A Journey GUIDED BY FAITH

AND A WILLINGNESS TO TRY



When Chinh Pham first arrived at Divine Word College, he saw Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD, working in the garden. Not knowing who he was, Chinh wondered, "Why did the school hire a gardener who was so old?" He later learned that the "gardener" was actually the college president. The experience still makes him smile and remains one of his strongest early memories of campus life.

At 23, his journey has already taken him through several countries and cultures. He left Vietnam at 13 and studied in the Philippines for four years. He later moved to Canada for high school. Leaving home at a young age was difficult. Some relatives questioned why his mother would allow him to travel abroad when he had no immediate family there. His mother cried as others criticized her decision. Still, when she asked whether he was willing to go, he responded simply, "Okay, let me try."

"The willingness to try has shaped my life," he said. Even before leaving Vietnam, he had experience living away from his family. At 10, he stayed with the De La Salle Brothers while attending school from sixth through eighth grade.

Looking back, Chinh sees God's guidance throughout these unexpected changes. "I feel very blessed because God planned everything for me," he said.

Chinh's interest in the priesthood began in childhood. His grandfather brought him to church and taught him how to pray. Chinh remembers watching a priest preach while wearing colorful vestments, and thinking, "I hope that I become a priest one day."

As years passed, that childhood dream became less clear. Chinh had a comfortable life in Canada: a job, education, friends, and financial independence. Nevertheless, he gave it all up to accept the invitation to discern a vocation with Divine Word Missionaries at DWC with the familiar words, "Why not? Why don't I try?"

His first impression of Iowa was unforgettable. Coming from a large city, Chinh looked around, and all he could see was cornfields. At first, the quiet environment was stressful. Over time, he learned to appreciate the peace of the campus.

Now as student senate president, he has grown in maturity, communication, and respect for cultural differences through community service and leadership responsibilities. "Through each leadership role, I grow day by day," he explained.

Chinh expects to graduate in May and hopes to apply to the novitiate to continue discerning his vocation.

Through the generosity of our benefactors and friends, students like Chinh receive more than an education. They find a community where their faith, leadership, and vocation can grow.