

## WHAT'S INSIDE

### SENIORS HELP ESL STUDENTS

### AC ICE ENGLISH

## Blessed Family

The pre-novices traveled to Nebraska, where they visited the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters (SSpSAP) and explored the Omaha Zoo. Known as the "Pink Sisters" for their rose-colored habits, these sisters lead a contemplative life centered on perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Their congregation was founded by St. Arnold Janssen, who also established the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS). This visit provided the young men with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Arnoldus Family and experience the cloistered way of life. Together, they attended Mass, shared stories, and built connections through conversation. As a token of appreciation, the DWC students gifted the sisters a stuffed pink penguin from the zoo, affectionately named Sr. Sylvia. The Pink Sisters, who regularly pray for the SVD candidates studying at Divine Word College, were delighted to meet the men they keep in their prayers, strengthening the bond between these two branches of the Arnoldus Family.

Flxkpg"Yqtf"Eqmg i g" y gneq o gf"Łxg"pgy" SVD candidates during a special reception in January. They joined six others who entered the formation program in the fall, bringing the total number of candidates enrolled to 21. These men are discerning their call to religious life as a Divine Word Missionary Priest or Brother.

Like many religious orders and dioceses, the college experienced a decline in the number of men entering the formation program during the coronavirus pandemic. In January 2020, Divine Word College had 50 SVD candidates enrolled. Over time, some men graduated and advanced in their formation and others discerned out—a natural part of the process. However, from August 2020 to January 2023, only 11 new candidates were admitted, an unusually low number. This decline, combined with the natural attrition of candidates, resulted in a reduced number of men in formation.

Today, those numbers are rebounding, offering renewed hope for the future.

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, the whole yqtnf" ycu"vqtp"crctv0"Kv"Łnngf"rgqrng" ykvj" fear and hopelessness, even the Church and religious orders,” said Dean of Students Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD. “This year, our college was blessed to have 11 men enter formation. We give thanks for the hard work of our vocation directors, and to God for bringing the Church and the whole world out of this darkness.”

The challenges of the past three years highlight the importance of this renewed growth. The recent increase in vocations tg łgevu" c" j q r ghwn" hwwvtg" cpf" v j g" fgfkecvkqp" of the Divine Word Missionaries in nurturing religious vocations.

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College when she moved to Dyersville in 1984.  
Originally from Chicago, she studied Food and Nutrition  
at Iowa State University and built a career as a dietitian.  
After meeting her husband, a native of Storm Lake,  
Iowa, they eventually settled in Dubuque County,  
where they were introduced to Divine Word College  
through a local woman whose cousin was a Divine Word  
Missionary Priest. Curious to learn more, they began  
attending college events, including the annual Lunar New  
Year celebration.

In 2000, the LeMays relocated to Ocean City, Maryland,  
but their connection to Divine Word College remained  
strong. Supporting the college became a meaningful  
way for them to contribute to both education and their  
faith. Mary Ann's husband passed away in 2012, but  
she has continued their shared commitment to helping  
future missionaries.

"I hope it will allow students to study and not worry  
terribly about how they're going to pay for it," she said.  
"I pray for them to embrace the jobs that they have  
taken on."

Mary Ann recognizes the  
increasingly global nature  
of the Catholic Church.  
While priests from the  
United States serve in  
missions abroad, priests  
from other countries come  
here to minister in local parishes, too. She understands  
the challenges that international students may face when  
adjusting to life in the U.S. In her own parish, a Nigerian  
priest serves as associate pastor.

She believes there are many ways people can contribute  
to the growth of the Church and support missionary  
work. Encouraging those discerning a religious

When the activity director at Bethany Home in Dubuque reached out with an unusual request, it sparked an opportunity for connection. Several residents at the nursing home wanted to tutor students learning English—but there were a few logistical challenges to address. Weekly transportation for the residents wasn't feasible, and the college couldn't manage the logistics of transporting students to Dubuque regularly. That's when Dr. Seo Hyun Park, director of the Intensive English Language Institute, came up with a creative solution: Could the residents commit to visiting the college just once a month during the spring semester? The answer was a resounding yes.

This simple yet innovative idea quickly became a win for everyone involved. Each month, four residents from Bethany Home are driven to the college to spend an hour in conversation with ESL students, helping them practice their English. The program launched in January, when the residents met with a Level 1 class of students who had arrived in the United States just three weeks earlier.

Students, eager but shy, had prepared questions for their guests. Then, it was the residents' turn to ask questions. "How long will you study here?" Blank expression.

"How many years will you be in Epworth?" Blank expression. Finally, a breakthrough: "How long will you be at the college?" A spark of understanding lit up the conversation. "Two years for English, then four years for undergraduate," one student explained, proud to get the words just right.

As the hour unfolded, the tentative exchanges gave way to animated discussions. They talked about families, hobbies, and favorite foods. Laughter echoed through the room as both students and residents found common ground—and occasionally stumbled over unfamiliar words. By the end, the initial nerves had melted away, replaced by wide smiles and a sense of accomplishment.

# TRAINING FUTURE MISSIONARIES

At Divine Word College, we are dedicated to equipping students with the essential skills needed to thrive as future missionaries. Our holistic approach integrates academic excellence with personal and spiritual growth, preparing students for a life of service. Beyond mastering the fundamentals of science, math, and English, our programs emphasize cultural understanding, effective communication, and spiritual development. This synergy between academic and formation programs fosters compassionate, confident leaders ready to serve diverse communities worldwide.

By the time students complete their journey at DWC, they will have developed and refined the following core competencies:

## Critical Thinking

Students develop strong critical thinking skills, enabling them to explore issues, ideas, and events thoughtfully and carefully before forming opinions, making decisions, or drawing conclusions.

## Communication

Students master effective communication in both writing and speaking, mastering the art of clear communication and building connections with diverse audiences.

## Cultural Understanding

Students learn how to understand, relate to, and work well with people from different cultures. They build the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to connect effectively with others.





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By Ae Pa You Paw

# Living God's Peace

I was born and raised in a Thailand refugee camp with limited opportunities to engage with religious people whom I admired. After settling in Texas in 2012, my family faced challenges due to the language barrier. I could not read, write, or speak English. I could not attend Mass and communicate with others. Despite this, my family advanced here in this country through the help of my mom's English teacher. She took us to church every weekend, although we still struggled to understand the Mass. After spending a year in Texas, my family moved to Minnesota, where we found a Catholic community consisting of our Burmese ethnic group known as the Karen. Moving to Minnesota gave me hope and a sense of belonging in my Catholic faith again.

In 2014, I moved to Minnesota, where I was able to attend Sunday Mass in my language and engage with other members of local religious communities, including the Franciscan Brothers of Peace and Missionaries of Charity. In 2015, I met a vocation director from the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) who visited and sparked a curiosity about their congregation. Later, I was invited to attend Mass on Sunday at Divine Word College and continued to learn

about the SSpS. Eventually, I participated in the "See" experience in Techny, Illinois. I engaged in various activities, including retreats and prayer at a summer peace camp. Ultimately, I developed a strong connection with the community.

I visited Divine Word College multiple times and learned more about the mission from my parish about joining the Sisters. Before this, I felt supported by my family and friends in my choice. I had previously known about the Missionaries of Charity but determined that this was my calling. A sign that God gave me was interpreted as a sign that God wanted me to follow that order.

I received an offer to apply to Divine Word College, which provided an opportunity to focus on my discernment and education. I began attending school at DWC. Through my studies, ministries, and the examples of the Sisters, I learned that being religious is a way of life dedicated to God and serving others, regardless of the challenges. I am grateful to God for guiding me and I thank my mom for her dedication. I strive to recognize God's presence in all things and see His plans for me. God's plan is to love rather than conforming to the expectations of the world.

In November, Divine Word College presented its prestigious Matthew 25 Award to the Epworth Community Volunteer Fire Department in recognition of their service to the Epworth community.

The award, established in 2001, honors individuals or groups connected to the local area who embody the spirit of 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.”

College President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD, expressed his gratitude during the award ceremony. “The Matthew 25 Award allows us to remember and celebrate works of kindness, welcome, and mercy by our neighbors in Dubuque County and the surrounding area,” he said.

“Today, we

particularly appreciate the long years of service of the Epworth Volunteer Fire Department.”

Fifteen current and retired members of the department, along with their families, attended the event to accept the award. Fire Chief Tom Berger shared insights into the department’s ongoing commitment to the community. “The members of the department are very appreciative of our wonderful relationship with Divine Word,” he said. “The principal members of the department are very professional, and volunteerism. I am extremely grateful for their time and talents to the department, ensuring a quick and professional response.”

The Epworth Community Volunteer Fire Department currently has 40 members who respond to approximately 250 to 280 calls each year, exemplifying the spirit of service and community that the Matthew 25 Award celebrates.

Would you like to support the men at Divine Word College who are discerning their call to become Divine Word Missionary Priests or Brothers? Let us know, and we'll support you. Contact: 563-876-1818 or 563-876-1818. Email: info@dwc.edu