



# ALWAYS READY TO SERVE

## Table tennis champ sets his sights on religious life

At 37, DWC Senior Hoang Son Vu has had his fair share of life experiences. Once a promising table tennis player in the Omnipong Table Tennis system in California, today he's more focused on how he can serve God than how he can serve a ping pong ball.



When he was a little boy in Vitenam, Hoang Son says his mother was spiritual but his grandmother was the one who took him to church. Back then, he didn't have much interest in religion.

He moved to Saigon for high school and had his first experience away from his family. During that time, Hoang Son considered leaving the church altogether. He felt uneasy when he saw people who dutifully attended Mass but did not live like Christians.

Then when he was attending university, Hoang Son met a priest who liked table tennis and the two started playing the game together. The priest started mentoring Hoang Son and became his spiritual guide. The priest's younger sister, who is a religious sister, also helped him find direction for his life. With their guidance, he gradually became more involved in the Church community. He joined the choir and felt inspired by their service to the poor. The sister asked him one day if he ever considered being a priest. He was surprised and felt challenged by her question. "I said 'are you kidding me?' I never thought about that before," he said. He took a lot of time to consider the idea, explore religious life and discern whether it was something he felt called to pursue.

Hoang Son was seriously thinking about becoming a priest when he learned about the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). He entered formation in Nha Trang and later immigrated to California with his family. Hoang Son made new friends in the United States and continued playing competitive table tennis. Still, he says he didn't find real happiness with the party lifestyle that most of his peers enjoyed. He was winning matches and even taking home some prize money, but it felt like something was missing in his life.

That's when Hoang Son met Vocation Director Fr. Anthony Cong Nguyen, SVD and got enrolled at DWC. During his time at the college, Hoang Son has improved his English and continued discerning his vocation. This May, he expects to graduate with a certificate in Theology.