the payment. In the church, we had simple, little stained glass windows. One of the parishioners made the statue of our patron, St. Andrew. A politician came to us and said he was going to donate the benches. We told him he could donate them, but only if they were made in the area. Everything came from the area. We worked on it for one year. It was unbelievable.



Fr. Ray Lennon

The final step before completion was to turn on the lights. The problem was, we had no electricity in that area. I was told I had to go to city hall. I went there and asked, "Could you turn on the electricity in this area?" I pointed to the spot on their map where our newly built chapel was now standing. He looked at it and said, "But there's nothing there." I said, "We're building a church." He said, "Father, what you need to do is bring in all your plans. We will approve them and then we will accompany you through the process." I said, "But there is a problem." He said, "What's that?" "It is already built," I told him. He said, "I can't believe it." I told him we would have lost the property if we had not built it, so we had no choice.

He said, "I'm going out there right now." He went out and it was amazing. He had a lot of expectations regarding proper construction, but the people who built it were brick layers and steel workers, and they knew what they were doing. They had built it correctly. In the end, and much to our relief, he decided to approve the project. That was perhaps the most exciting thing I have ever done in my life! We built a clandestine church and I was responsible for it. I mean it was illegal, and everything about how we went about it was wrong. They could have put me in prison!

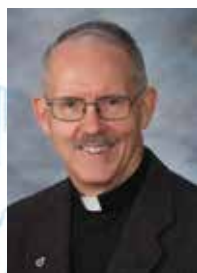
After Brazil, I went on to serve as Principal at Bordentown for seven years, Provincial in the Eastern Province for one term and Provincial in the Chicago Province for two terms. I served in Canada for three years, as Rector in Washington for six years, Rector in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi for three years, Rector at Bordentown for nine years, a sabbatical in Ireland, and Rector at Bordentown for three more years. During that time, I had cancer twice, so I decided it was time to retire, which I did in 2018. That pretty much sums up my life. I bounced all over the world doing strange things, but I enjoyed it.

President's Annual Report

Mission Starts with **“HELLO”**

*“So faith, hope, love remain,
these three; but the greatest of
these is love”*

(1 Cor. 13:13)



Fr. Tom
Ascherman, SVD

When I was a child, my mom always insisted, “You have to go to church on Sunday!” Later, when I belonged to a certain “tribe” of rule-obsessed, middle-school Catholic kids, I heard that Mass only “counted” if I showed up for the Gospel reading, and stayed long enough for Communion. Clear boundaries sometimes did help to get me through adolescence and on the way to adulthood. But adult Christians need new guidelines.

Remember, Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things.” Paul then offered a beautiful summary of the fundamental purpose of life, “So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:11,13). Jesus gives us a mission, love is that mission.

Divine Word College teaches students that our missionary “obligation” is to reach out to others, especially to faith-seekers, to the poor, to people of other cultures, and to people of other faith traditions. Each of the mission stories in this issue began with a “hello.” Your prayers, friendship and support for Divine Word College is greatly appreciated. But, there is one more thing you could do.

If you want your presence at Sunday Mass to really count, be sure to say **“hello”** to someone you do not know.



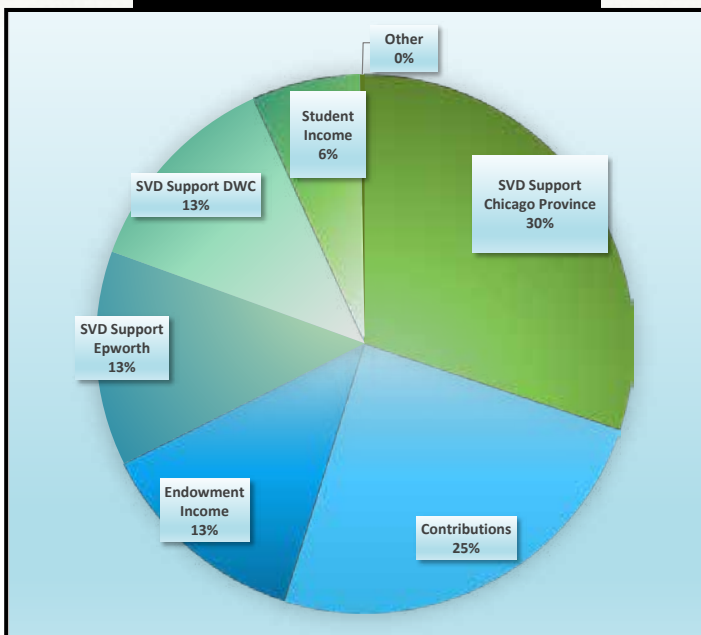
President's Financial Report

Your support helps make their educations possible.

THANK YOU!

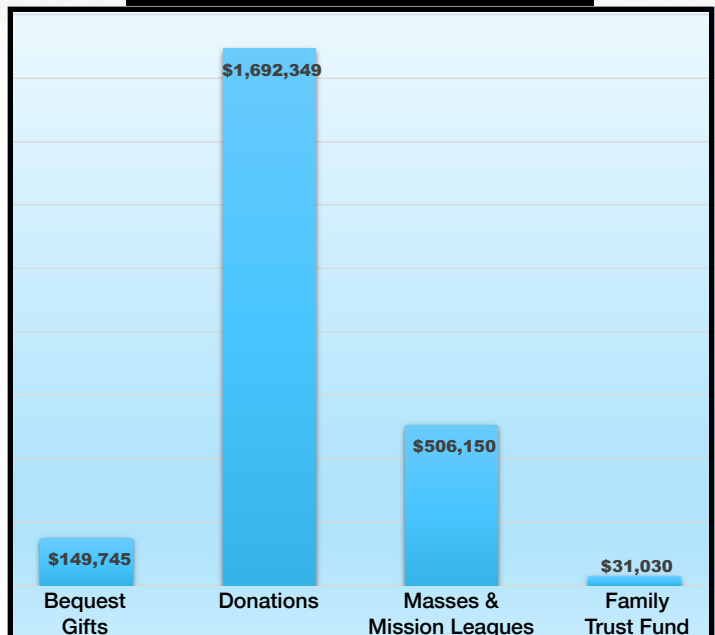


Divine Word College Income
2021 Fiscal Year



SVD Support Chicago Province	\$2,470,262
Contributions	\$2,016,551
Endowment Income	\$1,048,560
SVD Support Epworth	\$1,054,916
SVD Support DWC	\$1,038,148
Student Income	\$531,575
Other	\$22,551

Benefactor Contributions
2021 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 nearly \$1.71 million in scholarship assistance.

*Growing in community
with the Divine Word*

PRAY FOR OUR MEN IN FORMATION



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 2021-2022 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.



Frt. Ryan Agbim, SVD



Mr. John-Edeve
Augustin



Frt. Betenora
Bako Liba, SVD



Mr. Junior Jean Baptiste



Mr. Berson Bien-Aime



Frt. Michelet
Boncoeur, SVD



Mr. Khoa Bui



Mr. Antz-Carly Cadet



Frt. Thinh Cao, SVD

EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Frt. Christian Castro, SVD



Frt. John Cho, SVD



Frt. Cruz Colunga, SVD



Frt. Marc Declama, SVD



Novice Hoang Do



Novice Wisno Elie



Mr. Max Darly Emile



Frt. Kodjo
Emon, SVD



Bro. Joubert
Felix, SVD



Mr. Ladouceur
Flarissaint



Mr. Peterson Forestal



Frt. Arnold
Formbi, SVD



Deacon Carl
Gales, SVD



Mr. Omar Gonzalez



Frt. Martin
Herrera, SVD



Mr. Wilson Joseph



Bro. Wisvel
Joseph, SVD



Frt. Brian
Junkes, SVD



Frt. Roger
Kyaw Thu, SVD



Frt. Samuel
Lollar, SVD



Frt. Manie
Manuel, SVD



Mr. Franciste Mervil



Mr. Cederick Morando



Frt. Joao Pinda
Neto, SVD

EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Frt. An Nguyen, SVD



Deacon Derek
Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Ha Si Bao Nguyen



Mr. Hai Nguyen



Mr. Hoang Nguyen



Frt. Hoang Quang
Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Hung Nguyen



Frt. Huy Nguyen, SVD



Mr. Long Nguyen



Mr. Long Hai
Ngoc Nguyen



Mr. Quoc Nguyen



Novice Truong
An Nguyen



Frt. Tu Nguyen, SVD



Novice Tuan
Hoang Nguyen



Bro. Vincent
Nguyen, SVD



Frt. John Kofi
Nkum, SVD



Novice Friday Onoja



Mr. Kim Hoa Pham



Frt. Quang
Ngoc Pham, SVD



Mr. Kentory Philippe



Mr. Miguel
Toribio Romo Romo



Frt. Engelbert
Salmon, SVD



Frt. Pedro
Saveia, SVD



Mr. Nay Kaw Sho

EDUCATING MISSIONARIES



Mr. Joseph
Lucas Simbre



Frt. Boromeo
Shwe Pyi Soe, SVD



Frt. Zachary Smith, SVD



Mr. Khang Tran



Frt. Thong Tran, SVD



Mr. Do Tuang



Mr. Marc
Anderson Vaval



Frt. Tin Vu, SVD



Novice Tung Vu



Mr. Hoang Son Vu



Mr. Vuong Minh Vu



Frt. Andrew Wang, SVD



Frt. Jorge
Zetino, SVD



Frt. Baruch Zinsou, SVD



Divine Word Missionaries

Formation Houses:

Divine Word College
Epworth, Iowa

Divine Word Novitiate
Techy, Illinois

Divine Word Brother Formation
Chicago, Illinois

Divine Word Theologate
Chicago, Illinois

Contact Us:

800.553.3321

svdvocations@dwci.edu

www.svdvocations.org

STEP BY STEP

Men in formation with the Society of the Divine Word share about the path to religious life.

01

PRE-NOVICE



Franciste Mervil

The first formal step in the formation process with the Society of the Divine Word is a year called pre-novitiate, which most candidates at DWC participate in during their final full year of studies. **Franciste Mervil** was in the pre-novitiate program this year. During this step, candidates learn about the skills and education needed to be a successful missionary while living in a multi-cultural community. They live together in a small house that's just a short walk from the college's main building. Franciste says the past year has been unlike any other during his six years at the college. He learned to meditate and found peace in the structured daily routine of the house. The support of his fellow pre-novices and newly-strengthened personal faith even helped him deal with the tragic death of his younger brother in January.

"It's like you see life on a deeper level," he said. "It helps you to be more mature, not just in your vocation, but from all aspects of life. All of these things helped me to know and to discern my vocation at a deeper level."

02

NOVICE



Wisno Elie

Wisno Elie was born in Haiti and graduated from Divine Word College in 2021. He spent the past year on the second formal step of formation known as novitiate. This year-long process provides time for prayer, reflection and study of consecrated religious life. It's also an opportunity to learn about the unique characteristics of the SVD community with a special focus on discernment.

"The novitiate is an essential step in my training. Living occasionally with solitude and silence, the novitiate unfolds over one year and allows me to take root, to experience profound interior changes, and to mature in my choice of religious life," Wisno said. "I was very excited to begin my novitiate, because this is the precious time that I have been waiting for. I think it is a particular time of grace for me, since I want to commit myself to this life."

03

TEMPORARY VOWS
THEOLOGATE STUDENT



Frt. Samuel L. Lollar, SVD

Candidates who continue to feel called to religious life as a Divine Word Missionary after novitiate profess temporary or "first" vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Then they spend several years living in community at the Divine Word Theologate with the other candidates, continuing their religious formation and pursuing graduate studies at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago.

Priesthood candidates

Now a member of the Society of the Divine Word, priesthood candidates in this stage are known as "fraters." **Frt. Samuel L. Lollar, SVD** studied at DWC from 2019 to 2020. He professed his first vows in July 2021. "I felt overjoyed and like I had finally become what I had wanted to be for so long — a Divine Word Missionary," he said.

Brotherhood candidates

Men who feel called to a life as a religious brother take the same temporary vows as priesthood candidates after the novitiate year. They are referred to as "brother" at this point in formation. "I am working toward a master of arts in ministry with an intercultural concentration, so I am learning a lot," said **Bro. Joubert Felix, SVD**. "After that, I am looking forward to specializing in a field beneficial to the Society of the Divine Word."



Bro. Joubert Felix, SVD

04

CROSS
CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Fr. Brian
Junkes, SVD

After their second year of theology, candidates take part in a Cross-Cultural Training Program.

Fr. Brian Junkes, SVD graduated from DWC in 2018. In September, the Florida native moved to Chad for his Cross-Cultural Training where he'll likely stay for two years. He says the practical experience of serving at a mission site overseas has helped him see the bigger picture of what life is like for Divine Word Missionaries.

"Going outside of the U.S., seeing how the SVD work, and participating in the mission is a great experience for me," Brian said. "This will help me learn more about what it is to be an SVD and to continue to discern my vocation."

05

DEACON



Fr. Carl Gales, SVD

After CTP, candidates return to the Theologate to complete their studies, profess perpetual vows and finally they are ordained deacons. This is the final step before priestly ordination.

"What I learned during my diaconate year is that ministry is more about listening than anything else. If you listen with your heart, you will know how best you can serve others," said former DWC student **Fr. Carl Gales, SVD** who was a deacon for the past year. In May, he was ordained as a Divine Word Missionary Priest.

SVD formation weekend

Nearly 60 men in formation with the Society of the Divine Word gathered at Divine Word College this March for the first-ever SVD Formation Weekend. Attendees met to foster their fraternal friendships.

Several SVD candidates gave presentations about their most recent experiences in formation, revealing valuable insights for younger discerners. It was an opportunity for old friends to reunite and for newer candidates to learn from those who have already walked parts of the formation path that remain

in front of them. The weekend included a social gathering, a Mass presided by former DWC President Fr. Tim Lenchak, SVD and it all culminated with a rousing round of athletics in the gymnasium. Nothing secures the bonds of brotherhood like a game of dodgeball!



DONNA PUCCIO

RETIRES AFTER 51 YEARS

A lot has changed at Divine Word College over the past 50 years. Despite the twists and turns that led the college to the missionary educational institution that it is today, one thing remained steady for the past five decades – the dedication of [Donna Puccio](#).

This devoted employee has served as executive secretary to eight of the college's nine presidents. At the end of the 2021-2022 academic year, this beloved fixture of the DWC community stepped into yet another phase – retirement. Before leaving, she was asked to share her wisdom with the 2022 graduates as the principal speaker at the commencement exercises.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Donna was a married mother of two with secretarial experience when she saw an ad for a position at Divine Word College. She didn't get the job right away, but when it became available again shortly after, she accepted the position in October 1970. In the years that followed, she resigned three times to take leave as her family grew. "We didn't have maternity leave in those days, so I would quit work," Donna shared at graduation. "When I needed to return for financial reasons, I called (then Business Office Director) Bro. Leonard Bauer, SVD to see if there were any job openings. Except for once, the position of president's secretary remained open, as the then secretary was leaving."

Donna was at home with a new baby when her oldest child reached school age. She found herself feeling conflicted about whether to go back to the office. That's when Bro. Leonard adjusted Donna's schedule to ensure that she could be home when her daughter got on and off the school bus each day. Knowing that her employer respected her family life enough to make accommodations for her to succeed both as a mother and as a professional helped Donna find great fulfillment throughout her career.

"I think I was supposed to be in this position because it was always vacant whenever I came back," she said. Eventually, each of Donna's five children would be employed at Divine Word College for a period of time. Whether working the switchboards, cleaning the building or stuffing envelopes for the Development Office, the college was a family affair for the Puccios.

TECHNOLOGY

When Donna started at Divine Word College, she frequently transcribed letters dictated by then College President Fr. Harold Rigney, SVD. The mid 1980s brought



a huge shift in technology. “During my early years as a secretary, we had manual typewriters and did not see the invention of the electric typewriter until the 1970s. We would type letters using carbon paper or type documents on special paper that was then run on a lithograph machine to make copies,” Donna said. In the 1980s, the offices started using computers with word processing and later IBM arrived. Soon the college president was writing his own letters and Donna proofread them. By the 1990s, she was drafting meeting agendas and taking on more responsibilities as she gained the trust and respect of everyone, not just the college president. Donna knew the academic calendar backward and forward – partly because she compiled and printed it. She alerted presidents about upcoming events, reminded them about deadlines and gently nudged them when secondary reminders were needed. She also served as the recording secretary for the Board of Trustees, Board of Administration and other committees involving the president. She even served as secretary to the rector for about 15 years.

INTERCULTURALITY

In the 1970s, 16 Vietnamese seminarians who were refugees after the fall of Saigon were admitted to the college. Around that time, the decision was made to develop an extensive English as Second Language (ESL) program. “I have fond memories of the ESL program because one of those 16 seminarians was Fr. Joseph Tri Van Vu, SVD, who would study ESL and graduate from the College (undergraduate) program,” Donna said. “He went on to be ordained as a priest, and eventually returned to the College in the 1990s to serve for several years as Vice President for Formation and Dean of Students.”

WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Women of deep faith have always been a part of Divine Word College, and Donna was among them. Then in 2006, the number of women with spiritual devotion started increasing rapidly when DWC accepted the first four religious sisters for admission as students. Today, women account for approximately half of the students at the College. “The addition of the religious sisters brought about a more reverend or ‘holy’ atmosphere,” Donna said. “When the sisters walk by the chapel, they stop and make the sign of the cross. They have taught the male students to do the same! The sisters are so happy, joyous and appreciative and it spreads throughout the College - with students, faculty and staff.”

PRESIDENT’S RIGHT HAND

DWC President Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD, first met Donna in 1972 when he was a freshman assigned to the library for work study. He recalls Donna being patient and kind then. “In 2017 when I returned as president, she was just as helpful, patient and kind,” he said. “Donna was the

Executive Secretary for eight of nine DWC presidents, and she helped introduce seven presidents to the role! She expertly helped me know what was next on my to-do list.” Former DWC President Fr. Michael Hutchins, SVD, once said a more appropriate title for Donna would be “President’s Reference Library.” She is an expert on DWC history with in-depth knowledge of everything from academics and employment issues to



Donna Puccio
Circa 1993

college policies and practices. “I’ve always believed that my job is to represent the president and the College the best that I can,” she said. “Though I’ve taken a great deal of personal satisfaction in achieving that goal, the thing that I have valued above all else has been the trust that I’ve built with each and every president for whom I have served.”

HONORS

Through the years, this humble worker has embodied the missionary spirit of the SVD with her hospitable, warm and inviting presence. In 2014, the Chicago Province of the Society of the Divine Word presented Donna with the Verbum Award, a prestigious honor given to a layperson who has made significant contributions to its work. In addition, DWC established the Donna Puccio Distinguished Service Award, which is given annually to a staff member for his or her outstanding service to the College community. After offering the commencement address in May, Donna was recognized in another way. The Divine Word College Board of Trustees presented her with an honorary doctorate of philosophy as a testimony to her extraordinary service to the College.

RETIREMENT

Donna was beginning to think about retirement when she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. This past year, she’s been focusing on her health and working primarily from home. In her retirement, Donna plans to spend time enjoying the beautiful family that she and her husband, Charlie, have built. With five children, 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, she will have plenty to keep her busy. Still, she’ll miss her family at DWC. “I think I’ll probably miss the people and being able to come to work every day,” she said. “I was content with what I was doing and it wasn’t about the money. It was about loving what I did.” Donna continues to serve DWC as a part-time volunteer, working on revisions to the policy handbook and assisting her successor, Chris Jackson, to take up her former tasks. In the closing of her commencement speech, Donna offered these words . . .

*“Divine Word College was never a job to me – it has always been an honor to serve all of you.”
The honor, we assure you Dr. Donna, was all ours.*



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD

Bitter & Sweet

Every year when summer comes, I have mixed feelings. I'm relieved because the meetings and appointments are finished, but sad because I have to say goodbye to a lot of people. As the rector of the community and the director of the Divine Word Alumni Association, every year I write numerous cards to either say farewell to SVDs and students or to welcome new alumni members into the association.

Indeed, life is full of hellos and goodbyes. And every year I have to move the names of those who left DWC into the back of my mind in order to make room for the new ones who will come in August. Many times, I feel so tired and sad that I do not want to go through this process again. But what keeps me going is the fact that most – if not all – DWC students, SVDs, faculty and staff who leave here continue to keep in touch with the DWC community in various ways. And that also makes my job as the alumni director exciting! I have been given the opportunity to reach out to the alumni, to encourage them to keep the fire for the mission alive in their hearts. It's personally fulfilling to hear stories and witness the alumni using what they have learned at DWC to engage in missionary activities and make the world a better place. Although alumni are many times half a world away from me and they may be speaking a different language or working in different fields, I still feel their presence and cherish their memories. It's God's mission that brought us together once and that mission is what continues to keep us in communion with one another.



May our communion be a source of encouragement and strength for each one of us!

FAREWELL TO LONG-TIME EMPLOYEES

In addition to the students departing from DWC, the College community also said goodbye to some beloved and long-time members of the faculty and staff.



Jill Heitzman

Jill Heitzman was an assistant professor of music for 30 years from 1992 to 2022. She was passionate about world music and shared that love through her teaching and writing. Her efforts to nurture excellent liturgical music at DWC were commended. Dr. Ron Condon, Chair of the Department of Theology & Philosophy, said Jill was a great colleague because she was always ready to pitch in and do her part and was enthusiastic about her work. "Jill always had a love and concern for her students – she was very committed to them," he said.



Laura Bergfeld

Laura Bergfeld served on the DWC staff for 35 years as housekeeper, working from 1986 to 2021. She gave good example to students and other workers in the pride she took in making sure DWC was a clean and welcoming place. "I shall always remember Laura for her many acts of kindness toward me, but I especially appreciate her sewing skills and how she repaired and restored my tattered USA blanket, saving it from being discarded," said Fr. Joe McDermott, SVD.

For their many years of dedicated service to the College, the DWC community is grateful and wishes Jill and Laura all the best!

Schuellers Desire To Help Educate Future Missionaries

Ron and Pat Schueller, from Cuba City, Wisconsin, don't remember exactly when they started donating to Divine Word College, but they have continued for more than 30 years.

The Schuellers both grew up near Epworth, so they have known about Divine Word Missionaries for years. Pat remembers when she was a child, St. Paul's Mission House, as it was called then, would host a summer picnic she attended with her family. "I remember we played hide and seek on the grounds and there were a lot of people there. It was always fun," she said. Since their marriage, giving to charities has always been part of their life. They were encouraged by their parish priest, according to Pat. "When we were kids growing up, our priest, Fr. Breitbach, always preached, 'You cannot outdo God in generosity.' So we always thought, if we give, we are going to get it back," she said. "It worked for us, it really worked for us," Ron agreed.

Ron and Pat think they probably received a letter in the mail from Divine Word that prompted them to donate the first time. "We began to donate to Divine Word because it was a local charity we knew about," Pat said. Now, years after they first began to help Divine Word College students, they continue to believe in our mission and want to help current students. "Any time we can support education to get people out there to teach, we want to do that. We need more priests, we need more missionaries. Our world needs help. We want to support anyone who will help. Your mission is so good, in that you are educating young people to go out into the world to help others." *Thank you, Ron and Pat, for your generous help for Divine Word students!*



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

Getting into the Habit

The religious sisters who study at Divine Word College have a lot in common. They're devoted to their faith, their communities and their educations. Another common thread they share is the practice of wearing a religious habit. However, it's clear from just a quick glance around the DWC chapel that not all habits are created equal. So why does one religious sister wear a black and white habit while another is outfitted in a milky blue shade? What prompts one to add a bold pop of blue to her formal attire while others are in head-to-toe white? The answer is simple: their habits are a direct reflection of each sister's religious community.

In the 2021-2022 school year, the 47 religious sisters enrolled at Divine Word College represented 15 different religious congregations. The greatest number, 21, belong to the Lovers of the Holy Cross congregation.

Much like the Society of the Divine Word has a unique "charism" or mission, each of the religious sister congregations have a particular focus, as well.

DWC student Sr. Scovia Okello Apiyo belongs to a congregation called the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu that's based in her home country of Uganda. The group is dedicated to missionary service. The official habit of the LSMIG is white. When the congregation started, it was worn for prayers, teaching and all acts of official work but today it's reserved only for prayer. "It is a reminder to me that I am consecrated to Christ, living the three Evangelical vows of chastity, obedience and poverty and I belong to the LSMIG," Sr. Scovia said. "Wearing the habit reminds me to live a simple life."

Habits are designed with purpose – each detail has significance. Sr. Scovia says the official outfit centers on a white, long-sleeved dress. Then, a shoulder cover known as a “mantle” is added. It’s adorned with seven blue buttons to represent the seven sorrows of Our Lady and is finished with a collar and dark blue trim. A white veil serves as a sign of consecration, service and total dedication to Christ alone. The sisters wear a crucifix with a blue cord to signify that they are espoused to Christ and the cross is their protection and strength. A long rosary containing all the mysteries (joyful, sorrowful, glorious and luminous) is worn on the left side and attached to a belt that goes around the white dress. For daily activities and light work, the LSMIG sisters don a sky blue habit, which was introduced in 1972 after it became clear that the white habit was less practical for daily use in Uganda. A third habit in an iced coffee hue is used for heavy duties like cooking, fieldwork and house cleaning.

In the early history of the LSMIG congregation, the sisters sewed the habits themselves. Since the group is more established now, the sisters are busy with other duties and hire tailors to help create the garments. Sr. Scovia said when she was a child, she admired the long habits of religious sisters and considered them some of the most well-dressed women in her community.

“The first time I wore the habit, I felt that I belonged to a family of consecrated women who are all called by Jesus to fulfill His mission, even though it’s done in different ways according to each sisters’ talents,” she said. “I felt so dignified and had a sense of belonging to the LSMIG because, beside from our mission and charism, our habit is what differentiates us from other congregations.” While some women religious have left the habit behind and opted to adopt secular attire, many others continue the long-held tradition.

In Elizabeth Kuhns’ book, “The Habit,” she explores the history of the religious garments. “From this clothing, we immediately recognize a woman who has decided to commit her life fully to God, to renounce the possibility of bearing children, and to work within the boundaries of a community for some specific sacred purpose, frequently in neglected or controversial areas,” the author writes. The religious garb sends a clear message to all who see a religious sister. “At the same time that the habit serves to shroud the body and to mask the individual, it also dramatically announces the wearer to the world,” Kuhns writes.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, Sr. Duong Y, IMM was the only religious sister studying at DWC from her

SISTERS’ RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

CDM Daughters of Mary of Phu Cuong
CPS..... Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood
FMV..... Daughters of Our Lady of Visitation
IHM Immaculate Heart of Mary
IHMR... Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Reparatrix-Ggogonya
IMM Our Lady of Miraculous Medal
LHC Lovers of the Holy Cross
LSMIG.. Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu
MQP Mary Queen of Peace
MSC..... Missionary Sisters of Charity of Vinh Diocese
OP Dominican Sisters
PSP Sisters of Providence of Saint Paul of Kara/Togo
SON..... Sisters of the Nativity
SSpS Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit
SST Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus of Buea

congregation, Our Lady of Miraculous Medal. Her habit is unique in that it includes an intricately detailed and colorful collar. The accessory is handmade by sisters from her congregation with help from members of the local community in Vietnam, many of whom have physical disabilities. The collar is reserved for Sunday Masses and special occasions. It serves as a reminder to her that the congregation is home to an ethnically-diverse community of religious sisters who strive to preserve the traditions of the various cultures they serve.

Sr. Duong says when she started wearing the habit, it took a lot of time to get it just right. Now, she gets dressed and adds her veil in no time at all. It makes her feel a sense of pride when she wears the outfit, as it connects her to her community. “When I wear my habit, I feel happy because it means I follow God and I know who I am inside,” she said.

“When I wear normal clothes, I can run or walk easily but, in the habit, I need to be careful and not run. I am aware that I am a sister of the Our Lady of Miraculous Medal.” When she’s wearing other clothes, Sr. Duong said no one recognizes her as a religious sister of Our Lady Miraculous Medal but when she in her habit, they are curious and ask questions about her congregation and her life. Her feelings about wearing her habit are simple and clear, “I do not feel shame about my habit, I feel proud,” said Sr. Duong.



Sr. Duong Y, IMM



1 Sr. Isabel Mula, CPS reads during the college's celebration of St. Josephine Bakhita. The event honors the Sudanese woman who was a slave before she escaped to freedom and became a religious sister.

2 Culture Week is a DWC tradition that gives students an opportunity to enlighten the college community about the customs and traditions of their culture. Students of Burmese heritage shared sights, sounds and flavors of Myanmar.

3 Lunar New Year is widely celebrated in Asian countries but at DWC, everyone gets involved! This dance performance by students from various cultural backgrounds filled the stage and inspired guests to dance and sing along.



4 DWC student Hoang Son Vu rolled up his sleeves after class to work on the landscaping and help keep the Divine Word College campus beautiful. Indeed, many hands make light work!

5 Antz-Carly Cadet kneels before the crucifix in remembrance of the Passion of Christ. The cross is held by Do Kim Tuang (left) and Wilson Joseph (right) during the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday.

6 Formation groups at DWC do more than just pray — they lend a helping hand around the college like these sisters who did dishes after lunch. They also use these opportunities to bond as a group.

7 Fr. Huy Quoc Huu Nguyen gets involved in a lively game of charades during a meeting of the college's English Club. Games are a fun way to encourage ESL students to practice their language skills.

8 The annual volleyball tournament is a fun DWC tradition that helps students stay active even during cold weather. Those who don't play line the edges of the gymnasium to cheer on the players.

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