

# the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



## WHAT'S INSIDE

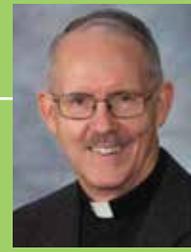


A Day in the Life  
of a Seminarian

## *A life-giving gift*

Forty Divine Word College students joined other service-minded people from the Dubuque area on a Saturday morning in November to volunteer their time packing meals for people in need. The nationwide “packathons,” as they’re known, are sponsored by Holy Name Haiti Health Promise based in New Jersey. In just one day, volunteers at the Dubuque County event managed to pack 92,160 meals that will be sent to Holy Name’s hospital in Milot, Haiti. The food will be distributed to children, pregnant and nursing mothers, the elderly and the poorest of the poor at Hôpital Sacré Coeur. Even though DWC students have busy schedules, many of them took time out of their weekends to lend a hand for this cause simply because they felt called to get involved. The event was especially meaningful to our Haitian student population.

# Time for prayer?



Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

“Every one of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy— then we need an hour.” That advice is attributed to St. Francis de Sales, the bishop of Geneva at the beginning of the 1600’s. He himself was a very busy man, so doubtless he regularly spent an hour in prayer and meditation. Every spring, as Easter approaches, I watch for the first sprouts of crocus blossoms. I know other flowers will not be far behind. And I am reminded once again that we live on the threshold of eternity. In eternity we will no longer measure out minutes, hours, days and years. But now, in this life, days come to us as gifts from God; today is unfolding as you read this, tomorrow will follow, and the days after will all arrive on time. Such Easter musings lead me back to the realization that I am already alive forever, so what am I going to do today? Today there is enough time for prayer, for work and rest, for family, for friends and strangers.

I kind of like being busy, but I do need to keep in mind St. Francis’ advice to: “avoid scruples, hurry, and anxiety of mind, which above all things hinder a soul on the road to spiritual perfection.” Scruples, hurry and anxiety spoil the gift of time, but those unhappy states can all be transformed when brought to prayer. Scruples and doubts can become trusting faith, hurry can become generosity, and worry can turn into intercession and blessing. *Life at Divine Word College is busy!* Classes, meetings, studies, friendships, assignments, ministries, exercise and parties jostle with one another on our daily calendar. So, everyone here is well-advised to find an hour for prayer. Morning and evening prayers, daily Mass, bible-sharing, rosaries, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic adoration and quiet meditation are just some of our ways of prayer. We take time to notice the river of God’s love that flows through us with his precious gifts of time. We pray for you, and are grateful that you pray for us.

Fr. Tom

## Welcoming new candidates

In January, two young men were officially accepted into the religious formation program at Divine Word College as SVD candidates. On behalf of the Formation Team, DWC Rector Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD, received and welcomed Andrew Thanh-Quang Nguyen and Tan “Martin” Duy Trinh Nguyen. Andrew is from Seattle and Tan is from Vietnam.

While most new students start in August, Divine Word College has welcomed new SVD candidates in January every year for the past 30 years with the exception of 2023 when the effects of the pandemic greatly impacted vocations.

“I am so proud of the formation program we have,” Fr. Simon said. “Its flexibility and welcoming nature make it possible for us to receive new candidates, even in the middle of the academic year. It certainly indicates the nature of the call, which does not depend on the time and season, but rather on the willingness of the heart that responds to God’s invitation.”

Since their arrival, Andrew and Tan have been busy with classes and getting acquainted with the college community. “Their presence has a great, positive impact on the group of SVD candidates, as well as the whole student body,” Fr. Simon said. “They too seem to immerse themselves well into the life of the college, making friends and participating in daily events at the college. We, as formators, may have to ‘look up’ to them because of their height, but surely, they may also ‘look up’ to us for companionship and guidance as they make their lives through formation programs as SVD candidates.”



(Left to right) Andrew Thanh-Quang Nguyen, DWC Rector Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD and Tan “Martin” Duy Trinh Nguyen



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email [info@dwci.edu](mailto:info@dwci.edu), or visit: [www.dwci.edu](http://www.dwci.edu)



# You can change the world

*Leave a gift in your Will to Divine Word College Seminary*

No other document is more personal than your Will. Through it, you can provide a gift of lasting value to assist the work of Divine Word College Seminary.

Since Divine Word opened in 1964, hundreds of generous benefactors have remembered the College with a gift in their Will. Their gifts help educate students as they prepare to share God's Word around the world.

*Through your Will*, you can assist the College in our special mission of educating Catholic missionaries - young men and women who will serve the poor, immigrants, the homeless and bear witness to Christ. *Through your Will*, you can provide a gift for the College in your name or in the name of your family or a loved one. Nancy Burds, a local Epworth resident, is doing just that.

Nancy and her deceased husband Tom, became familiar with Divine Word by attending Masses, cultural events and bringing their kids to use the swimming pool. Nancy even taught swimming lessons to Epworth children in the

Divine Word pool. Nancy, Tom and their kids especially enjoyed the variety of foods from around the world served at the events. And over the years, the Burds family became friends with many of the students, priests and brothers.

"I still see some of the students and enjoy visiting with them. Some students visited Tom in our home when he was very ill and they always left him smiling," Nancy said.

Nancy and Tom decided to leave a gift to the College in their Wills because they want to help students with their education without any financial restraints. Nancy is also grateful for all of the Divine Word priests who celebrate Masses at the local parishes.

"This really helps our parish. Without them, there would be fewer Masses. We truly love and appreciate our Divine Word neighbors," she said. It's not necessary to do so, but if you have no objection, we would like to know if you have remembered Divine Word College Seminary with a gift in your Will. We would like to thank you personally for your kindness and thoughtfulness.



Nancy Burds

If you have any questions or would like more information about leaving a gift in your Will to Divine Word, please contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-0097 or [singsank@dwci.edu](mailto:singsank@dwci.edu)

Message from Development

## God dwells among us



Fr. Linh Pham, SVD  
Development Office

There is one verse from the Gospel of John that truly speaks to the heart of the Church's Mission: "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Besides testifying to God as the Originator of creation, this verse attests to God's mission being constantly at work in humanity. In this sense, every being and every life has been touched by God's creating hand.

All we have to do is look around to see proof that God dwells among us. The evidence is in the breath of a newborn baby, the quiet resilience of an elderly person, and the alertness of a young person in pursuit of learning. You can see proof of God in the perseverance of workers who produce goods for the world, the patience of companions who assist loved ones in need, and the courage of people who stand up for the truth

amidst opposition. These are all manifestations of God being in our midst.

God is undeniably at work in the world through the Body of Christ, the Church. It is within the Church that the ongoing miracle of the Word becoming flesh is visible. As a missionary seminary, Divine Word College actively participates in this effort, offering concrete witness to the presence of the Word. In mid-December, eight students graduated and embarked on the Church's Mission in Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Vietnam. Then, in the new year, we welcomed 13 new students to the college and to the task of establishing new dwellings for the Word. Life continues, and God is ever-present! Thanks be to God for bestowing upon us the gift of salvation!

# AWARD RECIPIENT PROVIDES BEACON OF HOPE TO IMMIGRANTS



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 Bible passage 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.”



(left-to-right): Sr. Corrine Murray PBVM, College President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD, Executive Director of the Lantern Center Megan Ruiz, and Sr. Carmen Hernandez PBVM

In November, Divine Word College presented the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque with the 2023 Matthew 25 Award to recognize the organization’s incredible work in improving the lives of immigrants in the greater Dubuque area. The Lantern Center offers hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants at no cost. Students there can work one-on-one with tutors to improve their English skills, prepare for citizenship exams, learn practical life skills and meet people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In 2002, the center was opened by the Sisters of the Presentation after research showed a great need for these types of services in the area. Since then, the Lantern Center has served more than 1,700 adult immigrants.



Last semester, DWC Student Angel Rodriguez Fuentes tutored immigrants at the Lantern Center for his Ministry Practicum.

“I feel like we’re able to meet the needs of our community because of the generosity of our volunteers,” said Megan Ruiz, Executive Director of the Lantern Center. Each year, volunteers give between 3,000 and 4,300 hours of their time at the center.

Among those volunteers are a handful of Divine Word College students who spend a few hours each week working directly with immigrants. More than 90 percent of the students at Divine Word College are international students. Many of them know what it’s like to move to the United States and not speak English, so they bring a unique perspective to the people they tutor.

No matter where the Lantern Center’s students go after finishing their studies, Ruiz said the impact of the organization is a lasting one. “I think it’s neat that they’ll probably always carry a piece of Dubuque and the Midwest in their hearts wherever they go,” she said. Much like the spirit of the passage from Matthew 25, the staff

at the Lantern Center have never turned away an immigrant seeking the organization’s services. “Nothing compares to how rewarding this position is,” Ruiz said. “The adults who study here, we befriend them and welcome them to the community, and they’re just grateful beyond words.”

01.17.2024

# A Day in the Life of an SVD Candidate

We asked Ladouceur Flarissaint, a junior majoring in philosophy at DWC, to document his routine on January 17, 2024 to give you a glimpse into what his daily life is like as a seminarian.



6:30 a.m.

I wake up and do my personal prayers. As a seminarian, I consider personal prayer to be the best way to start my day.

7 a.m.

I take a shower and head to the Main Chapel to join the community for morning prayer.

7:45 a.m.

I always arrive 15 minutes before daily Mass to set up the visual aids and the sound system. It's my community service at the seminary to type the readings, psalms, Gospels, and songs in PowerPoint. Then I present them on TV screens during Eucharistic celebrations.



8:45 a.m.

Right after Mass, I go to the dining room and make a tray of food for my mentee and deliver it to his room because he's sick. Then, I return to the dining hall for breakfast.

9:00 a.m.

I go to my Divine Simplicity and the Trinity class.

10:00 a.m.

I take a break to prepare for my next class.

7 p.m.

I prepare the PowerPoint and visual aids for the following day's Mass.

7:30 p.m.

I meet back up with my Formation Group and our formator. Each week, we discuss a topic or hear from a speaker. On this night, we review our program for the new semester.

12 p.m.

I deliver another meal to my mentee and check on him before joining the large community for lunch.

1 p.m.

I attend Epistemology class, a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge.

2 p.m.

I take a 30-minute nap. Sometimes when we have long days full of commitments, DWC students take short naps to stay alert and focused.

3 p.m.

I attend Cross-Cultural Psychology class.

4:30 p.m.

I exercise for 30 minutes on the treadmill. Physical health has been a priority for Divine Word Missionaries since the congregation was founded, so candidates are encouraged to stay fit and active.

6 p.m.

I go to the Main Chapel for evening prayer.

6:15 p.m.

I take my mentee his supper, then join my formation group for dinner. We get together for a meal once each week.

8:30 p.m.

I catch up on homework, emails, and messages from family and friends back in Haiti.

11:30 p.m.

I go to bed and do my personal prayers to thank God for the day and ask Him to protect me during the night.



## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



### *A very important visitor*

Father General Paulus Budi Kleden SVD, superior general of the Society of the Divine Word, visited Divine Word College during the fall semester while he was in the United States for meetings. Students were excited to have the opportunity to meet him. During his stay, the Superior General celebrated Mass and shared his vocation story with Divine Word candidates, those in temporary vows, Holy Spirit Sisters and formators. Born in Indonesia, Father General Kleden was elected superior general in 2018.



### *Lunar New Year*

The DWC community amped up the energy for the Year of the Dragon during its Lunar New Year celebration in February! The chapel and gym were adorned in vibrant red and gold, symbolizing luck and prosperity for the upcoming year. Students performed a traditional lion dance, received “lucky money” and enjoyed an assortment of traditional cuisines. The event crossed cultural boundaries, as community members from diverse backgrounds joined together to honor the rich traditions of Lunar New Year.



### *Queen of the Americas*

In November, the Asian American Hispanic Association (AAHA) threw a party fit for a queen—the Queen of the Americas, that is! They gathered to honor the Marian Apparition to Juan Diego in 1531 and the love and admiration for Mary across the Americas. The festivities kicked off with a vibrant Mass concelebrated by Fr. Omar Ortega Patino and Fr. Sam Cunningham, SVD. Later, the college community enjoyed a cultural program that showcased delicious cuisines and traditional tunes from Latin American countries.



### *A tasty fundraiser*

A good missionary knows how to use his or her talents to make a difference and last semester, the students at Divine Word College did just that. The Student Senate organized an effort to make and sell more than 1,000 egg rolls. With its substantial Vietnamese community, the college has developed a reputation for having some of the tastiest egg rolls around! Students from a variety of cultural backgrounds got involved. All proceeds from the sale went to Catholic Charities to support the fire relief efforts in Maui.

# Overcoming reservations: Experience at DWC transforms shy student

*Growing up in Vietnam, Hung Cong Nguyen wasn't very outgoing and preferred to keep to himself.*

The only time he really opened up was when he was working with the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement (VEYM). He joined the group when he was just eight years old. Through his participation, he became an altar server, cantor and eventually a leader. When he was 18, Hung's family moved to Riverside, California. He and his siblings all worked at the family's nail salon with their parents. The business was successful and the money was good, but Hung felt unfulfilled. His parents urged him to leave the house and spend time with people his age, but he just wasn't interested. A few years after moving to California, Hung found a nearby church that had a VEYM group. Craving that familiar Catholic connection, he got involved teaching children ages seven to 14.

"When I joined, I realized that the purpose of my life is to serve people," he said. "It made me happy." As Hung participated more with the VEYM group, he stopped taking shifts at the nail salon on busy Saturday afternoons so he could be at the church. "I could have a nice car, but have no friends – it was a waste," he said. "I decided to go to church and serve the kids."

As much as Hung felt fulfilled by his work with children, there was one aspect that really challenged him – the endless questions. "Where does God live?" "How can Mary be a virgin?" Hung struggled to answer the questions that the kids posed. "I went home and kept thinking about the questions they asked. It made me think that I needed to take another step because I didn't have enough knowledge," he recalls. One day when Hung was at a VEYM camp, he met a former SVD priest who told him about Divine Word Missionaries. Soon after, he received a phone call from Vocation Director Fr. Anthony Cong Nguyen, SVD who told him more about the congregation.

Hung flew to Epworth for a Come and See visit and his life quickly started to change. "Before I thought I was an introvert" he said. "Then I came here and I couldn't just sit in my room. The people around me made me work and when I served them, it gave me energy." When Hung went home for a break, his parents recognized the transformation in their son. They told him he talked more, smiled more and had a more positive outlook.



*Hung Cong Nguyen*

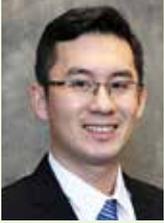
Since starting classes at DWC, Hung has served as treasurer of the Student Senate and president of the Vietnamese Student Association. During sporting competitions and cultural events, he can usually be found on a microphone commentating or encouraging the student body. His enthusiastic voice spills from the speakers and fills the space with his newfound self-assuredness.

Today, Hung is a pre-novice preparing to graduate in May. In the future, he hopes to serve the poor as a priest. Whether it's in Africa, South America or even right here in the United States, Hung says he's ready to serve and excited to see where religious life may take him.

# Building meaningful bonds

*Students learn to cultivate connections and foster friendships*

Missionary work takes more than just a set of technical skills. While it's important to understand pastoral duties and have a solid grasp of theology, the key to thriving in a mission field is connecting with people.



*Fr. Nam Duy Nguyen, SVD*

One way that Divine Word College students learn to build relationships is by volunteering at area parishes.

Fr. Nam Duy Nguyen, SVD already professed First Vows as a Divine Word Missionary and now he's at DWC learning English, pre-theology and continuing his discernment. On the weekends, he travels to Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa for his ministry work. Fr. Nam and a few other students meet with the children of the parish during Mass to offer Bible sharing and teach the kids to speak Vietnamese. It's not always an easy task. "These kids were born in the U.S. but they still have Vietnamese culture in their blood," he said. "It's easy for me to connect to the older generation at the church. But for the first two weeks, the kids were kind of afraid of me."

Fr. Nam started by listening to the children. He asked about their hobbies and dreams. It took time for the connections to grow, but after a few weeks, he earned their trust. Since then, he's been trying to help the kids understand the reason behind why their parents want them to learn about their faith and their culture. "I need to be a bridge to connect between the younger generation and their parents," he said. "I understand how Vietnamese people live and think, but I can also be open to the kids and adapt to their Gen Z way of thinking."

Last year, Sr. Francisca Doofan Aorakaa, SON and other DWC students traveled to a parish in Moline, Illinois each week. After Mass, they taught Catechism to the kids at Christ the King Church. Although Sr. Francisca had experience teaching religious education in her home country of Nigeria, she said teaching American kids is different.

"Coming here and teaching Catechism was scary. It was challenging, but I found that all the people at the Moline parish had a welcoming spirit," she said. With a bright smile and open heart, Sr. Francisca developed a strong bond with a Togolese family who hosted the DWC students during their visits to the parish. Despite cultural and language differences, she felt at home with Georgette and Edward Goyito-Mensah and their three children.

The feeling was mutual. Georgette said the parish's children learned a lot from the Divine Word College students. "The children are looking up to these sisters to teach them what they know about God," she said.

As time passed, Sr. Francisca's connection with the Goyito-Mensah family extended outside the church walls. She invited them to cultural events at the college and they celebrated her birthday with her. Sr. Francisca is set to graduate in May, she's confident her connection to the Moline family will remain strong, no matter where she goes next.



*(Left to Right) Prince Goyito-Mensah, Edward Goyito-Mensah, Emily Goyito-Mensah, Sr. Francisca Doofan Aorakaa, Georgette Goyito-Mensah, and Michelle Goyito-Mensah.*