

the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



WHAT'S INSIDE

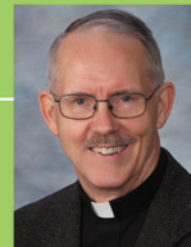


Former ESL student returns to celebrate Mass

Welcoming the year of the cat

While most Americans spent a few hours on the evening of December 31 ringing in the new year, many Asian countries celebrated later in January and the party lasted for days! At Divine Word College, we celebrate the Vietnamese tradition of Lunar New Year, or “Tết,” each year. During this liturgy, the chapel is decorated with traditional flowers, students perform the famous lion dance and the pews are filled with people donning brightly-colored outfits. Based on the Vietnamese zodiac calendar, 2023 is the year of the Cat. In China and several other countries, 2023 is celebrated as the year of the Rabbit. Most years the calendars are the same but this year is an exception. At the end of Mass, the celebrants distribute “lì xì” or “lucky money” to everyone in attendance. Afterward, the party continues with a banquet, live music, dancing and games in the gym.

WE CAN THRIVE WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS...



Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD

In the mid 1960s, John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles wrote a song for their friend and bandmate Ringo Starr. The lyric and tune can really get into your head, “I get by with a little help from my friends.” Since then, more than 50 other artists have recorded their own versions of the song. When I sing the song, it usually comes out as: We can thrive with a little help from our friends!

Making friends is a basic skill for every missionary. Inviting newcomers to follow Jesus to God’s Kingdom is not so much a crowd activity as it is a person-to-person sharing. Missionary service best takes root in the fertile earth of friendship. Jesus said, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.... I have called you friends... (and) chose you to go and bear fruit that will remain.” (Jn15)

Sometimes we imagine that missionaries are lonely heroes; but mostly, missionaries’ lives are crowded with friends. Some are fellow missionaries; some are poor people; some are folks of other cultures and religions; some are faith-seekers. And, some are benefactors and prayer partners.

As I count up my own friends here at Divine Word College, I can’t help but hum a tune, “we just THRIVE with a little help from our friends!”

Fr. Tom

Public events return to DWC

The academic year at Divine Word College is looking more “normal” than it has since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

While still observing health safety measures, the school started holding public events again. In the fall, the community returned to its annual public celebration of World Mission Sunday. This spring, the college will once again host hundreds of sixth graders from area Catholic schools for a Vocation Awareness Day field trip. The event is sponsored by the Dubuque Area Vocation Association (DAVA). Students play games, participate in activities and listen to presentations by members of several religious congregations as they explore the concept of a religious vocation. The aim of the annual event is to raise awareness about religious life and provide students an opportunity to interact with religious sisters, priests, brothers and deacons.

Along with the return of a few regular events, a group of the college’s faculty members initiated a new workshop on trauma and healing that will be offered this spring. They hope to help area professionals who regularly encounter trauma in their careers, like first responders, educators and clergy. Whether it’s at daily Mass or while hosting groups like the Knights of Columbus or the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women, the DWC community has been grateful to return to its missionary roots and welcome people back to the Divine Word College campus.

If you’re in the area, **JOIN US** for daily Mass at 8 a.m. Monday – Saturday or at 10 a.m. on Sundays in the main chapel.



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email info@dwci.edu, or visit: www.dwci.edu



Mission Sunday celebration in October 2022

ALL IN THE FAMILY



The Society of the Divine Word has a common saying to describe the members of the intercultural order, “One heart, many faces.” In Fr. John Yangia’s case, that face has a big, infectious smile on it. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Fr. John did most of his religious formation in his home country. Then in 2015, he enrolled at Divine Word College to learn English. He was determined to improve his language skills and interact with as many people as possible during his time at the school. As a missionary, Fr. John knew he’d need to learn to connect and engage with people.

One day while riding his bike through town, Fr. John took the opportunity to

meet some local residents. They talked for a bit and he told them about his studies. Soon, a friendship blossomed and before long, he was like a member of the family. He was introduced to parents, siblings and cousins. Fr. John was even invited to join the family for Thanksgiving and on his birthday, they surprised him with a party.

After a year at DWC, Fr. John completed his English studies and moved to Tallahassee, Florida where he did parish work for about a year. In 2018, he moved back to his home country and was ordained. Today, he works in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a vocation director, the director of a spiritual retreat center

and serves as a coordinator for the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Network representing the AFRAM zone.

In January, Fr. John was delighted to have the opportunity to return to the United States briefly. He visited Divine Word College and celebrated Mass for many people who touched his life during his time at the school, including a large group of local residents who have become like a second family to him.

“I was so excited to come back. It was like a dream to me,” he said. “I was glad for them to see me as a priest and also to offer Mass for them. It was kind of like a way to say ‘thank you.’”

Discerning God’s will for your life

Among the things an SVD candidate must learn in his religious formation is the art of discerning the will of God. Only in patterning one’s life after what God wants for himself can a seminarian’s pursuit of an SVD religious vocation truly bear fruit.

This idea receives its model and inspiration from none other than Jesus Christ Himself. In the process of manifesting God’s will to humanity, the Word-Made-Flesh must first discern what God the Father wants to accomplish in His person through the working power of the Holy Spirit. This discernment process takes place through moments spent alone in prayer and meditation by the Lord, which readers of the four books of the Gospel will notice throughout Jesus’ life on earth.

It was through the discernment of God’s will that the Founder of the Society of the Divine Word,

Fr. Arnold Janssen, could set about to accomplish what one Catholic bishop reportedly remarked as belonging to a dream of either a fool or a saint! Discerning God’s will in founding the three religious missionary congregations has indeed made Fr. Janssen a Catholic saint, whose feast day is on January 15 each year.

Would you like to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? Would you like to trace the missionary path trodden by St. Arnold? Then begin today by discerning God’s will for your life. Take some quiet time to reflect on what you are going through in the present moment, what you experienced in the last few hours, today, this week, this month, this year. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to see clearly the presence of God in the midst of things that have taken place. Hold on to that presence and begin to truly live God’s gift of life!



*Fr. Linh Pham, SVD
Development
Office*



My teacher is my **CLASSMATE**



Antz Cadet

Antz Cadet grew up in Haiti where he spoke Haitian Creole. As a boy, he learned just a bit of English and Spanish in school but not enough to master either language. Feeling that God may be calling him to religious life, he enrolled at Divine Word College in 2019 but before he could dive into classes like

philosophy and theology, he needed to learn English. He started in Level 1 of the Intensive English Language Institute.

English as a Second Language Senior Instructor Michelle Vargo was one of his first teachers. Antz said she was energetic and made learning exciting. It didn't take long for Antz to start picking up English and after a few semesters, he moved onto the undergraduate program.

This past fall, Antz started his senior year. He signed up for an Introduction to Spanish class, hoping to expand what he learned as a child.

On the first day of class when students started filing in, a familiar face entered the room. Vargo, who also had some experience with Spanish but had not seriously practiced in about 20 years, was taking the class, too. Antz and his first ESL teacher were about to spend another semester together learning a language but this time they were both students.

From time to time, DWC faculty and staff enroll in classes to learn a new skill or enrich their understanding of a familiar subject.

"I think it's a humble gesture for them," Antz said. The situation wasn't just unusual for Antz. Several of Michelle's other former students were in the Spanish class and many of them knew

she had prior experience with the language. She said that increased her stress when it was time to present in class but she knew that even her missteps could be a teaching opportunity for her students-turned-classmates.

"I hope they learned that learning a language is important, it's time-consuming, it's useful and everybody makes mistakes, even the teacher," Michelle said. "I think students perceive English teachers as being highly intelligent and very gifted with language, and we are with English, but maybe we're not as gifted with other languages. So, it was important to me that they could see that I make mistakes and I'm not perfect and that it is ok to not be perfect."

Antz said it's comforting to know that some DWC instructors, like Michelle, understand firsthand what it feels like for their students to learn a new language.

FROM ENGINEER TO SEMINARIAN

When Miguel Toribio Romo Romo was growing up in Jalostotitlan, Mexico, he was confident that he'd be a priest someday. His uncle, Fr. Tony Romo Romo, is a Divine Word Missionary and set an attainable example for the faith-filled child.

As the oldest in his family, Miguel spent his days caring for his four sisters while their mother worked in the home. He cooked and entertained them by reading from a children's bible and pretending to celebrate Mass. His uncle gave Miguel and all of his cousins a prayer for religious vocations but Miguel was already convinced that he was being called. He joined a choir that practiced at a local seminary and felt at home each time he visited. Miguel was firm in his vocation throughout middle school but then in high school, things changed. He took a philosophy class and earned a good grade but he didn't enjoy the class and it changed his perspective about his vocation. Suddenly confused about his purpose for the first time, he enrolled at a college two hours from his home. Miguel spent five years working toward his bachelor's degree in electronic engineering. During that period, he spent time with friends, received good grades and dated casually. Every Sunday, he drove back to his hometown to attend Mass and participate in the choir.

In May 2020, Miguel graduated. At that same time, businesses all around Mexico were closing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and Miguel found himself looking for an alternative plan. His uncle Tony suggested that Miguel enroll at Divine Word College to learn English. The nephew agreed but made it clear that he no longer had an interest in being a priest.



Miguel Toribio Romo Romo

God, it would seem, had a different plan.

Wanting to maximize his opportunity to learn English, Miguel attended formation events even though he wasn't a seminarian. He developed friendships with SVD candidates and quickly found himself again pondering whether God was calling him to consecrated life.

That summer, Miguel had an experience that reaffirmed his call. While spending time with his uncle, he watched as Fr. Tony talked with a woman who had lived a very difficult life. She wasn't Catholic, but by the end of the encounter, she expressed a desire to be baptized. "The way that my uncle helped her to find God's love, it made me think 'Oh, I could do that,'" Miguel recalls. "I think that was the moment where I decided that I wanted to think seriously about being a seminarian again."

After connecting with a vocation director and following the steps to become an SVD candidate, Miguel finished his English studies in December 2021. His uncle offered some encouraging words about philosophy. Feeling more prepared, Miguel set out to complete three semesters of undergraduate classes with a heavy emphasis on philosophy. Today, he feels more fondness for the discipline and says he understands it much better. He is on track to graduate this May and hopes to continue discerning his call to religious life as a Divine Word Missionary.

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



Adjusting to Midwest winters

Each year as the temperatures drop and the ground turns white with snow, students from tropical climates often have their first encounter with the fluffy white stuff! It's not uncommon to catch a group of new students tossing the flakes up in the air, making a snowman or trying out the infamous sledding hill at the front of campus. It's just another aspect of their education that they'll likely always remember from their time in Epworth.



A festival of culture and Mother Mary

On November 19, Divine Word College held its annual holy Mass honoring Mary, the Queen of the Americas. The event was planned by the college's Association of Hispanic Americans. After Mass, attendees enjoyed a banquet with multicultural cuisine, like Mexican tamales and a traditional American turkey dinner. Celebrations like this allow students to reconnect with their own cultures, participate in the customs of their peers and share diverse traditions with the members of the DWC community.



Christmas carolers hit the town

A group of DWC faculty, staff and students teamed up this December to spread Christmas cheer during the annual Epworth Country Christmas event. The carolers took their holiday tunes to Silker's (pictured here), the fire station, and the Pizza Factory. Many international students aren't familiar with traditional American carols, so this event is an opportunity for them to learn the songs while experiencing a taste of the holidays here in the US.



Ping Pong Tournament

There are lots of ways for students at Divine Word College to get involved and stay active. Each year, one student is appointed as the sports coordinator. That person organizes a variety of recreational sports and activities to keep everyone engaged and fit. When it's too cold for outdoor sports like soccer, students move indoors for sports like volleyball, basketball and badminton. This year, the ping pong tournament drew quite the crowd as the competition heated up!

COUPLE AWARDED FOR OPENING THEIR HEARTS AND HOME



In November, Divine Word College presented Epworth residents Lloyd and Dianne McDermott with the Matthew 25 Award for their many years of service to the college, as well as people around the world.

Over the past 24 years, the McDermotts have invited 12 international students into their home, including 10 from Divine Word College. With love and support, they provided so much more than a roof over their heads. The couple taught students about American culture and gave them an immersive environment to practice their new English skills. In return, the McDermotts say the students taught them about the cultures of their own countries, which included Japan, South Korea, Haiti, France, the Philippines, Belarus and China. Lloyd and Dianne have also been an important part of the Friends Across Nations Club at Divine Word, serving as a surrogate American family of sorts to international students who live on campus.

The McDermotts' charitable efforts extend outside of DWC, too. After retiring, Lloyd and Dianne decided they wanted to travel and leave a "footprint" behind wherever they went. Since then, they've worked with numerous organizations to pitch in after natural disasters and help people living in poverty both in the U.S. and abroad. During a trip to Haiti, Dianne had an encounter with people who didn't have anything – not even a basic shelter. When she returned home, she organized an effort at St. Patrick's Church in Epworth with the help of the St. Elizabeth Pastorate and managed to raise \$17,000 to fund the construction of a building in that community in Haiti.

Lloyd said that as a boy, he didn't understand why he needed to study geography because he knew he'd never go to any of the places on the world map. Today, he says the experiences of traveling and serving as a host family for international students has allowed him to feel more connected to world issues. Dianne agreed, saying that travel has a way of making the world smaller. "When you go to a country and you see their culture and you meet the people, you can't look at it as just a place on a map anymore," she said. "There are good people wherever you go." The McDermotts have four children and 10 grandchildren but after many years of service and sacrifice, the love of their new extended family stretches across nations.



The Matthew 25 Award was established at DWC in 2001 to honor those in or connected to the area, who minister in the spirit of the Gospel message put forth in Matthew 25:35-36:

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

MercyOne Dubuque receives Donaghey Award

The Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service was established in 1999 and named for the late Fr. John Donaghey, SVD, who dedicated much of his life to the college. He served as an instructor, vice president for Academic Affairs, president, and as a longtime member of the DWC Board of Trustees.

MERCYONE Divine Word Missionaries dedicate their lives to serving people in need but sometimes they find themselves on the receiving end of compassionate support. For decades, MercyOne Dubuque and MercyOne Dyersville Medical Centers have generously offered Divine Word College students discounted medical services when they were in need. Their assistance in times of crisis allowed students to recover quickly and remain focused on their studies.

To honor these extraordinary efforts, Divine Word College has named MercyOne Dubuque and MercyOne Dyersville Medical Centers recipients of the 2023 Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service. Kay Takes, president of MercyOne's eastern Iowa region, including the MercyOne medical centers in Dubuque and Dyersville, states, "MercyOne strives to ensure that all people have access to care, no matter the

circumstances. The Sisters of Mercy, who founded MercyOne in Dubuque in 1879, set a great example and continue to influence our organization's identity today."

"Access to health insurance can be a challenge for some patients," Takes said, "but MercyOne is committed to providing care to all those in need. Our staff go above and beyond to remove barriers to care, including providing financial assistance when appropriate." Takes said the organization takes its role as a community leader very seriously. MercyOne's mission, to serve together in the spirit of the Gospel, as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities, is well aligned with the mission of Divine Word. "We are grateful for our relationship and happy to support Divine Word students who are also committed to service and charitable work. We are honored to receive this very special recognition," Takes said.



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September 18 - 30, 2023

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Rector, Divine Word College

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