

FINDING JESUS

in every heart

Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, Frt. Rafa Yescas, SVD grew up in close connection with the Divine Word Missionaries since the congregation ran his home parish. His mother attended Bible-sharing sessions, and his family was deeply involved in their church community. At age 10, he joined the youth group and choir, solidifying his bond with the SVDs. As a teenager, he found support from the SVD Priests and SSPS Sisters when facing personal challenges. “It was amazing,” he said. “As a teenager, you need someone who can help you understand what’s happening in your life.”

By age 15, he began spiritual direction with a vocation director. Three years later, he faced a tough decision: study psychology or join the SVDs. Frt. Rafa chose to continue discerning his call to missionary life. In 2017, he moved to Guadalajara to study philosophy, followed by a novitiate year in Oaxaca during the pandemic. He then studied theology in Mexico City and professed First Vows in 2021.

During his formation, Frt. Rafa worked with young people in a community where drugs and violence were part of their everyday life. He didn’t just want to teach them, but to help them develop a relationship with Jesus. By the end of his time there, several young people told him they had discovered Jesus. This experience confirmed for Frt. Rafa that he wanted to help others in the same way as a Divine Word Missionary Priest.

Now at Divine Word College in Iowa, Frt. Rafa is learning English in preparation for his upcoming Cross-Cultural Training Program in Jamaica. “Being here has helped me learn how to deal with and be patient with people from different cultures and mindsets,” he said.

Frt. Rafa hopes to blend spirituality and psychology in his missionary work, helping people understand themselves and find healing. In Jamaica, he plans to assist with a food pantry, teach Spanish, and attend Bible-sharing sessions. He also hopes to inspire young people to consider religious life by showing them how to bring Jesus to others through their faith.

“People need someone to listen to them, especially now when the world is changing so much,” he said. “We need priests, sisters and brothers who are able to accompany people, see their wounds, help them heal and be the presence of Jesus in their lives.”

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