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THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

Spring and Second Chances

The Sunday Gospels of Lent are a masterclass in giving second and third chances.

The Gospel of the **First Sunday**, narrates Jesus' tests in the desert; they are a "do-over" of the temptations of Adam and Eve in the garden, and a "redo" of the testing of the people led by Moses in the desert. Where the human race was unsuccessful in the earlier tests, Jesus, as a representative for all of us, passes the tests with flying colors.

The **Second Sunday** celebrates the transfiguration of Jesus. The guidance of Moses and Elijah are even more gloriously presented in the shining person of Jesus. On the mountaintop, Peter, James and John, were blessed with a vision of Jesus' glory. It was a glimpse of their own future, and of a new life awaiting all of us.

The **Third Sunday** recounts Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. Both the woman and the disciples were scandalized that a Jewish man would bridge such a painful social divide. Yet, Jesus ignored those ancient animosities, challenging us to open our hearts to the very people we are tempted to call enemies.

This past **Fourth Sunday**, we heard of the man who was blind from birth. The account is about more than physical restoration of sight, it is about Jesus' efforts to heal inner blindness. While the blind man grows in faith – recognizing Jesus first as a healer, then a prophet, and finally the Son of Man – the Pharisees move in the opposite direction,



suspecting a fake healer, then a law-breaker, and finally a sinner. Their outer eyes worked fine; their inner eyes became ever more blinded. We are challenged to open the eyes of our hearts to see the Promised One.

Spring, like Lent, is a time of new beginnings. As the days get longer, we hunger to see the flowers and trees come alive once again. This year, as we returned from Spring Break, nature had some unwelcome surprises in store. We jumped from warm days at the beginning of March, into a Sunday evening blizzard and near-zero temperatures for St. Patrick's Day. We're shivering now, but the forecast for the first official day of spring this Friday promises a welcome 65 degrees!

It is fitting that the word LENT comes from Old English, *lencten*, meaning "spring" or *lengthening* days. (Even now, the Dutch word for spring is *lente*.) Just as nature resets in the spring, Lent is a time for new beginnings for our inner selves. God blesses us continually with second chances; in turn, we are called to bless others with second, third, and fourth chances. St. Peter asked whether he should forgive his brother seven times. Jesus replied that seventy-times-seven would be a better number. Let us lengthen our generosity toward sisters and brothers who may need a second chance.

St. Patrick's Day

Our dining room is a sea of green today. Shamrocks grace the tables, and leprechauns peek out from many corners. The international students are somewhat mystified by this outbreak of green Irishness.

Iowa has a surprisingly large number of people who claim some Irish ancestry. Approximately 13% of Iowans claim some Irish heritage, making it one of the most Irish-American states in the US. (German ancestry is claimed by approximately 36% of Iowans.) A visit to St. Patrick's parish cemetery across the road from the College shows generations of McDermotts, McGranes, McCallisters, and Connollys; and plenty of Kramers, Ostwinkles, Meyers and Wilgenbuschs! There is plenty of evidence of Irish-German mixed ancestry in our small town of Epworth.



I have some dad-jokes to honor the day. *Which do you think is the worst???*

- I'm half Irish and half German — I tell jokes like an Irishman and explain them like a German.
- I'm Irish-German: I improvise the fun and then write the instruction manual.
- My Irish side brings the beer, my German side alphabetizes it.

When I was a boy, my Irish grandmother (McGoff) told me that though I was mostly of German ancestry, I did have some Irish in me. She claimed that most of the "Irish" landed in my mouth! Only years later did I figure out that her comment was likely NOT a compliment!

Valedictorian 2026

As we begin the last term of the academic calendar, many eyes are focused on May 15, graduation day. The graduating class recently proposed nominees to serve as valedictorian for the ceremony.

The Board of Administration considered the recommendations, and I have asked Mr. Angel Luis Rodriguez Fuentes of Baytown, Texas to share his reflections with us during the commencement exercises.



Angel Luis
Rodriguez Fuentes



VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Joshua Young

Time for a Vocation Vibe Check

Fr. Sam Cunningham, Ms. Elizabeth Winter, and I will be attending the [2026 NetVUE Conference](#) in Kansas City, MO. The theme, “*Vocation: An Itinerary of Hope for Higher Education*,” reminds us that higher education is at a crossroads.

Americans are asking themselves what is the purpose of higher education. The question is existential for some institutions, including many Catholic colleges and universities. The conference will try to use the call to serve the common good as a source of hope.

Personally, I’m looking forward to a workshop on writing our vocation narratives and attending a live recording of [Callings](#), NetVUE’s podcast on vocation.



Through our NetVUE Faculty Professional Development Grant, members of the College community have been able to share their vocation stories, and they have been sources of hope and inspiration.

Results from this Fall’s Faculty Vocation Survey showed there is a real desire to be able to share vocation stories.

So, today is the day to take a break and listen to [Vocation Vibe Check](#), a new podcast sharing vocation stories of those across our community. Each week over the next few months, students of the Digital Public Witness class will be interviewing community members, bringing hope and connection across the College.

This week features a full-length interview with Sr. Diem Nguyen and a bonus interview with Ms. Michelle Vargo. I hope you enjoy hearing their stories.





VICE PRESIDENT FOR FORMATION/DEAN OF STUDENTS

Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD

Welcome to Our New Students

Divine Word College welcomes seven new students who recently arrived to the college for their English studies. We welcome Br. Raul Acosta, SVD, Sr. Tram Doan, CMR, Eda Hussa, Fr. Dac Thanh Nguyen, OCist, Sr. Mai Lien Nguyen, LHC-TD, Sr. Thu Nguyen, CMR, and Sr. Hieu Pham, LHC-KT to the Divine Word College community. Our new students come from different parts of the world – Argentina, Guatemala, and Vietnam.

All of them arrived safely last week, and are adjusting themselves to the community. If you see them around, please welcome them. During the first week, I ask the mentors to show them around the college, and take them to the places they need to be for testing and paperwork.

Lenten Recollection

This Saturday, March 21, 2026, there will be a Lenten Recollection guided by Fr. Brian Van Fossen from the Diocese of Scranton, New Jersey. The theme for the Lenten Recollection is *Freedom Found in Fidelity*. The SVD community will join us for this recollection.

All students are required to attend the recollection, so please do not make any plans for that day. The schedule and small group sharing will be posted on the student bulletin board later in the week.



Dean's Forum

This Thursday, March 19, 2026, there will be a Dean's Forum held in room 107 at 1:00 P.M. Dean's Forum is a time where the deans and the formation team raise up issues concerning formation and student life, and it is also an opportunity for the students to raise their concerns as well. As always, all students are required to come to Dean's Forum. Please be there on time.

Conference for Men and Women Religious in Temporary Vows – Conflict Resolution

This Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Sr. Annmarie Sanders, IHM will be giving a conference for men and women religious in temporary vows and diocesan seminarians. The conference will be on *Conflict Resolution*. Living in community life, conflict happens from time to time. Conflict also happens when we are doing ministry. As ministers, there will be times when we have to find ways to resolve conflicts. We hope the this conference will give us some ways to resolve that.

All men and women religious in temporary vows and diocesan seminarians are required to attend this conference as part of the formation program. It is also open to anyone else who is interested in this conference for their ongoing formation. The conference will begin at 5:15 P.M. in room 107.



VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMISSIONS

Len Uhal

Welcome New Students

As we return from spring break and begin Term D of the English language program, we welcome seven new students to Divine Word College this March. They are:

SVD Member

Bro. Raul Acosta, SVD Argentina

Religious Sisters

Sr. Tram Thu Thi Doan, CMR Vietnam
 Sr. Thu Anh Thi Nguyen, CMR Vietnam
 Sr. Hieu Hanh Thi Pham, LHC-KT Vietnam
 Sr. Mai Lien Thi Nguyen, LHC-TD Tulsa, OK
(Vietnam)

Male Religious

Fr. Thanh Dac Nguyen, OCist Walnut
Grove, CA
(Vietnam)

Lay Student

Eda Husa Dubuque, IA
(Guatemala)

All new students need to visit the Admissions Office to see both Ms. Carolyn Waechter and Ms. Patti McDermott if you have not already done so. Carolyn will assist all new international students with visa information and new domestic students with Federal Student Financial Aid application. Patti will work with all new students to make sure the College has original copies of your educational documents.

ALL NEW STUDENTS, PLEASE VISIT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE THIS WEEK!



VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS

Steve Winger

Scullery Upgrade: New Dishwasher Installed Over Spring Break

We're happy to share that the scullery received a major upgrade over Spring Break with the installation of a new commercial dishwasher. Randy and John from the Maintenance Department did an excellent job completing the installation quickly and efficiently. Thank you both for your hard work and attention to detail—it made a huge difference for our kitchen operations.

The new machine is already working great. It runs significantly faster than the old unit and holds temperature consistently, improving both sanitation and workflow in the dish room. For those who help with loading or operating the dishwasher, please keep the following reminders in mind:

- Do not push or force trays through the machine. The conveyor is designed to move items automatically, and forcing trays can damage the belt.

- Do not dry dishes, utensils, or trays with a towel. Everything must air-dry. Using a towel can spread bacteria.

With proper care and operation, we hope this new machine will serve the College as reliably as the previous dishwasher—which lasted nearly 25 years!



Around Divine Word College

Special Presentation!

Divine Word College will host a special presentation, *“Ecological Conversion: Awakening to Renewed Creation,”* on **Tuesday, March 24, at 5 P.M.** in the Main Chapel.

The presentation will be offered by **Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD**, a Divine Word Missionary serving in Thailand and Assistant Professor of Moral Theology at Lux Mundi National Seminary.

Drawing on Scripture and Catholic teaching, Fr. Anthony will explore humanity’s relationship with the Earth and invite participants to reflect on the call to ecological conversion.

Grounded in the spirit of Lent and the hope of Easter, his presentation will highlight our shared responsibility for creation and the promise of renewal.

A reception will follow the presentation near the Weyland Art Gallery.

All are welcome!

Women’s History Month Lunch & Learn

Friday | 12 Noon
March 20 | Pour House

Join us for a video on gender violence and inequality, followed by a discussion on global injustices faced by women. Grab your lunch from the dining room and head to the Pour House for the event.

Sponsored by
The JPIC Council



On View in the Gallery

Via Creativa Exhibit Opening

Please join us this week - Friday, March 20 - for the *Via Creativa* exhibit opening!

Artists Lori Erickson and Catherine Quehl-Engel will be here to celebrate art as a spiritual practice, so it's a good opportunity to learn, be inspired and ask these two amazing women questions that have come up as you've viewed their artwork over the past few weeks. We're including headshot portraits and their website and blog links below so you can get to know them better before meeting them in person.

A big thank you to everyone who's visited the gallery and signed the guestbook on the table near the entrance. Leaving a message for the artists, or even just your name, means a lot. For an artist, creatively expressing is the beginning of a conversation that can only be completed by a viewer or audience.

Lastly, a shout out to our amazing food services staff who are making art in the kitchen prompted by our request for a garden party themed celebration with lots of purple food to match the stunning artwork and season of Lent.

Hope to see you all from 4:00 - 7:00 P.M. this Friday!



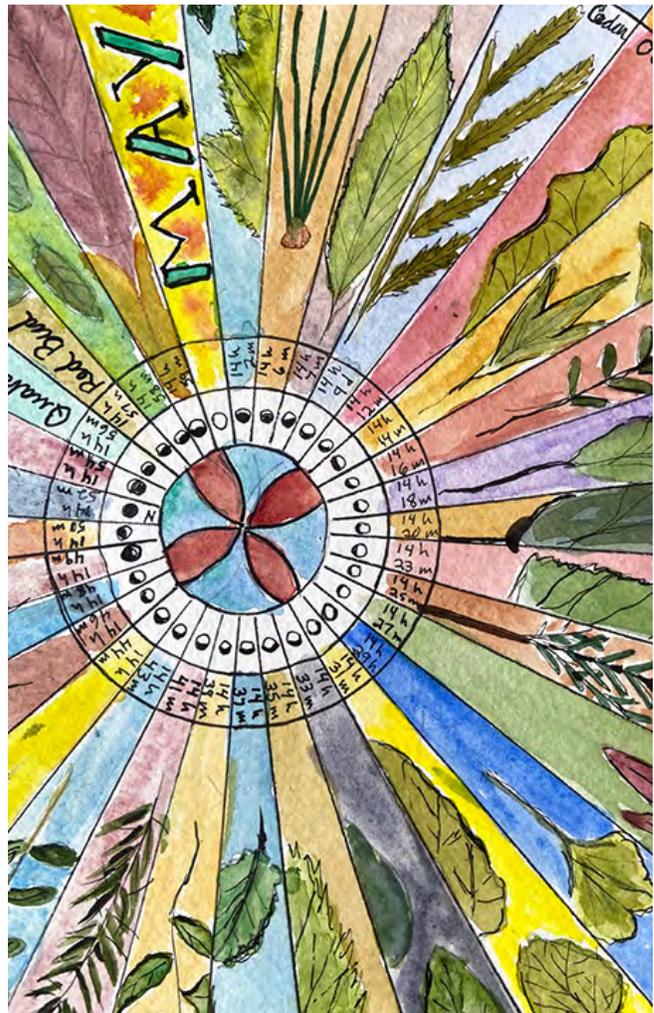
Catherine Quehl-Engel

Catherine's Website:
<https://www.calmwithcatherine.com/about>



Lori Erickson

Lori's Website:
<https://lorierickson.net/>



 Matthew Jacoby Library

opac.dwci.edu

Dubuque County Reads: Seeds and Stories Author Event

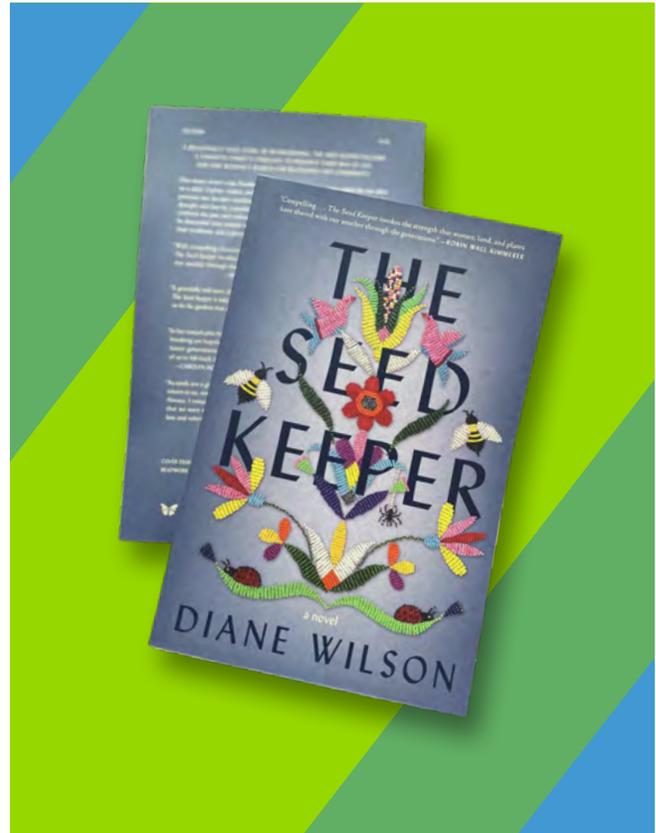
March 24, 2026, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM
Steeple Square (101 E 15th St, Dubuque, IA)

DWC Students, Staff, and Faculty are encouraged to attend the final Dubuque County Reads special event on Tuesday, March 24th at 6:30 PM.

Join acclaimed author Diane Wilson for an inspiring keynote on her novel *The Seed Keeper*. Wilson will share stories of Indigenous resilience, ecological stewardship, and the sacredness of seeds. A Q&A and book signing will follow.

You do not need to have read *The Seed Keeper* to attend this event. By joining Dubuque County Reads, you'll help foster literacy, cultural understanding, and community dialogue. Whether you attend one event or all of them, your involvement makes a difference.

Learn more about Dubuque County Reads: <https://www.dbqreads.org/dubuque-county-reads>



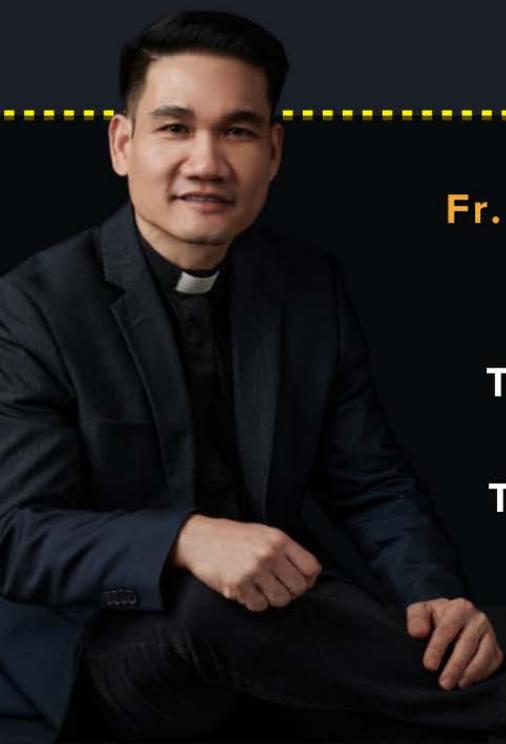
DIVINE WORD COLLEGE PRESENTS

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION: AWAKENING TO RENEWED CREATION

By Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD

MARCH 24, 2026 AT 5:00 PM

A faith-filled reflection on humanity's relationship with the Earth, exploring how Scripture, Catholic teaching, and the seasons of Lent and Easter call us to ecological conversion, responsibility, and hope for renewed creation.



Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD
is a Divine Word
Missionary based in
Thailand and Assistant
Professor of Moral
Theology at Lux Mundi
National Seminary.



Livestream at www.youtube.com/@DWCEpworth