

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD



Missionary Skills – A Community Affair

Celebrations at Divine Word College are really great. After a party, there is one more spectacle to behold. **Everyone** gets busy: clearing tables, washing dishes, storing tables and chairs, sweeping floors, and putting away the remaining food. It's pandemonium – but in 30 minutes it's all done. Visitors stand aside to watch in amazement.

In previous centuries, missionaries were usually pictured as strong, individual, heroic figures. The truth is there is as much need for listening as for talking, for receiving as for giving, for communal effort as for individual labor. For today's missionaries, dialogue is our way of life. At Divine Word College, we help students prepare by emphasizing five fundamental missionary skills:

- Critical Thinking Acuity
- Social & Global Responsibility
- Communication Effectiveness
- Missionary Discipleship
- Intercultural Competence

There is a “secret sauce” to these five skills, they can only really be practiced in community.

Jesus sent his disciples out two-by-two. St. Paul had many companions and collaborators in his missionary outreach. Their challenge, and ours today, is to build friendships with faith-seekers, with people of other cultures, with the poor and marginalized and with people of other religious traditions. The five skills help us invite friends to join us on the road to the Kingdom of God.

Here in the US, though we live in the most prosperous nation in history, we may be reluctant to share the blessings that God has showered on us. We might think, I got *mine* through *my* hard work, let them get their own. We may forget that previous generations have given us a rich foundation of thinking, technology, abundant resources, and good neighbors to our north and south. Not everyone in the world starts with so many blessings!

At Divine Word College we pray, eat, study, play, and work together. Everyone shares in learning, in making a home, and in helping brothers and sisters from around the world. Good grades matter, but more important is giving and receiving life in the community and with neighbors all around.

Friends and benefactors of the College are a vital part of our missionary community. Through your friendship, prayers, and generosity, you are helping to make missionary service possible today and tomorrow. You are part of the “secret sauce” of a missionary education.

Fr. Tom

Renewed Growth in SVD Vocations



Divine Word College welcomed five new 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 world was torn apart. It filled people with 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 reflects a hopeful future and the dedication of the Divine Word Missionaries in nurturing religious vocations.



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