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THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

Coming to America

I want to share a story with you, an account of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) coming to America. As you read the story, perhaps it will remind you of your own arrival at a new home, in a new culture, for the very first time.

On December 27, 2025, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) opened their province celebration of 125 years of missionary service in America. I was deeply honored to be present with them that day at their convent in Northfield, IL. The celebration was filled with plenty of stories, stretching from 1901 until the present.

When SVDs tell our stories of the foundation in America, we always begin with Br. Wendelin Meyer who arrived in 1895. When the SSpS tell their stories of America, they begin with Sr. Leonarda Lentrup. The following excerpts from Ann Gier's biography of Mother Leonarda, *This Fire Ever Burning*, paint the story in vibrant colors.

America in 1901. "By 1901, the young country had already been through the bloody revolution for its freedom from tyranny and unjust taxation; the War of 1812, which gave birth to the classic 'do not trespass' document: the Monroe Doctrine; the pathetically tragic Civil War to abolish slavery and preserve the Union; the Spanish American War to limit or crush Spain's interests in the Americas. The country had felt the repercussions from slavery and the post-Civil War Carpetbaggers who surely set back Reconstruction; the Know-Nothing Party with its anti-



Sr. Leonarda Lentrup

Catholic and anti-immigrant policy; the Ku Klux Klan and its lawlessness and violence; the sad and often violent subduing and final subjugation of the Indian tribes, the aborigines of this beautiful land.” (p.61)

“The coins of the country epitomized the country’s... unique personality; *E Pluribus Unum* – From many, one – many people from all places of the world making up one distinct nation But, *E Pluribus Unum* included the well-meaning as well as the charlatan and drifter, the honest as well as the unscrupulous. It meant cooperation as well as dissension because freedom has as many interpretations and causes as people fighting for it. Thus, the country came to be the ‘melting pot of nations’ and ideas. (p. 60)

“In 1901, the country was still loosely bound by a lot of ‘little old world’ sections in cities; immigrants tended to flock to their own people. It would be only following the First World War that the American personality would begin to take on meaning as a distinct nationality.” (p. 63)

Insider or Outsider. On May 8, as Sister Leonarda and her four companion Sisters debarked from the passenger ship, Nordham, in Hoboken, NJ, they knew that embracing “the people of another nation and to accept them as they are demands a keen insight and a fine perception of the human person. There is something so deeply unique about each nationality that it escapes the understanding of an ‘outsider.’ The missionary is always aware of this. She knows she cannot fit the personality of another country into the mold of her own country's personality. Accepting each person as a unique individual in the uniqueness of his own country was one of Sister Leonarda's most beautiful traits. For this she would be deeply loved.” (p. 63-64)

Welcome on the First Day. On the first day as the passengers came ashore: “there were laughter, shouts of welcome and a confusion of happiness surrounding travelers, relatives and friends. The five Sisters from Steyl, Holland, were a bit unsteady as they tried to stand on stable ground with somewhat shaky ‘sea legs.’ Somewhere in the hubbub of shouts and laughter and a strange language, they heard someone calling out, *Grüss Gott, Schwestern! Herzlich Willkommen!* They looked about them. Yes, someone was welcoming them. They were the only Sisters they could see. The sound of their own language thrilled

them. They were in a strange country, being welcomed by strange people, but in a language they understood. The friendly cordiality and kindness warmed them. Nothing goes so directly to the heart of a person as one's language, especially when heard in unfamiliar surroundings. (p. 64)

“They saw a man and woman waving to them and moving through the crowd. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Heinemann and their daughter Pauline were soon standing before the Sisters, and introductions were made. The Heinemanns took care of the Sisters' immediate needs and then took them to the Leo House, a stopping place for German Catholic immigrants. The Sisters spent the night there. (p. 64-65)

Cross Country to Chicago. “At two o' dock the following day, Sister Leonarda and her companions boarded a train for Chicago. Near Buffalo, the Sisters experienced some consternation when they found themselves in the middle of an excited group of passengers all talking at once and every word unintelligible to the bewildered newcomers. The Sisters finally concluded that some accident had occurred. And so it had – or almost had! The rails of the track spread so much that there was danger of their coach de-railing. Not knowing what to do, the Sisters stood perplexed as the other passengers hurried back and forth. A kind gentleman saw the Sisters' predicament, came up to them, and offered to take them to the pullman car because he said that it was not right for the Sisters to be in that crowd at midnight. The gentleman meant well, his offer was kind, but Sister Leonarda's mind was filled with the last admonitions given her by the Reverend Founder and Mother Josepha. Their words kept ringing in her



ears: ‘Remember you will be in a new country. Do not readily listen to any stranger that may approach you.’ Realizing her responsibility as senior of the group, Sister Leonarda graciously declined the man's offer. He smiled, for he must have sensed the situation of the poor Sisters; but he would not be dismissed so easily. He saw to it that their luggage was taken care of and that they themselves were comfortably seated in a different coach. Later, when Sister Leonarda became acquainted with the American people and their customs, she laughed many times over this incident and expressed her sincere gratitude for the kind man's solicitude. (p. 65)

A New Home in Shermerville (Techny). “The train arrived in Chicago on Friday at seven o'clock in the evening. The Sisters were warmly welcomed by Fr. John Peil, Superior of the Divine Word Missionaries, Fr. Richards, and Br. Wendelin, and a few Chicago friends. (p. 66)

“An hour before midnight, the tired travelers found themselves in the chapel of St. Joseph's Technical School where a solemn hymn of thanksgiving, Mary's hymn: My soul magnifies the Lord, was sung for their safe journey. The Sisters then walked a short distance to the small frame house which was their new convent. There, Mrs. Barbara Happ, Mrs. Mathias Happ, Mrs. Julia Donovan, Miss Gaesfeld, and Miss Lucy Brackendorf awaited them with cups of hot coffee and a little refreshment. Sister Leonarda was surprised at this thoughtfulness on the part of these busy women, who waited for the Sisters even at this late hour. She would never forget their kindness on this first night in a strange land and a strange convent. Down through the years, none of the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters would forget these women, who so generously befriended their Foundress and her companions. (p. 67)

A Good Start. “When the Sisters had gone to bed, Sister Leonarda opened her suitcase and took from it a small notebook. She sat down, took a pen and opened the book to the first page and wrote: ‘God Holy Spirit, all for love of Thee!’”

“Then she turned the page and jotted down in diary form: “Each person while on earth gives but a very small part of her life, just a dot; each lifetime on earth is but an infinitesimal point in time. Every human

being lives on earth to prepare for a greater life to come. A person lives here temporarily, but one day will be eternally happy. So it is that in each one's life there may be a task, a calling, a special mission – yet all are but moments lost in eternity.

“We also find such important moments in our holy Church, in society at large, and in religious societies. Thus this is now such an important moment in the life of us five Sisters and in the life of our Congregation, namely, the establishment of a branch of our Order in a new land.

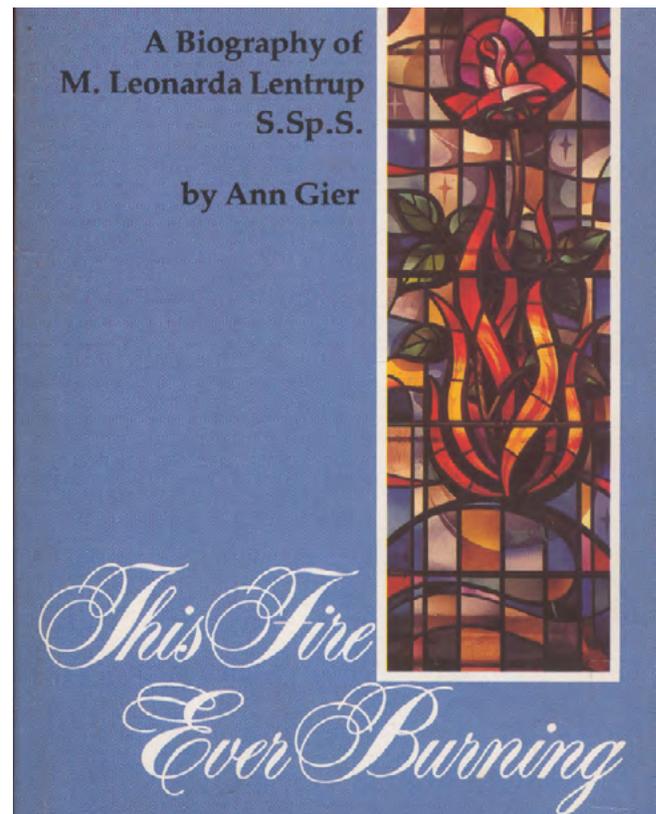
“We five Sisters: Sister Alexia, Sister Clara, Sister Foureria, Sister Martina, and I, Sister Leonarda, left Steyl, Holland, on April 26, 1901. Arrived in New York, Wednesday, May 8, and in Chicago, May 11.” (p. 67-68)

Some Resources:

A media presentation on Mother Leonarda:

https://www.ssps-usa.org/resource_media.html

This Fire Ever Burning: A Biography of M. Leonarda Lentrup SSpS, by Ann Gier: https://www.ssps-usa.org/resource_books_thisfire.html





VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Joshua Young

NetVUE Conference Summary and Future Opportunities

Last week, Elizabeth Winter, Fr. Sam Cunningham, SVD, and I attended the NetVUE conference in Kansas City. The conference was an opportunity to learn more about the resources available from NetVUE and to connect with other members of the organization. While there, I attended a workshop on writing vocation narratives, hosted by Dr. Geoffrey Bateman, Editor of the *Vocation Matters* Blog and Professor and Chair of the Department of Peace and Justice Studies at Regis University, and Dr. Erin VanLaningham, NetVUE Director of Project Development and Professor of English at Loras College.



I greatly appreciated the opportunity to explore ways to expand what stories we share about our vocations and how to share them. Faculty that are thinking about future professional development opportunities are encouraged to check out the [NetVUE upcoming events](#) and to take advantage of their offerings.

Missionary Survey Still Active

WE NEED YOUR HELP! As part of the College's efforts to understand vocation and missionary service, research is currently being conducted on missionary formation and higher education. The survey asks how successful Catholic colleges and universities are at forming missionaries and what improvements can be made. **The survey is for EVERYONE THAT CONSIDERS THEMSELVES MISSIONARIES!**

Please encourage your fellow missionaries to take the survey by sharing the link with them after you have completed the survey. Please help us reach over 1,000 missionaries! Here is the link- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2D86N2W>

Newest Episode of Vocation Vibe Check

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. Monica Kabiru. I hope you enjoy hearing their stories.



ASSESSMENT LOOP

Ms. Kimberly Burnett-Hackbarth

Annual Assessment Cycle

Here is the new graphic for our Annual Assessment Cycle!





VICE PRESIDENT FOR FORMATION/DEAN OF STUDENTS

Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD

SVD Formation Day

This weekend from Friday, March 27, 2026 to Sunday, March 29, 2026, the three SVD formation houses (Divine Word College, Divine Word Novitiate, and Divine Word Theologate) will gather at the college for SVD Formation Day.

It is a day where SVD candidates and SVD fraters in temporary vows gather to share their stories and vocation discernment with one another. It is also an opportunity for them to meet with the provincial and one of the missionaries, Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD, to learn more about the missions of the Society of the Divine Word. I ask all of you to pray for our seminarians who are continuing to discern their life with the Society of the Divine Word.



A previous SVD Formation Day at DWC.

Mass for Vocation – St. Francis of Assisi

This Friday, March 27, 2026, we will have a vocation mass. St. Francis of Assisi formation group, men in religious temporary vows and diocesan seminarians will organize the vocation mass. In this mass, Macoy Kabansok, a seminarian from the Diocese of Daru-Kiunga Papua New Guinea, will share his vocational journey about how God has called him, and how he is drawn to be a seminarian with the diocese.

We ask you to join us to support Macoy and St. Francis of Assisi, and also continue to pray for more vocations in the Catholic Church.

Holy Week

Holy Week will begin this Sunday with Palm Sunday, leading to the Easter Triduum. It will be a busy week for all of us as we prepare ourselves to experience the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I want to remind you of several important things for the Holy Week:

- This Thursday, March 26, 2026, we will have liturgy preparation at 1:00 P.M. to go over the songs for Holy Week. All students are required to attend liturgy preparation.
- On Wednesday, April 1, 2026, we will have Lenten Reconciliation service at 7:30 P.M. in the main chapel. We will have several priests to assist with confessions.
- Due to Holy Week and preparations for the Easter Triduum, there will be no formation meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2026.

I will post the schedule and information for the Holy Week on the bulletin board this week.



external affairs



New Weekly Challenge: Core Competency Quest!

Looking for a fun way to engage more deeply with the Core Competencies? We're introducing a new weekly activity designed to spark curiosity, build community, and highlight the values that shape life at Divine Word College.

Each week in *The LOG*, a new question or task related to our Core Competencies will be featured. To find the answer, participants are encouraged to visit the Core Competency display located on the first floor and explore what each competency means in our shared mission.

Submit your response to Sandy Wilgenbusch (wilgenbu@dwci.edu) by **noon on the following Monday** for a chance to win! All correct entries will be entered into a weekly drawing, with **two winners selected**:

- One student
- One faculty/staff/SVD member

Winners will receive a gift card to **Walmart** or **Rosie's Coffee Shop**—a great excuse to treat yourself!

Whether you're a student, faculty member, staff, or SVD, this is a simple and enjoyable way to stay connected to the heart of what we do. Keep an eye on *The LOG* each week—and join the challenge!

→ Week One - Selfie Challenge

Take a photo of yourself with your favorite or most important Core Competency display. **Submit the photo and the reason it is your favorite or most important to you to Sandy Wilgenbusch by Noon on Monday, March 30.** Winners will be announced in *The LOG* on Tuesday, March 31.

Contemplative Prayer

There will be contemplative prayer on Wednesday, March 25, April 1, April 15, and April 29 at 5:15 P.M. in the Mother of Asia Chapel.

On View in the Gallery

A Successful Reception

What a fantastic celebration of art, spirituality and community. Friday's *Via Creativa* exhibit reception was a great success thanks to each of you who attended and made Catherine, Lori, and Bob (Lori's husband) feel the warmth and hospitality of DWC. Thank you to our photojournalism students who used curiosity as a bridge, prompting continual conversation with their wonderful questions.

Catherine and Lori are still raving about their experiences during the evening! A big shoutout to food artist Jana and her team for going way beyond the call of duty with their creation of delicious and colorful food that matched the artwork perfectly. *Those watermelon radishes...*

If you weren't able to make it, please make sure to immerse yourself in the beautiful, whimsical energy of this joint exhibition **before April 17**.

Mark Hirsch with his project *That Tree* is next in The Weyland Gallery, so save the date for his Arbor Day reception on Friday, April 24.

Words in Flame will be installed this week in the first-floor hallway. The documentary exhibit bears witness to the systematic destruction of Ukrainian libraries by Russia in the context of the full-scale war. It also speaks of recovery, of resilience, and of the desire to read, create, and work.

The photographs reveal destroyed, burned, and looted libraries across Ukraine, reflecting not only the physical devastation, but also the deliberate attempt to erase cultural memory, language, knowledge, and the national identity of Ukrainians.



 Matthew Jacoby Library

opac.dwci.edu

**Campus Reads – Chapter 12:
“The Yarn in the Tapestry”**

Campus Reads continues this week! Our spring Campus Reads discussion continues with Chapter 12: “*The Yarn in the Tapestry: Weaving Memory into History, Vocation, and Our Common Life*” by Martin Holt Dotterweich, led by Erin La Belle.

STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, SVDS: Join us on March 27 at 12:10 P.M. in the ARC. Bring your lunch and settle in for a thoughtful, engaging conversation.

This chapter invites us to reflect on how personal and communal memory shape the stories we tell—about ourselves, our vocations, and our place within a shared mission. It’s a rich opportunity for students to bring their own experiences, questions, and insights to the table. Whether you’ve read the chapter closely, skimmed it, or are just curious, your voice belongs in this conversation.

Copies of the chapter are still available in the library, and you do not need to finish reading before joining us.

Come to listen. Come to reflect. Come to participate.

Your perspective matters—and it helps weave the tapestry of our shared life here at Divine Word College.

New Books at the Library – Plus Featured Titles by Weyland Gallery Artists

Stop by the library this week to explore what’s new! The library’s latest book arrivals are now on display, featuring fresh titles across philosophy, theology, intercultural studies, sociology, spirituality, psychology, and more. These books aren’t chosen at random. Each one is intentionally selected by librarians, faculty, and other DWC community members to support student learning, enrich course assignments, and strengthen the academics and formation at the College.



This month the library is also spotlighting works connected to the current Weyland Art Gallery exhibition: *Via Creativa: Art as a Spiritual Practice*.

The exhibit features the work of Catherine Quehl-Engel and Lori Erickson, both of whom explore creativity, spirituality, and the search for meaning in unique and compelling ways.

To complement the gallery experience, the library has curated a selection of their books and related materials. Stop by to learn more about the artists, their creative processes, and the spiritual themes present in their work.

Whether you’re drawn to art, theology, culture, or just the joy of discovering something new, the library has something waiting for you.



**Join us for
Campus Reads!**

March 27 at 12:10 P.M. in the ARC

Bring your lunch!

2026 CLIMATE ACTION FESTIVAL



WED APRIL 8TH 2026

4:30 – 6:30PM

**OUTSIDE @ ALUMNI COMMON
UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE**

FREE WALKING TACOS

First 100 Students!

Free zero-waste meal from UD Dining Services for the first 100 students (bring your student ID!)

COLLABORATIVE ART

w/ Clarke University & Divine Word College

Explore your creativity & vision for a resilient future through art expression and crafting

CLOTHING SWAP

Sponsored by ProUD

Shop a FREE & inclusive clothing swap — open to ALL students! Starts at **3pm in Alumni Hall**

UPCYCLE STATION

Candace Eudaley-Loebach & Fiona Howard

Learn to creatively modify your clothes and craft accessories from recycled materials

REPAIR CAFÉ

Dubuque Rescue Mission Repair Shop

Bring clothes for buttons/patches, watches needing batteries, or other small items for fixes. Need a larger repair? Snap a pic and ask the team

CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY

Explore local sustainability, art, research, conservation, and other efforts of Dubuque area organizations

LIVE MUSIC WITH BIG BLUE SKY

Folk, bluegrass & reggae sound with musical writing inspired by wild places and a celebration of our natural heritage.

Featuring Jon Stravers with Folko Landvogt on guitar, Kristina Castaneda on vocals, and Jason McCullick on bass.



Presented by the Dubuque Colleges Sustainability Coalition

A resource and strategy sharing network of Dubuque area institutions of higher education

Thanks to the University of Dubuque, Loras College, Clarke University, Divine Word College, and the Dubuque Metro Area Solid Waste Agency (DMASWA) for their partnership in this event. This effort is funded through a Sustainable Dubuque Grant through the City of Dubuque.

