Fall 2026

the DWC World

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



WHAT'S INSIDE



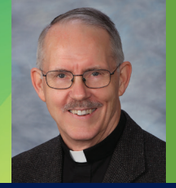
Faces of DWC

One Family, Many Faces

Every year in early September, Divine Word College celebrates Family Feast, a joyful tradition that brings the campus community together as one Arnoldus Family. Students spend the day playing games, dancing, laughing and simply enjoying time together outside the classroom. But Family Feast is about more than having fun. It is also a celebration of the shared spiritual family formed by the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS), and the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, congregations founded by St. Arnold Janssen. SVD Priests and Brothers who serve at the College and SSpS Sisters join students for this special day, strengthening the bonds that connect the College community. In the midst of games and laughter, Family Feast offers a reminder that at DWC, people from many countries, cultures and walks of life come together as one family, united by a shared missionary spirit.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD



Facing the Future – Together

A rabbi once asked his students, "When is it dawn?"

One student replied, "Rabbi, night is over and day arrives when you can see a house in the distance and determine whether it is your house or your neighbors."

Another student said, "Night is over and day has arrived when you can see a flower in the garden and distinguish its color."

"No, no, no," the rabbi replied. "You are seeing only separations and distinctions. No. Night is over and day arrives when you can look into the face of the person beside you and see that he is your brother, that she is your sister. Night is over when you can see that you belong to one another, that you are one. Night has ended and day has arrived when you can see God in the face of the other."

There is a long tradition in the religious congregations founded by St. Arnold Janssen SVD, of seeing one another as family. The Arnoldus Family – including Divine Word Missionaries, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, and lay associates – seeks to live as "brothers and sisters to one another."



At Divine Word College, the students, faculty and staff come from more than 20 countries, yet we are united by one mission. I am constantly "recharged" by their generosity, joy and openness. Even the obstacles we encounter seem lighter when we know that we are facing the future together. DWC celebrates this diversity in unity through the expression, **"One heart, many faces."**

You too, are part of this family as, together, we turn hope-filled faces toward the dawning of God's Kingdom. On that day, all people will recognize that we are brothers and sisters, that we belong together, and that all humanity is truly one heart, many faces.

Fr. Tom

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More Than a Booth

Each August, about 80,000 people make their way to Carthage, Missouri, for a four-day celebration honoring the Virgin Mary called Marian Days. Now in its 47th year, this annual festival and pilgrimage draws Vietnamese American Catholics from across the country and beyond.

In addition to events such as Masses, Eucharistic adoration, musical performances and workshops on a variety of topics, Catholic religious orders and congregations set up booths to connect with attendees and share information about their communities. Divine Word Missionary Vocation Directors are regular participants, often bringing DWC students along to meet young people interested in learning more about the SVDs and Divine Word College.

And they don't just talk! DWC students sing, dance and play music, making the Divine Word Missionaries booth one of the most interactive and popular at the festival. Over the years, these encounters have helped introduce young people to the SVDs, and for some, that first encounter can be the beginning of a vocation journey.



DWC students joined Divine Word Missionary Vocation Directors and fellow SVDs at this year's Marian Days in Carthage, Missouri.

A Mission Made Possible Together



Fr. Linh Pham, SVD
Development Office

Life is more than a series of moments that come and go. The experiences we share remain with us, shaping who we are and reminding us of the people and communities that have been part of our journey.

The same is true of our shared mission at Divine Word College. Through the work of preparing future missionaries, we are invited to take part in God's mission in the world. That mission is made possible not only by those who study, teach and serve at DWC, but also by the many friends and benefactors who support the College with their prayers, financial gifts and time.

You are part of that mission.

Because of your support, students from around the world have the opportunity to receive an education and formation that prepares them for service to the Church and to people in communities around the world. Your generosity also helps Divine Word College meet the financial challenges of carrying out this mission and gives others the opportunity to become co-missionaries through their own support and involvement.

As we look back with gratitude, we are especially thankful for those who have given generously of their time and talents. One example is Mr. Doug Stillings, who has continued to serve Divine Word College following his retirement from the banking industry through his work with the DWC Board of Trustees in the areas of Development and External Affairs.

As we look toward the future, may we continue to walk together as contributors, co-workers and sharers in God's mission. **Thank you for being part of the Divine Word College community and for helping the mission continue.**

Doug Stillings Honored with Donaghey Award

In October, Doug Stillings received Divine Word College's Donaghey Award in recognition of his decades of loyal service and dedication to the College.

Doug came to know DWC through his work at Dubuque Bank and Trust, where he spent about 30 years and retired as a Senior Vice President. As the College's banker, he helped with systems and fraud prevention before becoming more involved in the DWC community.

His involvement outside his role as banker began with the College's former Spring Brunch fundraiser in the late 1990s. From there, Doug became a familiar presence at DWC. He served on the Board of Trustees from 2012 to 2025 and currently serves on the Development and External Affairs Committee.

The Donaghey Award, established in 1999, honors individuals and groups who demonstrate a lasting commitment to the mission of Divine Word College. It is named for Rev. John Donaghey, SVD, who served the College as an instructor, dean of students, vice president of academic affairs, president and longtime Board of Trustees member.



From left, PR Director/ Coordinator for External Affairs Sandy Wilgenbusch, Doug Stillings and College President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD.

"What I have appreciated most about Doug is that his support has always gone beyond simply fulfilling a responsibility," said DWC Development Director Fr. Linh Pham, SVD. "He brings wisdom, encouragement, and a willingness to help."

For Doug, much of that dedication comes from the students themselves.

"I am fascinated by the dedication, devotion and work that the students put in, because that is what our Lord needs," he said. "The students are the reason I do everything out there."

Doug said the experiences of DWC students, and the challenges many overcome to pursue their vocations, have given him a deeper appreciation for his own blessings. Most recently, he helped initiate the Trustee Scholarship Fund, providing a way for current and past trustees to support future DWC students.

Faces of DWC

Our students come from many countries, but the diversity of DWC goes beyond geography. Each brings a unique story, vocation and hope for the future as they prepare for lives of service. Meet a few Faces of DWC.





Bro. Hanh Nguyen, OCist

Undergraduate Program | Religious Brother

Vietnam

Where I've been...

Bro. Hanh studied at a maritime college and spent 10 years working as an officer on a cargo ship before entering religious formation to become a Cistercian monk. He has a God-given gift for sculpting stone, which he uses to beautify the grounds of his monastery.

Where I'm going...

Bro. Hanh plans to further his education by earning a master's degree in philosophy before returning to his monastery in Vietnam. There, he hopes to help his brothers learn English and philosophy and adapt to a changing world.



Nhat Duc Minh Nguyen

Pre-Theology Certificate Program | SVD Candidate

Vietnam

Where I've been...

Nhat moved to California at age 24 and earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. He then spent two years working as an aeronautics test engineer before enrolling at Divine Word College and beginning formation with the Society of the Divine Word.

Where I'm going...

"Regardless of what I do, I want to help the people around me," he said. "If God calls me to commit to one person or to a family, I will do that to the best of my ability. If God sees that I am capable of serving the Church in religious life, then I will do it with all my heart."



Philip Porowe

Intensive English Language Institute | Diocesan Seminarian

Papua New Guinea

Where I've been...

Philip knew he wanted to become a priest from the time he was a young altar server. After high school, he entered seminary, where he spent five years before coming to Divine Word College to learn English and pursue a bachelor's degree in philosophy.

Where I'm going...

Philip hopes to return home and be ordained as a diocesan priest. Eventually, he would like to teach philosophy in a seminary, where he sees a great need for philosophy teachers. That need is part of what brought him to the United States to pursue his own studies.

Sr. Hope Albersia, SSpS

Intensive English Language Institute | SSpS Sister

Indonesia

Where I've been...

After professing Perpetual Vows in 2018, Sr. Albersia spent seven years in Brazil working with poor and Indigenous communities in the Amazon. Her ministry included working with children and young expectant mothers, serving elderly people and supporting parish catechesis. She also worked as a video editor on projects for the diocese and her congregation.

Where I'm going...

Sr. Albersia's congregation sent her to Divine Word College to learn English. After completing her studies, she plans to return to the Amazon, where she hopes to teach basic English to indigenous and rural children who have limited educational opportunities. She also hopes to communicate more effectively with members of her congregation around the world during their monthly video meetings, where they use English to plan communication strategies and projects to share the mission and work of the SSpS.



Frt. Joanico Sarmento, SVD

Undergraduate Program | SVD Member in First Vows

Timor-Leste

Where I've been...

When he was in middle school, Frt. Joanico moved from his family's home in rural Timor-Leste to a town where the SVD operated a junior high school. As he came to know the congregation, he felt called to religious life and entered formation. He completed his novitiate in the Philippines and professed First Vows in 2025.

Where I'm going...

After earning his undergraduate degree at DWC, Frt. Joanico plans to continue his education at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. After that, he hopes to serve in religious formation, inspired by his novice master's words that formation is the heart of the congregation and the heart of the Church. Without it, they can't survive. He is open to serving wherever the SVD needs him, but he also sees a particular need in his home country for young seminarians to encounter the example of a local priest who understands their culture and language.



Sr. Francine Mave Indekanza, OLVSM

Intensive English Language Institute | Religious Sister

Democratic Republic of Congo

Where I've been...

Sr. Francine knew from childhood that she wanted to become a religious sister. After completing school, she entered religious formation with a missionary congregation in West Africa. She then spent three years teaching at a primary school, where she was the sole teacher for 80 six-year-olds and accompanied them throughout their early education.

Where I'm going...

As part of her religious vocation, Sr. Francine welcomed the opportunity to come to the United States to learn English. She plans to continue her education in DWC's undergraduate program, knowing her new language skills will be useful to her missionary congregation. "I hope to serve all the people in the world, because I am sent for them," she said.

Campus Connections



A Taste of DWC at RAGBRAI





In July, an estimated 30,000 people passed through Epworth, Iowa—a town of just 2,000—as part of RAGBRAI, the world's oldest, largest and longest recreational multi-day bicycle ride. It had been more than 30 years since this famous Iowa ride last passed through Epworth, and Divine Word College was ready to welcome the crowds! DWC students brought a little color and culture to RAGBRAI with performances, including a traditional lion dance, and helped serve 3,000 Vietnamese pork eggrolls made with help from the Vietnamese community in Davenport. The delicious treat gave hungry riders a taste of the many cultures represented at Divine Word College.



Sisters Get in the Act - The fun continued the following weekend at Epworth's annual Town & Country Days parade. With a 1990s movie theme, DWC's winning float paid tribute to the 1992 film "Sister Act." Real religious sisters got in the act, singing songs from the movie and bringing smiles along the parade route. More than 30 other students, employees and friends joined the fun in '90s attire, walking alongside the float and tossing candy and music makers to kids.

A Journey GUIDED BY FAITH

AND A WILLINGNESS TO TRY



When Chinh Pham first arrived at Divine Word College, he saw Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD, working in the garden. Not knowing who he was, Chinh wondered, "Why did the school hire a gardener who was so old?" He later learned that the "gardener" was actually the college president. The experience still makes him smile and remains one of his strongest early memories of campus life.

At 23, his journey has already taken him through several countries and cultures. He left Vietnam at 13 and studied in the Philippines for four years. He later moved to Canada for high school. Leaving home at a young age was difficult. Some relatives questioned why his mother would allow him to travel abroad when he had no immediate family there. His mother cried as others criticized her decision. Still, when she asked whether he was willing to go, he responded simply, "Okay, let me try."

"The willingness to try has shaped my life," he said. Even before leaving Vietnam, he had experience living away from his family. At 10, he stayed with the De La Salle Brothers while attending school from sixth through eighth grade.

Looking back, Chinh sees God's guidance throughout these unexpected changes. "I feel very blessed because God planned everything for me," he said.

Chinh's interest in the priesthood began in childhood. His grandfather brought him to church and taught him how to pray. Chinh remembers watching a priest preach while wearing colorful vestments, and thinking, "I hope that I become a priest one day."

As years passed, that childhood dream became less clear. Chinh had a comfortable life in Canada: a job, education, friends, and financial independence. Nevertheless, he gave it all up to accept the invitation to discern a vocation with Divine Word Missionaries at DWC with the familiar words, "Why not? Why don't I try?"

His first impression of Iowa was unforgettable. Coming from a large city, Chinh looked around, and all he could see was cornfields. At first, the quiet environment was stressful. Over time, he learned to appreciate the peace of the campus.

Now as student senate president, he has grown in maturity, communication, and respect for cultural differences through community service and leadership responsibilities. "Through each leadership role, I grow day by day," he explained.

Chinh expects to graduate in May and hopes to apply to the novitiate to continue discerning his vocation.

Through the generosity of our benefactors and friends, students like Chinh receive more than an education. They find a community where their faith, leadership, and vocation can grow.

SSpS SISTERS:

125 Years of Mission in the US, 20 Years at DWC

A shared history with the SVD helped open a new chapter at DWC

This year, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) celebrate 125 years of missionary service in the United States.

Founded by St. Arnold Janssen in 1889, the SSpS share their roots with the Society of the Divine Word and the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters. Together, these communities form the Arnoldus Family, united by a common missionary spirit.

That shared mission has also shaped the story of Divine Word College. In 2006, SSpS Sisters were selected as the College's first women religious students, building on the longstanding relationship between the SSpS and the Society of the Divine Word. Their presence helped blaze a new path at DWC, paving the way for sisters from many other congregations to become part of the College community.

"SSpS Sisters bring a distinct feminine perspective to missionary formation through their living example, especially with the SVD brothers, building a community across cultures, genders, ages, and languages," said Sr. Aprilia Untarto, SSpS, Associate Dean of Students.

For Sr. Carol Welp, SSpS, that kind of shared formation is rooted in the relationships students build with one another. A spiritual director and formator at DWC, she has seen sisters who studied at the College carry their experiences of intercultural community into ministries around the world.

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS)

Founded: 1889, Steyl, Netherlands, by St. Arnold Janssen

Founding Sisters: Blessed Maria Helena Stollenwerk and Blessed Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns

Today: 2,744 Sisters serving in 49 countries

Mission: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the SSpS proclaim the Gospel and work with people of diverse cultures and traditions to promote human dignity, life-giving relationships, justice, peace and care for creation.

Today, **45 SSpS sisters have studied at Divine Word College**, part of the **230 women religious from 57 congregations** who have been part of the DWC community. SSpS Sisters have contributed to campus life as students, classmates, mentors, leaders and members of the wider DWC community.

As the SSpS look toward the future, Sr. Carol remains hopeful about the congregation's continued response to the needs of a changing world.

"It's such a privilege to work with the next generation of the Church and to see their dedication, their spontaneity and their readiness to go forward," she said.



The first four SSpS Sisters to study at DWC clockwise from bottom left: Sr. Gladys Smith, Sr. Maria Eugenia Ojeda, Sr. Ana Julita Belu Bau, and Sr. Alexis (Christina) S. Tjahjani.



SSpS Sisters who currently live in community in the congregation's house near campus, from left: Sr. Aprilia Untarto, Sr. Carol Welp, Sr. Hope Albersia, Sr. Retno Yebrink

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