

Raising Our Neighbors' Children Is Our Duty and Honor



Fr. Thang Hoang, SVD

At this time, 112 students are attending Divine Word College Seminary. This diverse group includes seminarians, sisters, and priests from 19 different countries around the world. Of these, nearly one-third are candidates for the Divine Word Missionaries. The remainder belong to various religious orders and dioceses that lack the financial means to support their own members. Almost all of these students are on full scholarships, which cover not only tuition, room and board but also necessities like medical insurance and travel expenses.

Many people ask, "Why do you feel the need to raise your neighbors' children?" Our answer is simple: "They are our children as well." In the garden of God, there is no "I" and "mine"—only "we" and "ours." Everything we have comes from God and is meant to be shared. For this reason, we do not merely educate and train missionaries for our own congregation but for the Church as a whole. And the Church belongs to all people. If we desire a holy and inspiring Church, we must foster the growth of holy and inspiring leaders.

As we await the arrival of spring, I invite you to breathe new life into the Church by helping us train these future leaders at Divine Word College Seminary. As the African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." In the same way, we need your support to provide these students with the resources they need to develop into leaders who can build a world of peace and justice and lead all people to God, the source of true happiness.

Together, may our collective efforts yield abundant fruit in God's garden. And may the joy and renewal of God's springtime fill your hearts and homes.

Happy Spring!

A Lifelong Commitment To Faith and Education

Mary Ann LeMay first learned about Divine Word 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 vocation, praying for seminarians, and offering financial support for their education are all meaningful ways to make a difference.

"I'm not present in that area, so I certainly can't come in and do something like tutor students who are learning the English language," she said. "But I can pray for them."

