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## THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

### All Things New

There was once a young girl who wore a new pair of shoes. She was so delighted, and happily showed her new shoes to everyone in the family and to her friends. That evening, when she was saying her prayers before bed, she thought to tell God about her new shoes. She prayed: “I love my new shoes; I am so happy. So, God, if you come to church on Sunday, you can see my new shoes!”

**Easter Clothes.** When I was a boy, Easter was the day to get new church clothes – a new shirt, a new pair of pants, or maybe even a new pair of shoes. Like the girl in the story, I would proudly wear new clothes to Easter Sunday Mass. (I still make sure I have something new to wear at Easter time.)

An old song by Irving Berlin (1933) celebrated an Easter Parade in New York City, when people would walk along Fifth Avenue in all their Easter finery on their way to and from church services. “In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it, you’ll be the grandest lady in the Easter Parade!”

The tradition of wearing new clothes at Easter time is apparently very old. Since Easter was a time for baptism, putting on a new white garment was part of the celebration of the sacrament. It is also said that after his conversion in 312, the Emperor



Constantine required members of his court to wear new clothes on Easter to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord. <https://www.oursundayvisitor.com/the-little-known-meaning-of-wearing-new-clothes-at-easter/>

**New Life in Christ.** St. Paul wrote one of his earliest letters to the Galatian community around the year 50 AD. He stressed: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”



Early baptismal liturgies included the instruction: “You have become a new creation and have clothed yourselves in Christ. Receive this baptismal garment...” To this day, these phrases remain part of the baptismal rite. The point is the ritual expression of a change of life – of becoming someone new.

**Newness of Life.** Though new clothes are no longer as central to Easter practice, newness of life remains essential. In the final days of Lent, a number of students and staff asked me whether there would be flowers in the gardens for Easter. We seem to have some very “Christian” tulips this year, since the first ones opened on Easter Sunday and Monday. In the coming days, we can also expect the crabapple trees to put on their annual display, dressing the gardens in elaborate displays of white and pink and red blossoms.

**New Creation.** Jesus’ resurrection promises eternal life not only for individual disciples. It is more, it is the beginning of God’s new creation. The Second letter of St. Peter, drawing on the prophetic vision of Isaiah, affirms that “...we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pt 3:13).

Spring flowers are a reminder that we are all caught up in the groanings of new birth. St. Paul tells us:

“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; ... We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Rm 8:18-19, 22-23).

**On the Way to a New Creation.** As a young boy, I grumbled and groaned a bit about having to wear “fancy clothes.” I still sometimes grumble about the changes that are leading us all to new life and new creation. My mom was unmoved by my resistance; and I eventually came around to taking pride in my new look.

I know that God is just as patient and forgiving, and always at work making all things new – me and you included! (By the way, God did show up to church on Sunday, and he smiled at the young girl’s new shoes.)



*Fr. Tom as a boy.*

## HLC Honors Dr. Kanjirathinkal for a Decade of Service

The Higher Learning Commission recently honored Dr. Mathew Kanjirathinkal with the Peer Corps Recognition Service Award in acknowledgement of his ten years of dedicated service as a Peer Reviewer. In this role, Dr. Kanjirathinkal has been trained to evaluate colleges and universities, offering analysis and recommendations that support institutional quality and continuous improvement.

His work contributes to accreditation decisions made by the Institutional Actions Council (IAC), to which he was later appointed in addition to his responsibilities as a reviewer.

Dr. Kanjirathinkal describes his service as both professionally and personally enriching. While the

role requires significant preparation and time, it has strengthened his skills in collaboration, objective assessment, and effective communication.



Dr. Mathew  
Kanjirathinkal

His experience with evolving accreditation standards has also allowed him to bring valuable insights back to Divine Word College, helping to inform institutional policies and practices. He strongly encourages fellow faculty and administrators to consider serving as Peer Reviewers with the Higher Learning Commission.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about becoming a Peer Reviewer for HLC.





**VICE PRESIDENT FOR FORMATION/DEAN OF STUDENTS**  
Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD

**Student Senate Elections  
2026–2027**

The election for the 2026–2027 Student Senate is underway! Several students have already declared their candidacy for positions within the Senate. The final day to declare candidacy is Friday, April 24, 2026. The first ballot will take place in the dining room during lunch on Wednesday, April 29, 2026. We thank all candidates for their willingness to serve the student body and encourage everyone to participate by casting their vote. Best of luck to all!



**Recognition and Award Luncheon**

On Wednesday, April 22, 2026, the college will host its annual Recognition and Award Luncheon. This event honors students, staff, and employees for their dedicated service to the college community, celebrates academic achievements, and offers a farewell to those who will be departing at the end of this formation and academic year.

The luncheon will begin at 11:50 a.m. and conclude at 1:30 p.m. Please note that all students are required to attend in semi-formal attire.

**Theological Reflection Week**

As we approach the end of the academic year and conclude our apostolic ministry practicum, all participating students are required to write a theological reflection paper and meet in groups to share their reflections. Faculty supervisors will coordinate these group meetings.



Students are encouraged to take this opportunity to prayerfully reflect on their ministry experiences and consider how the Lord has worked in their lives throughout this time.

**Mass for Vocations – St. Teresa of the Child Jesus**

On Tuesday, April 28, 2026, we will celebrate a Mass for vocations organized by the St. Teresa of the Child Jesus formation group, women religious in temporary religious vows.

During the Mass, Sr. Hoa Nguyen, LHC-V, will share her vocational journey and how God has called her to the Lovers of the Holy Cross of the Vinh Diocese. We invite everyone to join in supporting Sr. Hoa and her formation group, and to continue praying for an increase in vocations to the Catholic Church.





## VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS

**Steve Winger**

### Business Office Update

I am pleased to share two Business Office staffing updates at Divine Word College.

Joan Westhoff has joined Divine Word College as Bookkeeper/Secretary, replacing Ann Maiers upon her retirement on May 21. Joan's first day of work was Monday, April 20. She comes to Divine Word College from Regional Medical Center in Manchester and brings a strong background in accounting support, financial processing, and day to day business operations. Her experience across healthcare, banking, and accounting environments positions her well to support the ongoing work of the Business Office and serve the campus community.



*Joan Westhoff*

The search for the Bookkeeper/Secretary position attracted a strong pool of candidates. After interviewing several qualified applicants, the Hiring Committee selected Joan based on her experience, skills, and fit for the role and the needs of the College.



*Dr. Kenneth Retzl*  
Dr. Kenneth Retzl has accepted the position of Business Office Director & Controller. Dr. Retzl currently serves as Controller and Institutional Researcher at Clarke University and resides in Peosta. His professional background includes senior level responsibility for institutional accounting operations, budgeting, financial analysis, and compliance within higher education. He brings experience working closely with executive leadership and translating financial information into clear, actionable insight in support of sound institutional decision-making.

The search for the Business Office Director & Controller attracted a strong pool of candidates, and three highly qualified finalists were interviewed. After careful consideration, Dr. Retzl was the unanimous choice of the Hiring Committee. We are finalizing Dr. Retzl's start date and look forward to his joining the Business Office and the Divine Word College community.

The President and I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Divine Word College Hiring Committee— Len Uhal, Sandy Wilgenbusch, and Marlene Decker—for their time, discernment, and thoughtful engagement throughout both search processes. The committee was chaired by Steven Winger. We also extend our gratitude to Dan Kadolph and Sr. Monica Balbuena for their time and careful evaluations of the finalist candidates in the Business Office Director & Controller search.

Please join me in welcoming Joan and Dr. Retzl to Divine Word College.



# external affairs

## Week 5 Quest

Which Core Competency includes these three words on individual circles?

*SOLIDARITY COMPASSION DIGNITY*

Send answers to ALL questions to Sandy Wilgenbusch at [wilgenbu@dwci.edu](mailto:wilgenbu@dwci.edu) by noon on Monday, April 20.



## Core Competency

Quest 

## Week 4 Winners!

### FACULTY/STAFF



Len Uhal

### STUDENT



Chinh Pham

# external affairs

## RAGBRAI Is Coming to Epworth – Join the Fun!

On **July 25**, Epworth will take center stage as **RAGBRAI (Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa)** rolls through town on the final day of its week-long journey across the state.

For those unfamiliar, RAGBRAI is one of the largest and longest-running recreational bicycle touring events in the world. Each year, thousands of riders travel across Iowa from west to east, covering hundreds of miles and stopping in communities along the way. This year, approximately **12,000 riders** are expected to pass through Epworth—bringing with them incredible energy, enthusiasm, and a spirit of celebration.

Communities along the route embrace RAGBRAI as a chance to showcase what makes them special. Riders are always eager to experience the **unique character, hospitality, and hidden gems** of each town they visit. And here in Epworth, **Divine Word College is one of the most unique and meaningful parts of our community.**

DWC will be represented as part of the day’s festivities, and planning is already underway. This is a wonderful opportunity to share our mission, welcome visitors from across the country, and highlight the global, intercultural spirit that defines our campus.

To make the most of this moment, we will need **many volunteers** to help ensure that DWC puts its best face forward. Whether you can assist with hospitality, set-up, or simply being a welcoming presence, your involvement will make a difference.



### Interested in helping?

Please contact **Sandy Wilgenbusch** to learn more and get involved.

Let’s come together to represent Divine Word College with pride—and enjoy being part of one of Iowa’s most iconic summer traditions!



## HAPPY EARTH DAY 2026

In honor of Earth Day on Wednesday, April 22, JPIC invites you to watch The Story of Stuff. This 20-minute video is a fast-paced, humorous/serious, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns that expose the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues. <https://www.storyofstuff.org/%20movies/story-of-stuff/>.



# On View in the Gallery

## Bittersweet

Change is always bittersweet. On Monday morning, we said goodbye to the beautiful “Via Creativa” artwork and artists, Catherine Quehl-Engel and Lori Erickson, only to turn around and welcome Mark Hirsch and his photographic collection known to many as “That Tree”. We’re excited about the Arbor Day exhibit opening for “That Tree”, which is already generating much interest from the outside community. Please join us this Friday, April 24 from 4:00-7:00 P.M. to meet Mark and be inspired!

Learn more about Mark and his incredible project here... [https://youtu.be/uuaFbdM\\_hM0?si=2AjaQEEfTH\\_iMLu4](https://youtu.be/uuaFbdM_hM0?si=2AjaQEEfTH_iMLu4)



Also, this is TREE WEEK on campus, so we’re inviting all students to make a photograph or two of our beautiful trees and email them to Erin LaBelle for an Arbor Day project.

Choose a tree that you feel is beautiful, or for some reason captures your attention, and then email to [elabelle@dwci.edu](mailto:elabelle@dwci.edu). Thank you!

And lastly, please take a moment to stop by the “Words in Flame” exhibit that was recently installed in the first-floor hallway. This exhibit was created by a Ukrainian nonprofit to raise awareness about libraries during times of war, and the loss that is more far reaching than one would expect. Dr. Roman Ciapalo brought the exhibit to campus, so if you have questions, I’m sure he’d love to converse with you or help steer you in the right direction. Erin and Liz would also be able to help you learn more.

As always, thank you for supporting the arts!

*thank you*



Lori Erickson and Catherine Quehl-Engel



Mark Hirsch

 Matthew Jacoby Library

[opac.dwci.edu](http://opac.dwci.edu)

## Celebrating Arbor Day

### Library Book Display

April 24 is Arbor Day, and Divine Word College has a full day of events planned to mark the occasion. The Matthew Jacoby Library has put together a display featuring books related to trees, forests, ecology, and our relationship with the natural world. The display includes titles on tree science and identification, forest ecology, and nature writing. All items are available for checkout, and students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to browse and borrow. The display will remain up through the end of April.

### Take a Walk

To encourage the DWC and local community to explore the campus, I created a Tree Campus Walk brochure. The brochure outlines a 1.1-mile walking route and highlights ten notable trees along the way. It includes a key to help visitors locate each tree, brief notes on the history of Arbor Day, and an introduction to Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), a Japanese practice to encourage mindful experiences in nature. Divine Word College has been a Tree Campus Higher Education designee of the Arbor Day Foundation since 2022, and this brochure is one way to make that recognition more visible and accessible. Print copies will be available Friday, April 24th. The map is included below.

