

# GRADUATES UNITED IN LEADERSHIP, DEDICATION TO SERVICE

*After students leave Divine Word College, they go on to do all sorts of things. Some men continue to discern a religious vocation and eventually take vows as Divine Word Missionary Priests or Brothers. Others take different paths. They become diocesan priests or deacons, they continue as religious sisters or start families and careers.*

*No matter where life leads them, DWC graduates carry the spirit of service and commitment to community that is instilled in them during their time in Epworth. The places they live around the world are shaped, in part, by their leadership and humanitarianism.*



**PAUL C. HOANG**  
2003 graduate - Licensed  
clinical social worker

During his time at DWC, Paul started to uncover how his experience of fleeing Vietnam by boat at age 7 impacted his mental health. He didn't even know what mental illness was until the topic came up during a psychology class at the college. That's when Paul realized that he might be suffering from depression and post-traumatic stress

disorder. The instructors and formation leaders helped him start processing the trauma he endured and gave him the tools he needed to begin healing. Later in his discernment, Paul traveled to Japan and the Philippines. In each place, he stopped to consider how the culture of these places impacted the psychology of the people living there. On the surface, Japan was beautiful, safe, clean and filled with successful people, but he learned that their suicide rate was one of the highest in the world. In the Philippines, he witnessed profound poverty and learned that some people live at an enormous garbage dump. Still, he saw a genuine joy and generosity in them. These contradictory concepts made him curious to learn more.

After seven years in formation with the SVD, Paul discerned out of the program. He attended Loyola University in Chicago and earned his master's in social work. "I feel a true vocation," he said. "I feel that my time in the seminary and in ministry led me to where I am in my calling to serve those who are experiencing mental health challenges or mental illness, specifically those who are contemplating suicide or are experiencing suicidal thoughts."

Today, Paul lives in California with his wife and two kids. For nearly 14 years, he worked for the Orange County Health Care Agency. He specialized in emergency mental health and disaster response services. He also trained people in crisis prevention and intervention. Paul founded and serves as executive director of an organization called Moving Forward Psychological Institute.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, he realized that the government couldn't respond fast enough to the growing need for mental health support, so he took a leap of faith and left his full-time job with the county to dedicate more time to Moving Forward. In addition, Paul also started a nonprofit organization called Viet-CARE several years ago. This group aims to reduce the stigma in the Asian and Pacific Islander communities surrounding mental health disorders. "The spirituality of Fr. Janssen still resonates with me and I carry that with me daily in my work," Paul said. "I believe that this is my ministry, my life's vocation and my calling. I'm grateful for my time with SVD."



*Photo by Chuck Decker*

**FR. RAMON URBINA**  
2014 graduate - Diocesan priest

Fr. Ramon spent three years discerning life as a Divine Word Missionary Priest at Divine Word College and at the Novitiate at Techny before he discovered that missionary life didn't suit him. He says the SVDs he met were all filled with joy for their work, but he longed to have more connection with the sacramental aspect of the priesthood than many missionaries experience.

After leaving, he turned his sights to life as a diocesan priest and was ordained in May 2022. Today, he's the Parochial Vicar of St. Bonaventure Catholic Community in Concord, California. He serves a diverse community of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking members and said the demand for Spanish ministry is increasing.

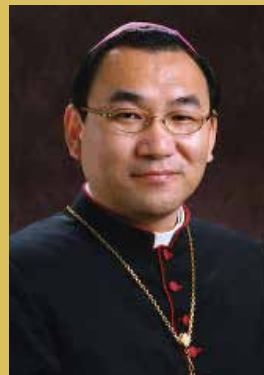
"The most rewarding part about priesthood has been hearing confessions," he said. "It's a beautiful sacrament Jesus left for the Church and the best way to remind people that there is nothing they can do that would separate them from the love of God."

Fr. Ramon says his time at Divine Word College taught him how to treat people, a lesson that serves him well in his role today. "No one person is better than another, and those in authoritative positions are given the task of helping those who are less fortunate," he said. "We all share the equal blessing of being God's children. Under the SVDs, I learned to be honest and straightforward with the people I serve. I am forever grateful for everything the Divine Word Missionaries taught me."



**SR. NU THI NGOC NGUYEN, LHC**  
2015 graduate - Theology educator

Sr. Nu said that before coming to Divine Word College, she never considered teaching Bible in an academic setting because her congregation in Vietnam generally looked to priests to fill that role. "It was Fr. John Szukalski, SVD (now Vice President for Academic Affairs) who encouraged me to convince my superior that women definitely can study and have contributed greatly in the field of Biblical research," she said. She double majored in Theology & Mission and Cross-Cultural Studies at DWC before moving to Belgium and earning an MA in Theology. Today, she's back in her home country of Vietnam and teaching theology and Bible at the Dominican Theological Center in Saigon. She also works with a group of biblical scholars to translate the Bible from its original languages into Vietnamese for academic purposes.



**ARCHBISHOP TARCISIO ISAO KIKUCHI, SVD**  
ESL student in 1983 - Leader of worldwide aid group

In May, a former Divine Word College student was elected as the new president of Caritas Internationalis, a global confederation of 165 Catholic organizations working in humanitarian emergencies and international development. Archbishop Tarcisio will serve a four-year term as president of the organization, which operates in more than 200 countries and territories. He also serves as the Archbishop of Tokyo in Japan.

Caritas seeks to build a better world, especially for the poor and oppressed. In an interview about his new role, Archbishop Tarcisio said that Caritas Internationalis works to do more than provide shelter, food and aid to people in need. The organization aims to provide hope. "But we cannot bring the hope from outside," he said. "What we can do is to walk along with them to try to create hope in the hearts of those people in difficulties."