

Communities of the Word

STORIES OF THE CHICAGO PROVINCE



THE WASHINGTON DC STORY, 1950 – 2012

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In 1933, Superior General Father Joseph Grendel and his council accepted an invitation from the Holy See to take over Fu Jen Catholic University in Peking (now Beijing), China, from the Benedictines of Latrobe, Pennsylvania. In no time, the Generalate realized it needed an immediate infusion of money and then a steady source of funding if the university was to flourish under the leadership of the Divine Word Missionaries. Financial demands and depressed times gave birth

to a fund-raising undertaking, established by and directly under the Generalate, called “SVD Universities Incorporated,” headed by a great Divine Word fundraiser, Father Ralph Thyken (1899–1975). From his office in downtown Chicago he was to procure financial resources for Fu Jen University.

After the Communist takeover and the loss of the university in Peking, the Generalate expanded Father Thyken’s job description. San Carlos University (1935, Philippines), Nanzan University (1949, Japan) and the transplanted Fu Jen Catholic University (1961, Taiwan) became the responsibility of “SVD Universities Incorporated.” Yet another need surfaced. Professors required professional training to staff these Divine Word universities. So Father Thyken was asked not only to raise funds but also to supply housing and support for Divine Word Missionaries assigned for specialized academic formation in the United States.

MOVE TO WASHINGTON

“Father Ralph’s House,” as it was unofficially called, became a residence in Washington, DC, for Divine Word missionaries sent to study at the Catholic University of America. Two small single-family houses (1325 and 1335 Quincy Street NE) were purchased. They received their first six missionaries in 1950. Five of the men were



Father Ralph Thyken (1899–1975).

assigned to China (Fathers Charles Roeslein, Frederick Linzenbach, Henry Busch, Francis Huber and Gerald Schreiber) and one to Austria (Father Martin Guisinde). The official name of the residence was the “Divine Word House of Studies.” For the time being it remained independent of the Eastern Province in which it was located.

Already in 1953, Divine Word Missionaries assigned to the United States provinces began to study in Washington and took up residence at Father Ralph’s House. The first three were Fathers Paul Burrichter, Mark Figaro, and Charles Schoderbek. However, as the number of students increased, a house was leased by the Northern Province at 2907 Ellicott Terrace NW in Washington. Although Father Louis Luzbetak was local superior and the official name of the Ellicott residence was “Divine Word Missionaries,” neither the property nor the residents ever appeared in the *SVD Catalogus*. Perhaps the reason was that the house was only leased and not SVD-owned. When Father John Schütte, the former education secretary for the entire Society, became Superior General, he asked that the lease not be renewed and that the students and superior move to Father Ralph’s House. Fortunately a third house had been purchased on Perry Street located directly behind the 1335 Quincy Street house to accommodate the growing number of Divine Word Missionaries in the Washington area. From 1950 to 1959, the Divine Word House of Studies housed a total of 78 Divine Word student priests.



The Quincy Street House: 1335 Quincy Street.

JOHN XXIII AND THE PASTORAL YEAR

Pope John XXIII, remembered above all for convening the Second Vatican Council, is also remembered for a less momentous, yet significant innovation that had an impact on the Society of the Divine Word. In 1958 the pontiff, together with the Congregation for Religious, issued the decree *Sedes Sapientiae* stating that a Pastoral Year (*Annus Pastoralis*) was to be added to the formation of all newly ordained religious priests. The Divine Word Missionaries in the United States immediately went into planning mode. The major questions centered on the physical location and the educational design of the newly established pastoral course (*Cursus Pastoralis*).

Without wasting any time, the three U.S. provincials and Father Robert Pung, a member of the General Council, met on July 24, 1958, to begin planning for the pastoral year. As was his custom, Father Provincial Lawrence Mack pinned a note on the Fathers' bulletin board at Techny calling for suggestions about a suitable site for the soon-to-be established pastoral year. Fathers Aloysius Zimmerman, Charles Kely and Louis Luzbetak immediately suggested Washington, with courses at the Catholic University of America. Father William Fitzgibbon suggested New York (where, surprisingly, the Society of the Divine Word had no presence); Father Vincent Fecher offered



The Perry Street House.



Father Louis Luzbetak (1918-2005).

Southern California; others jotted down locations such as Miami, Chicago, New Orleans and San Antonio. Needless to say, Washington won out, probably because the Society was already present there and it was judged useful to have a presence in the nation's capital, near the government, several outstanding universities, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference [which evolved in time into the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)].

Finances became a serious concern. Father Luzbetak wrote to Father Provincial Nicolas Bisheimer on January 5, 1960, to state that there was no great enthusiasm on the part of the Western Province (as the province headquartered at Techny was known until 1964) to spend great funds. "Perrysburg and Epworth are in themselves enough," Father Luzbetak opined, "to make anybody's hair gray." Just six days later, however, the Techny Mission Press, founded in 1901, burned to the ground. Unexpectedly, Superior General John Schütte flew from Rome to evaluate the situation and to participate in a meeting at Techny to determine the future of the Mission Press. It was decided that it would not be rebuilt. Some maintain that the negative effect of the decision was that many of the Techny Brothers lost their identity that had been so closely associated with their professional work in the press. Others reflected that the fire, as tragic as it was, made the building in Washington, DC, possible, for the insurance money from the press was earmarked for a new Divine Word House of Studies.

TRY BUILDING A COLLEGE

Credit must be given to Father Luzbetak for leading the search for a site for the Washington house of studies. Several likely leads were followed up on: open property near the Franciscan Monastery, a lot at 907 Michigan Avenue NE, as well as a spot where the Sulpicians were living on the university campus. Monsignor James A. Magner, then procurator of Catholic University, was approached about the availability of land owned by the university that might be purchased. “The needed cash is on hand, both for the site as well as the building,” Father Luzbetak wrote Monsignor Magner on March 21, 1960. Then the unexpected happened—presumably to Father Luzbetak’s relief and delight.

Oral tradition recounts that Brother Joachim Oros had come to the Washington area to deliver Mass wine made at the O-Neh-Da Vineyard and Winery owned by the Society in upstate New York. Generally, Brother preferred not to stay at Divine Word parishes or houses, and as Father Ralph’s House was fully occupied with students, he arranged to stay with the Marianist Priests and Brothers of Cincinnati who had a house at 3730 12th Street NE, several blocks from the Quincy–Perry Street houses. Providentially, Brother Joachim happened to mention that the Society was looking for a new site to relocate and expand its facilities. It turned out that the Marianists had already decided to sell their Washington property! After being contacted by Father Luzbetak, Brother Jerome McAvoy, the Marianist provincial, offered the land and house to the Society of the Divine Word for \$110,000. The location was good; the price was right. Father Schütte again flew to the States and visited the site with Father Luzbetak. Approval was granted by Father General Schütte to proceed immediately with negotiations.

Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle of Washington, DC, gave permission for the transaction on April 12, 1960, and on May 5 the contract between the Western Province of the Society of the Divine Word and the Marianist Priests and Brothers was signed. The Society had purchased lots 8 to 11 and 824 in square 3883 between 12th Street and Michigan Avenue NE and then proceeded to acquire the adjacent privately owned plots 1, 2, and 3 to enlarge the total area. Plot three, with a two-story house, was purchased for \$30,000. Plots 1 and 2 (approximately 50 by 75 feet) were acquired for about \$0.50 per square foot. With the expanded property, Father Luzbetak moved to the next step: the selection of an architect.

The architecture firm of Frank Martinelli & Sons was approached, and design work began in earnest. By August 30, 1960, the Generalate had approved the plans for the new “Divine Word College.” Rome informed Father Luzbetak that the “*Pius-Kolleg*” in Munich, the new pastoral-year center for Germany, had been built for less than \$500,000 and suggested that the U.S. house should aim for something around that cost. The bids for the Washington house were put out to the construction companies; all came in over \$700,000. After making some architectural and construction changes to lower the cost, the three lowest contractors were asked to rebid. The bids were opened on December 21; none came in less than \$750,000. On December 31, Rome asked that the Washington project not exceed \$600,000, including the architectural fees and furnishings.

Additional adjustments were made to reduce the cost, and construction began on a building that was to include 53 residential rooms with bathrooms, offices, dining hall, kitchen, reading room, library, lounge, chapel, and chapel areas for private Masses. Wisely, Father Provincial Bisheimer asked Brother William (Richard) Krick, at the time stationed at Techny, to be the on-site overseer of the construction project. His task was not only to provide quality control but also to ride herd on the costs of the project. He had been highly commended for his professional service to the community in the construction of the minor seminary in Perrysburg, Ohio. As Mr. Ernest Brandewie noted, “He more than any single individual ensured that everything in the plans was translated into solid craftsmanship on the ground from the way the excavation went to how the roofs were constructed.”¹

On a very tight construction schedule, the building was completed at the close of 1961, so that the Techny ordination class of 1961 could move in during February 1962 to continue with their pastoral year in new surroundings.



Brother William (Richard) Krick
(1906-1979).

DEDICATED TO ST. PIUS X

The formal dedication of Divine Word College took place on February 22, 1962, with Archbishop O’Boyle presiding in the presence of the three Divine Word Provincial Superiors: Father Nicholas Bisheimer (Western), Father Leo Hotze (Eastern) and Father William Hunter (Southern). A number of major superiors of other religious communities also were invited to attend. Vincentian Father Frederick McGuire, mission secretary for the United States bishops and personal friend of Father Luzbetak, had been invited to preach. Bishop James Kearney of Rochester, New York, also was present for the occasion. Over the following three days, the community organized an open house to give religious, university staff and laypeople from the area an opportunity to tour the newly completed edifice.

The college was dedicated to St. Pius X (1835–1914), but there is this question: Why was Pius X selected rather than, for example, an outstanding missionary saint? Could it be because of the motto he chose when elected pope in 1903? “*Restaurare omnia in Christo*” (“*To restore all things in Christ*”) was a task he fulfilled “with heavenly wisdom and apostolic courage” (Memorial of St. Pius X, Opening Prayer). Was the pastoral year seen as an occasion for growth in such wisdom and courage? Again, the answer might be simpler than expected. As the house for the pastoral year in Germany was dedicated to St. Pius X, why not the one in the United States? Superior General Schütte, a former missionary to China, probably recalled that Pius X was pope when the idea of the Catholic University in China was proposed in 1912 by Dr. Vincent Ying. Did Father Schütte intend to establish a direct connection between China’s Catholic University and the final period of missionary training for Divine Word priests in Munich and Washington?

NAMING A COLLEGE

From the beginning, the name given to the SVD houses on Quincy–Perry Streets was “Divine Word House of Studies.” The leased house on Ellicott Terrace in northwest Washington had the generic title of “Divine Word Missionaries”—a popular title for the Society of the Divine Word, first suggested in 1953 by Father Ralph Wiltgen and subsequently used widely by the United States provinces. But the new building, facing Michigan Avenue rather than 12th Street, was officially named “Divine Word College.”

From an American point of view, the name is somewhat ambiguous, if not inaccurate. The building was never intended to be a college in the accepted American use of the term. No classes were offered nor degrees awarded. Was the name of the new Washington house a simple translation of the name of the house in Munich, called, in German, the “*Pius Kolleg?*” Was this but another lingering reminder of the Society’s European heritage? The Generalate in Rome to this day is called “*Collegio del Verbo Divino.*” In Italy and in other European countries, although the term “*collegio*” can indicate a school — generally a secondary level boarding school — it is also a common term for a residence for student priests and religious, both diocesan and religious.

The name of the building was never posted outside for public view or information. For that reason, to passersby it remained anonymous (Greek: *an-onyma*; “without a name”) and its residents perhaps enjoyed the anonymity. One afternoon this author carried out a simple experiment. I stood on the Michigan Avenue sidewalk and asked passing university students what the building was. They were nonplussed. Only one, however, proffered a comment: “I don’t know what it is. I see a lot of men go in, but don’t remember ever seeing anyone come out!” Of course, that was a gross exaggeration. Still, it might offer a reminder of the importance of a public logo or signage.

In no time, however, the spanking-new SVD residence on Michigan Avenue was given another, certainly unofficial, nickname: the “SVD Hilton.” Its imposing presence, five floors in all, looming tall as one crossed the Michigan Avenue bridge connecting it to the campus of Catholic University on the other side of the railroad tracks, enjoyed the impressive appearance of a high-class hotel. Moreover, unlike other student residences of the day, the college had amenities that other houses, especially those of religious communities, did not enjoy. The whole facility was air conditioned—an accommodation to the stifling summer heat of the lowland of the District of Columbia! But perhaps most appreciated were the private bathrooms in each of the student priests’ rooms! Initially the General Council objected to the bathrooms, but the architect argued convincingly that in his design they were less expensive than the traditional common baths. He won the case and pushed the Society structures in the States into the twentieth century while easing out old stereotypes about architecture and religious life.

Again, there is an oral tradition that the name “SVD Hilton” came from the story that the Marianists had actually negotiated with the Holiday Inn Corporation to sell the property for the future site of a Holiday Inn. The Marianists, it is told, at the last moment cancelled negotiations with Holiday Inn in order to sell the land to our Society and so keep the property in the hands of a religious community to help further its international missionary work. Eventually, a Holiday Inn was built on the other side of the railroad tracks, nearer the university.

QUINCY AND PERRY HOUSES SOLD

Father Louis Schaffhauser was appointed the first rector of Divine Word College in 1961 and did not see it his task to become involved in the sale of the empty and deteriorating Quincy and Perry Street properties. The houses on Quincy and Perry Streets were emptied in early February 1962 and remained unoccupied for seemingly too long. On May 23, 1962, he wrote to Father Melcher, the provincial treasurer of the Northern Province: “There should be some windows replaced, but we are just making ends meet here, and just have to forget about the upkeep of the houses.” Father Melcher came to Washington to apprise himself of the situation and to help move ahead the sale of the empty properties. The house on Perry Street had been appraised for \$29,000; the two pieces of property with houses on Quincy Street had been worth \$90,000 when Father Thyken bought them.

Father Provincial Bisheimer proceeded to make arrangements with a real estate agency, Arthur L. Curling Inc. of Washington, to sell all three houses. On October 3, 1962, permission was sought from Archbishop O’Boyle to sell the property. The very next day Bishop Philip Hannan, the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Washington, gave the required canonical approval in writing. The community’s attention was now focused on the Michigan Avenue college, and so the three houses near the Franciscan monastery faded from interest. The properties were eventually sold and the proceeds allocated to the construction cost of Divine Word College at 1025 Michigan Avenue.

PASTORAL YEAR BEGINS AND ENDS

The ordination class of 1959 was the first group of newly ordained to participate in the pastoral year and was able to reside at

the Quincy–Perry Street houses. The following ordination class (1960), however, was the largest in the history of St. Mary's Mission Seminary at Techny, and that was a problem. The new college had not been completed; the houses on Quincy and Perry were too small for 30 neo-presbyters, so a Solomonic decision was made. In the autumn of 1960, the 11 members of the class of 30 with overseas appointments and two members from the Eastern Province were appointed to DC for the pastoral year. Several others went immediately to the Philippines to begin their mission assignments. The other members of the class were asked to remain at Techny or go to St. Anselm Parish in Chicago and commute to De Paul University for a pastoral course that would last 100 days. They moved on afterward to their assignments in the United States.

The pastoral year program was short-lived. Technically, it lasted five years (classes of 1959–1962; 1964). As stated above, the ordination class of 1959 lived at the Quincy–Perry houses; the 1961 class began at the Quincy–Perry residences but in February 1962 moved into the college on Michigan Avenue. The ordination classes of 1961 and 1962 enjoyed Divine Word College, but with the ordination class of 1963, the *SVD Catalogus* makes no further note of the presence of the *Cursus Pastoralis*. In fact, in 1964 no newly ordained priests from the class of 1963 had been assigned to Divine Word College, Washington. However, the following year (1965), 11 men from the class of 1964, including two from overseas [Father James Langan (England-Ireland) and Father Francis Barros (China Province)], lived at the college. Father Luzbetak enjoyed the title of director of the pastoral course until 1967, but in reality the program ceased to exist already in 1965. The pastoral year had died in its infancy.

THE WASHINGTON HOUSE FOCUS EXPANDED

That is not to say that Divine Word College was not used by the Society after 1965. From the beginning, overseas missionaries or members of the United States provinces assigned to study in Washington lived alongside the members of the pastoral courses. This confirms the fact that the new building was constructed not exclusively for the pastoral year (which could never have filled the private rooms) but for a pastoral year cum Divine Word graduate students.

As the pastoral year quietly dissolved, the college turned its focus primarily toward confreres from the States and elsewhere who had been assigned to pursue graduate studies. In 1966, for example, 28 men lived at the college: three administrators and 25 students (six from U.S. provinces; 19 from overseas provinces). Indeed, Divine Word College had morphed from its primary purpose (pastoral year) into a residence for Divine Word Missionaries pursuing graduate degrees for ministry within the Society—at home or abroad.

By 1966 it became clear, though, that the Society could not possibly fill the entire Divine Word College with its own members. Yet to make the college financially viable, full occupancy was very important. Providentially, word had gotten around about the fine accommodations at Divine Word College, and non-SVDs began to approach the administration requesting accommodations. After consultation with lawyers, it was determined that diocesan priests and religious (priests and Brothers) could be admitted without jeopardizing the tax-exempt status of the college.

For the following years, the Rectors, beginning with Father Ignatius Scholl, a house treasurer by experience, welcomed non-SVDs into the community. Normally, several guest rooms were left free for visitors, but Father Rector Edward Norton (1977–1985) had a different philosophy. He believed—to the delight of Provincial Treasurer Father Arthur Melcher—that all rooms should be filled to help balance the budget and so reduce the annual subsidy from the province. It was financially more responsible, Father Norton believed, to put up the occasional visitor at a local hotel than to leave rooms unoccupied throughout the entire year. One must also recall that the rooms were usually only rented to the extern residents for the duration of the academic year, not for the entire calendar year. Some students, however, did pay for the entire year to assure themselves of a room the following year, and to avoid the inconvenience of moving one's personal belongings out of the rented room and into storage at the end of each academic year.

In the post-Vatican II days, there were still a good number of diocesan priests attending the Catholic University of America, especially in the Canon Law Department, who found the on-campus accommodations at Caldwell Hall and elsewhere less acceptable than at Divine Word College, although the cost of room and board were

almost comparable. Bishops also were eager for their men to live with a religious community and readily gave permission and financial approval for their student priests to move to Divine Word College. Fewer religious priests or Brothers moved into the college, since many had houses of their own communities in the area.

This new experience of Divine Word Missionaries and non-SVDs living within the same residence proved by and large to be wholesome. Non-SVD residents were invited to participate in all of the daily functions and daily order (*horarium*) of the Divine Word community: liturgy (Mass and Liturgy of the Hours), meals, recreation, Sunday afternoon *conveniats* (socials), special religious and civic celebrations, and so on. Over the years, lasting friendships were forged within the mixed community of students. With few exceptions, the non-SVD residents made a positive contribution to the house.

Opening the college to diocesan priests was both a good public relations move and a financial boon. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate a complete roster of non-SVD residents of the college. Over the years a number of them, as well as a number of Divine Word Missionaries who lived at Father Ralph’s House or at Divine Word College, were appointed to important ecclesial positions.

| Divine Word Bishops | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Raymond Caesar (Deceased) | Ordinary of Goroka, Papua New Guinea |
| Miguel Cinches (Deceased) | Ordinary of Surigao, Philippines |
| Joseph Francis (Deceased) | Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, New Jersey |
| Curtis Guillory | Ordinary of Beaumont, Texas |
| John Hung Shan-chan | Archbishop of Taipei, Taiwan |
| Antonio Jaca | Ordinary of Caxito, Angola |
| Leonard Olivier (Deceased) | Auxiliary Bishop of Washington DC |
| Non-SVD Bishops | |
| Joseph Binzer | Auxiliary Bishop, Cincinnati, Ohio |
| Earl Boyea | Ordinary of Lansing, Michigan |
| Benyamin Bria (Deceased) | Ordinary of Denpasar, Indonesia |
| Robert Carlson | Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Everard De Jong | Card. Archbishop of Utrecht, Netherlands |
| Timothy Dolan | Card. Archbishop of New York |
| Charles Dufour | Archbishop of Kingston, Jamaica |
| Paul Loverde | Ordinary of Arlington, Virginia |
| Patrick Pinder | Archbishop of Nassau, Bahamas |
| Kevin Rhoades | Ordinary of Fort Wayne–South Bend, Indiana |
| Allen Vigneron | Archbishop of Detroit, Michigan |
| Philip Wilson | Archbishop of Adelaide, Australia |
| Abbot | |
| John Klassan OSB | St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota |
| Divine Word Provincials | |
| Thomas Ascheman | Chicago Province |
| Michael Calmano | Japan |
| Joseph Connolly | Ghana |
| Joseph Connors | Chicago Province |
| Laurentius Da Costa | Indonesia Ende |
| Joseph Detig | Western Province |
| Patrick Ferry | Ireland |
| Frank Gerry | Australia |
| Konrad Kebung | Indonesia |
| Thomas Krosnicki | Chicago Province |
| Heinz Kulüke* | Philippines South |
| Raymond Lennon | Eastern Province and Chicago Province |
| Patrick McHale | Ireland |
| Edmund Nomo | Ghana |
| Petro Simon | Japan |
| Aloysius Zimmerman | Japan |

**Father Kulüke was elected Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word in the General Chapter of June 2012.*

Most persons familiar with the history of the college would agree that the high point came in the late 1960s. The administration of the house was in place. The residence enjoyed a fine reputation.

Curiously, already in the 1970s the number of Divine Word students began to decline. In the following chart, after the year, two numbers are provided. The first indicates the number of Divine Word students at the college from overseas provinces. The second number shows the number from the United States provinces. Combine the two numbers to see the total number of students in any given year.

| Enrollment, 1970–1979 |
|-----------------------|
| 1970: 15/6 |
| 1971: 18/4 |
| 1972: 14/2 |
| 1973: 11/2 |
| 1974: 9/2 |
| 1975: 8/1 |
| 1976: 5/2 |
| 1977: 5/3 |
| 1978: 4/3 |
| 1979: 3/2 |

In the 1980s the average number of Divine Word students in residence was six, United States and overseas provinces combined. This decline reflects, perhaps, two phenomena of the 1980s. First, the number of men ordained in the Society had decreased. Second, the number assigned for graduate studies in Washington waned. It should be pointed out also that, in this decade, only three Divine Word students were from the United States provinces: Father Gerald Garry (1980, 1982, 1983); Father Thomas Ascheman (1985–1989) and Father Timothy Lenchak (1989). All three were members of what is today the Chicago Province.

During the same decade of the 1980s the United States bishops began to feel the pinch of the priest shortage, and as a result, fewer were being assigned for graduate studies at Catholic University. The new Code of Canon Law was published in 1983, and bishops had sent men to Washington to study the revised code. By the end of the decade the need for professional canon lawyers for (arch)diocesan chancery

offices had been quite satisfied; the number of diocesan priests studying in that subject area fell off drastically. Finally, by the end of the decade, the Church in general was beginning to experience a financial crunch. Education had become exceedingly costly for most dioceses

For the Society of the Divine Word—especially for overseas provinces not financially self-reliant or which did not have the funds on hand for the graduate education of their members—studies at the Catholic University of America became prohibitively expensive. At this time the Divine Word superiors in Rome suggested that studies, if possible, should be undertaken in one’s own country or region where costs would be more affordable.

Yet the following decade of the 1990s showed a slight upswing in the number of Divine Word Missionaries living at Divine Word College. The number from overseas provinces still outnumbered students from the United States provinces. In fact, during this entire decade, Father Peter De Ta Vo was the only student from any of the United States provinces to study in Washington.

| Residents, 1990–1999 | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| Year | SVD Foreign | US Provinces | Staff | |
| | | | Priests | Brothers |
| 1990 | 17 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1991 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 1992 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 1993 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| 1994 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 1995 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 1996 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 1997 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 1998 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| 1999 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 2 |

English as Second Language (ESL) and special students are not included, as they were not listed in the SVD Catalogus.

The total enrollment for the 1990s was 141 men (excluding ESL and special students). Of these, 38 were Divine Word Missionaries; 103 were non-SVDs. What is perhaps most surprising is that among

the non-SVDs only five priests studied canon law, the mainstay of the early residents.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the future of the college was beginning to be questioned by the Divine Word provincial administration. The number of non-SVD students had continued to dwindle; the SVD students showed a marked decline as well.

| Enrollment, 2000–2005 | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| Year | SVD Foreign | US Provinces | Staff | |
| | | | Priests | Brothers |
| 2000 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| 2001 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| 2002 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| 2003 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 2004 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 2005 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Fathers John Szukalski and Khoa Nguyen, both from the Chicago province, were the only two students from the United States provinces to reside at Divine Word College during the 2000s. Brother Gerry Raker was the treasurer from 1995 to 2005 and literally closed the books when the college was sold. Irish-born Father Phelim Jordan was the last Rector of Divine Word College in Washington. An era had come to an end.

MORE TO THE STORY

With the purchase of the property facing Michigan Avenue from the Marianists in 1960, you will recall, the Society also came into possession of a small two-story home, which was situated immediately to the right as one faced the college building. During the 40 years (1962–2002) of its history, this house served various purposes. With the construction of the new building (1960–1961), the house was allowed to stand in order to provide living quarters for several of the college staff (e.g. Father Raymond Sanders and his dogs!). From 1967 to 1971, two Mexican Sisters, who came to staff the college kitchen and laundry, lived in the small house. In 1971 Father Donald Ehr became the Provincial of the Eastern Province and decided to move the

provincial offices from Girard, Pennsylvania, to Washington, DC, – geographically more central for the administration of the province. At that time the building, like the college itself, belonged to the Northern Province, but after negotiations, Father Ehr and his staff (Fathers Richard McGervey and Richard Rashke) moved to Washington and into the two-story house.

When Father William Shea was elected Provincial in 1976 to succeed Father Ehr, he continued with the living arrangements but moved the offices of the provincial and province treasurer into the college building, using rooms that had previously been outfitted as chapels for private Masses.

In 1983, Father Raymond Lennon moved to Washington as Provincial. By that time the possibility of amalgamating the Northern and Eastern Provinces was raised and a process for its actualization was begun. On June 9, 1983, Father Donald Mulrenan, Provincial of the Northern Province, wrote to Father Thomas Krosnicki, then stationed in Papua New Guinea:

The amalgamation committee is making good progress, and if all goes as planned, we should have everything in place before September 1984 when the new elections begin. The finances have been merged and we are now working on the priorities for this new Province. A lot of work still has to be done, but on the whole things are moving in a positive direction.

Subsequently in 1985, Father Lennon was elected Provincial of the combined Northern and Eastern Provinces, renamed the “Chicago Province.” The name was suggested by Father Donald Skerry, then Vice-Provincial, who argued that the name Chicago Province would embrace many countries (e.g., Canada, the Caribbean Islands) and was more easily identified than a geographical area (e.g., the Northern Province). The headquarters of the newly established province were at Techny, Illinois. The Superior General then formally suppressed the Eastern Province.

This slight digression into the making of the Chicago Province is mentioned to bring attention to the change in the storyline of the two-story house. Once again it stood empty, so several retired members

(e.g., Fathers Raymond Sanders and Louis Altendorf) moved in. Five years later, the house was to take on a completely new life of its own when “Wendelin House” was born.

WENDELIN HOUSE ESTABLISHED

“Wendelin House,” located at 1009 Bunker Hill Road NE,² was established in 1990 as an inter-provincial formation program for Divine Word Missionary Brothers. The plan had been drawn up, revised, and formally approved in 1992 by the Provincial Council of the Chicago Province. The small residence was named after Brother Wendelin Meyer, the first Divine Word Missionary sent to the United States by St. Arnold Janssen in 1895 – nearly 100 years earlier.

In 1992 the Provincial Council approved the following statement with regard to the purpose of Wendelin House:

The special purpose of Wendelin House is to provide a formation house for those Brothers in temporary vows; those Brother Candidates completing the A.A. (Associate of Arts degree) Program in Mission Preparedness at Divine Word College; and those Brother Candidates of the province’s Associate Program who seek preparation in a professional site in the Province.³

| Wendelin House Roster, 1990–2000 | |
|---|--|
| Directors | 3 Brothers: Gerald (Bruno) Burr, Bernard Spitzley, and Daniel Holman |
| Brothers in Temporary Vows | 14 |
| Associates | 3 |
| Brother candidates | 15 |
| Divine Word seminarians | 2 |
| Diocesan seminarians | 2 (Archdiocese of Chicago) |

A roster of those who had lived at Wendelin House was drawn up in 2000. Of the 32 Divine Word residents (excluding the formators and the four seminarians), six pronounced final vows as Divine Word

Brothers (Brian McLaughlin, William Brennan, Richard Sullivan, Daniel Holman, Ronald Fratzke, and Michael Decker) and one (Father Roland Danzine) was ordained. Subsequently, William Brennan and Rolando Danzine left the Society. The record speaks for itself in terms of the fruitfulness of the Wendelin House formation program in light of its stated objectives.

In October 1997, at a meeting of the Tri-Province Formation Commission, a vote was taken to evaluate Wendelin House's formation program. The team consisted of Brother Dennis Newton and Fathers James Bergin and Quang Duc Dinh. Background information was gathered (history, rationale, program handbook, annual evaluation process, etc.). A questionnaire was sent to former residents for feedback, and to the Director of Novices (Father Edward Peklo), two members of the Washington House Council (Fathers Raymond Lennon and Phelim Jordan), the Chicago Province Secretary of Education (Father James Braband) and Provincial Father Stanley Uroda. Brother Bernard Spitzley was not included since at that time he was the Director of the Wendelin House formation program, which was being evaluated. An on-site visitation was made in late February, by Brother Dennis Newton and Father Quang Duc Dinh. A final report was submitted to the Tri-Province Formation Commission. The written evaluation was basically positive, with several specific suggestions for improvement offered to the Director.

At the end of the 1998 final evaluation report, the focus turned toward the future. It stated, "We have not considered the issue of alternative forms of pre-novitiate Brother formation. We suggest that this issue be discussed by the Tri-Province Formation Commission." Did the evaluation team already recognize that a major change was coming in the near future?

Rumors were beginning to circulate about the future of Divine Word College and, by association, the future of Wendelin House. In 2001 only two men lived at Wendelin House: Brothers Daniel Holman (Director) and Tam Nguyen. The same was true for 2002: Brothers Daniel Holman and Hai Minh Tran. On April 21, 2002, Father Provincial Krosnicki wrote to Brother Brian McLaughlin, who was at the time Chairman of the Brother Formation Program Sub-Committee:



Wendelin House, 1009 Bunker Hill Road, alongside Divine Word College.

The Provincials and their Councils will have the responsibility to make specific decisions about the future formation program of Brothers in temporary vows and those young men who might consider joining us and would like to spend a year as an associate with the Society in the USA. We are, therefore, most grateful for the work of the sub-committee at this time.

The program in Washington at Wendelin House was discontinued in view of the impending sale of the entire Washington property. It was relocated, temporarily, to St. Anselm's Parish on Chicago's south side.

DIVINE WORD COLLEGE STAFF

One might note that the staffing of the Divine Word College, in terms of both priests and Brothers, remained rather constant throughout the years of its existence.

| Rectors of Divine Word College | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1961–1963 | Father Louis Schaffhauser (died in office while celebrating the Eucharist) |
| 1963 | Father Louis Luzbetak (completed term of Father Schaffhauser) |
| 1964–1967 | Father Ignatius Scholl |
| 1967 | Father Luzbetak (complete term of Father Scholl, who was recalled to Techny) |
| 1968–1973 | Father James Mullaley |
| 1973–1976 | Father Jacques Nijssen |
| 1976–1985 | Father Edward Norton |
| 1985–1987 | Father Elmer Nadicksbernd |
| 1987–1993 | Father John (Jack) Farley |
| 1993–1999 | Father Raymond Lennon |
| 1999–2002 | Father Eric Vargas |
| Praeses of Divine Word House | |
| 2006–2011 | Father Phelim Jordan |
| 2011–2012 | Father Robert Mertes |
| 2012– | Father Binh Nguyen |

Among the priests on the staff, Father Raymond Sanders was treasurer from 1972 until 1994 when Brother Gerard Raker was assigned to take over the finance office.

Part of the backbone and point of continuity of the college was the group of Brothers who had been assigned there over the years. The following list does not include Brothers assigned to the college for English language (ESL) courses, professional study, or vocational discernment, nor the Directors of Wendelin House.

| Brothers Assigned to Divine Word College | |
|--|-----------|
| Alphonse Horne | 1961–1978 |
| Daniel Kelly | 1968–1973 |
| James Doerfler | 1969–1991 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Anthony (Francis) Hogan | 1970–1974 |
| Louis Gagnon | 1972–1991 |
| Mathew Zemel | 1972–1985 |
| Patrick Hogan | 1973–1974 |
| Patrick Hegarty | 1973–1986 |
| Robert Zalikowski | 1987–1997 |
| Gerard Raker | 1993–2004 |
| Henry Miller | 2001–2003 |

Initially, Brother Alphonse Horne and laywomen cooked for the community, but from June 1967 to April 1971, two Mexican Sisters from the Misioneras del Sagrado Corazon y de Santa Maria de Guadalupe were hired to work in the kitchen and laundry. Their Sisters also ministered at the Vincentian residence in Washington and so the two groups formed a small local community.

Through the years, the college was also assisted by a number of dedicated lay employees in the maintenance department and on the kitchen staff.

Attorney Robert Elliot, a former Divine Word seminarian, offered the college valuable legal assistance over the years. A retired judge, Randy Caldwell, volunteered many hours of service as chief accountant and legal advisor to the rectors and treasurers of the college.

The most memorable layperson, however, was Mrs. Dorothy Madey. She came to the college shortly after it had opened, at the invitation of Father Joseph Bisson (Papua New Guinea), who had met her at the Catholic parish in Landover, Maryland, while he was studying in Washington (1963–1964). An opera and movie devotee, Dorothy began as a volunteer but soon became an important part of the hired staff and remained as secretary and receptionist (not to mention counselor and confidante to so many at the college) until the college closed. She retired eight months later. In 2004, Mrs. Madey was awarded the Verbum Award by the Chicago Province for her outstanding service to the Society.

After receiving the news of Dorothy's death in Chicago in July 2010, where she and her daughter had gone for a doll show, Father David Mayer wrote from Japan, "Dorothy was a great help to our

SVD missionaries who studied at Washington. She helped create a supportive atmosphere and was a voice of practical reason for many.” Father Bisson added, “She was like a mother to the community.”

SEMINARIANS MOVE EAST

One program connected with the college must be briefly mentioned: the major seminarians who transferred from Techny to study at the Washington Theological Coalition [later renamed the Washington Theological Union (WTU)].

When it was decided in 1969 that St. Mary’s Seminary, the theologate at Techny established in 1909, would close, an alternate academic program had to be located. The Provincial Council on March 26, 1969, narrowed the choice between Chicago and Washington. Since many questions remained unanswered, it was decided that for the 1969–1970 school year, the first- and second-year students would go to Washington for theology. The others would go to Catholic Theological Union (CTU), the clear preference of the Techny faculty.

“The students unanimously opposed locating immediately in Washington. Sixty percent favored locating in Chicago; 40 percent favored splitting the student body between Washington and Chicago” (Father Uroda, *History of Divine Word Theologate at Chicago*) Although the names of the theological students are not listed in the *SVD Catalogus* along with the residents of the Washington House (presumably they still were assigned to the Theologate at Techny/Chicago), 20 seminarians moved to Washington.

Three in first-year theology (seminarians Curtis Guillory, James Pawlicki and Daniel Schweiterman) came directly from the novitiate in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and one (Francis Budenholzer) came after completing a degree in science. The 16 in the second year of theology (Australians—Brian Byrne, Geoffrey Brumm, Darryl Millard, Michael Seigel; Germans—George Pierk, Walter Zimmerman; Canadians—Walter Bracken, Jacques Lacasse; Jamaican—Arthur Kelly; Americans—Jon Kirby, Thomas Parenti, Herbert Pins, Paul Kutyllo, John Schwab, Frederick Timp) all came from Techny.

During the first year in Washington, all 20 seminarians stayed with the Society of African Missionaries (SMA) on Randolph Street NE, in a new building near Divine Word College, which was later sold to Howard University. Fathers Lawrence Nemer and Eugene Ahner

served as their Prefects (Deans). After one academic year, the first-year students were given no option. They were reassigned to complete their theology studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

The seminarians in the second year were told that they could choose to remain in Washington or go to Chicago. Only five opted to remain and move into Divine Word College. As Fathers Nemer and Ahner would be returning to Chicago, Fathers David Mayer and William Seifert were asked to guide and mentor the seminarians at the college. Father Walter Bracken reflected on those seminary days in Washington: “These were exciting years, but unsettling in some ways. The moving around, the ‘Marathon,’ [a controversial psychological program], the [Vietnam] war, the aftermath of Vatican II all played parts in our training.”

All five seminarians (Kelly, Byrne, Seigel, Bracken, and Zimmerman) who chose to remain in Washington were ordained for the Society of the Divine Word. Subsequently, Father Kelly left the Society and served as a priest among the poor in Indianapolis until his death. Father Byrne also has died. Fathers Seigel (Japan), Bracken (Southern Province) and Zimmerman (Paraguay) are still active Divine Word Missionaries and outstanding alumni of Divine Word College, Washington.

WIDE PASTORAL MINISTRY

One would have to be myopic to believe that Divine Word College focused only on the academic work of its SVD student members. Significant contributions by its members were made in other areas. These included extensive weekend parish ministry by students and staff in the parishes of the Archdioceses of Washington and Baltimore, the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, and the area military bases. Divine Word Missionaries assigned to Divine Word College also taught at Catholic University (Fathers Luzbetak, Schoderbek, and Krosnicki); worked at the Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) (Father Luzbetak), and served as part-time seminary staff at Washington Theological Union (WTU) and Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg (Fathers Günther Gessinger and Krosnicki). They also were chaplains at the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters Sacred Heart Home (Fathers John Vos, Justin Wong, Patrick Barder, Richard Graham, Joseph Fleishaker, and Robert Mertes) and at hospitals (Fathers John Rodney and Phelim Jordan). Father Robert Myers had a position at the African American

Museum and Father Krosnicki was on the staff of the U.S. Bishops Conference.

In 1988 Father Leonard Olivier was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, and although he lived elsewhere, like Father Raymond Guidry (military chaplain), his name was included as a member of the Divine Word College community.

RENOVATE OR SELL

In 2000, during the term of Father Stanley Uroda as Provincial (1998–2002) and the rectorship of Father Eric Vargas, discussions began in earnest about the future of Divine Word College in Washington. Two possibilities were weighed: a complete renovation of the building or its outright sale. The Provincial Council established an *ad hoc* Committee on the Washington, DC, property with Fathers Braband and Vargas and Brothers Daniel Holman and Gerard Raker as members. Vice-Provincial Brother Dennis Newton gave direction to the committee's task in a memorandum dated July 28, 2000. He challenged the committee "to investigate various options for refurbishing or reconfiguring our property and buildings in Washington, DC."

A broker analysis of the property was completed at the end of 2000 by Grubb and Ellis of metropolitan Washington. The conclusion came as a surprise to both the committee and the Provincial Council. The company stated, "We feel one could go to market with a price of \$2 million for the facility and additional land" (December 1, 2000). The selling price was unacceptable. Nearly a year later, in November 2001, the results of a feasibility study for the renovation of the college was submitted by Weigland Associates Inc., Consulting Engineers. The projected cost for the electrical update came in at \$468,490; the mechanical update was calculated at \$833,200. The figures did not include other areas where maintenance had been deferred over the previous years: the repair of the driveway and parking lot, roof replacement, upgrade of the air conditioning and heating system. Without touching the needed maintenance updates, the estimated renovation cost was more than \$1.3 million on a building already 40 years old. Even if large amounts of funds were to be pumped into a total renovation (not simply cosmetic) of the building, a central question remained: Was there still a need for the Society to operate



The Divine Word College Building as it looks today, the home of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, 1025 Michigan Avenue NE.

Divine Word College with its dwindling number of Divine Word residents and high operational costs? Should the fact that the Society has a building dictate the necessity of establishing a new *raison d'être* for its use? Simply put: Do we allow buildings to dictate the future ministries of the Society and province?

AN EXTRAORDINARY DECISION

No decision about the future of the college had yet been made when Father Krosnicki became Provincial (2002–2005), but one was urgently needed.

As Provincial, Father Krosnicki personally visited religious communities that were in the process of major renovations of their own facilities in Washington (Josephites, Jesuits, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Washington Theological College). One thing became clear. All the groups he met with recommended that the Society contact the E & G Group in McLean, Virginia, to provide a professional analysis of the property. Contact was made in August 2003 and a major study was initiated under the leadership of Mr. Thomas Gallagher.

A thorough renovation and market analysis of the college was completed with the professional input of an architectural firm and

a construction company. A 100-page booklet was prepared and an extraordinary Provincial Chapter of the Chicago Province was convened in spring 2004. With an abundance of facts laid out before them and a comprehensive oral presentation by Mr. Gallagher, the *pros* and *cons* of two options were presented to the chapter delegates: renovate to continue the present operation or sell the property.

Two additional proposals surfaced from the chapter delegates themselves. Father Louis Luzbetak, a longtime resident of the college, suggested that it should become a Society mission center, among other things, transferring the Anthropos Institute from St. Augustine, Germany, to Washington. The second consideration was brought forth by Father John Farley, a former Rector of the college: close Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, the Society's college level formation program, and transfer the students to Washington to study at the Catholic University of America.

Unfortunately, neither St. Augustine in Germany nor Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, had been consulted. It was difficult to imagine how either would agree to such moves. The German Province would hardly tolerate losing one of its flagship institutions. Would Epworth consider uprooting its program? In both cases, major repair of the college would have to be financed without any guarantee of a steady income that would support either of the suggested operations.

After much discussion and deliberation, the chapter delegates voted on this resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Chicago Province close the residence (Divine Word College) at 1025 Michigan Ave., and put the property on the market for sale, with the option of also selling Wendelin House (1009 Bunker Hill Rd.) at the discretion of the provincial and his council, while retaining in Washington, DC a house suitable for SVD presence and work.

The vote on this resolution was 45 pro, four con and two abstentions.

BUILDING PLACED ON THE MARKET

The clear decision of the extraordinary Provincial Chapter was to sell the building. The Provincial Council felt that, if at all possible, the building should be sold to a church-related organization or religious community. The selling price was set at \$4.5 million, although this was open to negotiation. That was a considerable increase from the appraised price of \$2 million proposed in 2000!

On December 4, 2004, Superior General Anthony Pernia and his council gave permission for the Chicago Province to proceed with the sale of the college. Father Phelim Jordan began to show the facilities to interested parties as the word of its availability became public.

Then something totally unexpected, but providential, happened.

DINNER AT A ROMAN PIZZERIA

Provincial Krosnicki had been elected to the Executive Board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) and traveled to Rome with the group for its annual meeting with the Vatican *dicasteries* (offices of the Vatican Congregations) in the spring of 2004. One evening the CMSM group went out for pizza. As they began to eat, Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, then head of the United States Military Ordinariate, entered the restaurant. Invited to join the table of major superiors, in the course of the conversation the archbishop commented that he had a problem. "I have a house for ten men and I need one for 50." Father Krosnicki retorted promptly, "I also have a problem. I have a house for 50 men and I need one for ten!"

Archbishop O'Brien asked Father Krosnicki to contact his vicar general, Monsignor Aloysius Callaghan. The offices of the Military Ordinariate were, at that time, located in the basement of Theological College; the staff priests and bishops were housed at Ryan Hall in northeast Washington.

On December 21, 2004, Archbishop O'Brien and Provincial Krosnicki signed a contract for the sale of the Divine Word property for \$4.25 million. On March 2, 2005, the Society, at the Ordinariate's request, lowered the price by \$100,000 because of the large expense (\$210,725) incurred in the removal of all the asbestos material in the college—floors and ceilings throughout the building. The province was reluctant to lower the cost, but at the same time it did not want

to jeopardize the contract. The deal was sealed. Fortunately for the Society, the building was sold before the 2008 financial recession and the crisis of the real estate market in the United States.

THE SEARCH AND MOVE

Credit must be given to the remnant team of Divine Word Missionaries (Fathers Jordan and Szukalski and Brother Gerard Raker) who undertook the herculean task of emptying Divine Word College.

The library was picked through by Divine Word College at Epworth, Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and the Catholic University of America. What remained on the shelves was sold to a book dealer. Room furnishings that were not needed were either sold or donated to others. The large army surplus desks that graced each private room since 1961 became scrap metal. The chapel and its furnishings were left untouched.

On December 15, 2004, anticipating the sale of the Washington property, Father Provincial Krosnicki wrote to Father Superior General Pernia, “We will begin a new chapter in the history of the SVDs in Washington.” At that time, however, no firm decision had been made as to where the Society would resettle, although it was clear from the decision of the extraordinary Chapter that the community would continue to maintain a presence in Washington.



Divine Word House, 832 Varnum Street.

RYAN HALL TRANSFORMED

From the beginning, the Society had expressed interest in Ryan Hall, 832 Varnum Street NE, a residential property of the Military Ordinariate. On November 3, 2004, the provincial wrote to Archbishop O'Brien about the possible use of the building: "The property on Varnum Street would serve as a residence for the members of the Society of the Divine Word assigned to Washington, DC, for studies, ministry or Society administration."

Ryan Hall was named by the Ordinariate after Archbishop John Joseph Thomas Ryan (1913–2000), who in 1998 was named the first independent archbishop of the Archdiocese for the Military Services (until then it was a part of the Archdiocese of New York).

The Varnum Street building was constructed in 1930 at a cost of \$70,000 by the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse as a residence for their members assigned to study at the Catholic University of America. The handsome sandstone brick building, with a distinct Spanish style of architecture, was designed to accommodate 20 Sisters. It was dedicated as the "Dun Scotus House of Studies." In 1985 the house of studies was purchased and renovated by the Military Ordinariate. The original very small rooms were reconfigured into two-room suites.

When the Chicago Province expressed interest in purchasing the property, the asking price was between \$1.5 million and \$1.7 million, but negotiable. The Society's offer of \$1.4 million was accepted, and the community agreed to move into the new facility during the first two weeks of April 2005.

Chicago Province treasurer, Father Dariusz Garbaciak, was asked to visit the Varnum Street property to discuss necessary renovations. On April 18 the Provincial Council approved funds for the renovation and furnishings of the new Varnum Street property. A sum of \$300,000 was earmarked for that undertaking, but was to be spread out over a 36-month period and considered as part of the purchase price of the house. Major costs included, among other things, new house furnishings; waterproofing of the entire foundation; repair of the drainage system; repair of the roof, gutters, and downspouts; boiler and HVAC repair and service; renovation of rooms; installation of new energy-saving windows; and tree trimming and removal.

Before the April move, it was already decided that the name "Ryan Hall" would be changed to "Divine Word House." To some it seemed

to be an archaic throwback to much earlier years when “house” was a part of the name of many SVD institutions: St. Mary’s Mission House (Techny), Holy Spirit Mission House (East Troy), Sacred Heart Mission House (Girard), and so on—a practice that found its origin in the German Missionshaus (e.g., Missionshaus St. Wendel). More likely, the new name for the Varnum Street residence was but a simple substitution of “Divine Word” for “Wendelin,” as in Wendelin House. Some maintain that “house” should be changed to “residence” to better describe the purpose of the building. In any case, a definite step had been taken to abandon the use of “college,” as misleading as the title had been for four decades.

As a small house with few members living in it from the Chicago Province, the Provincial Council decided that the title of the local superior would be changed from rector to praeses. The purpose of the house, however, remained unchanged. It was first of all to be a residence for Divine Word Missionaries pursuing graduate degrees, in the tradition of Father Ralph’s House and Divine Word College. Second, it was to be a place from which outside pastoral ministry could be undertaken. Third, it would provide space, when necessary, for Society administration.

Since 2005, international graduate students have provided stability to the community as they remain for several years of study. The members who come for language studies are more transient, often remaining less than a year. In terms of ministry, the Chicago Province accepted pastoral responsibility for the Chinese parish of Our Lady of China in Rockville, Maryland. Father Nick Hien Nguyen served as pastor until 2009 when he was replaced by a Chinese diocesan priest and the SVDs discontinued the Chinese ministry in Washington.

Father Phelim Jordan continued to serve as chaplain at Providence Hospital, a five-minute walk away from the SVD house. Father Juan Antonio Romo-Romo was in residence as a traveling vocational director. In 2010 Father George Kintiba accepted a position at Archbishop Carroll High School as campus minister and Latin teacher and took up residence with the community. In the same year Father Krosnicki was assigned to Washington with time to write in his area of specialty (liturgical theology), give retreats, do mission appeals, and assist in parochial ministry.

Divine Word House provides a good religious community atmosphere—less institutional than most residents might have been

used to. Located on a private street, it offers the community members a quiet setting for study with few distractions, except those in which an individual decides to engage. In an attempt to be financially self-reliant, the house has no hired help. The residents undertake the household chores to ensure the smooth operation of the house. In 2011 there were three graduate students from the Japanese Province: Fathers Maranus Pale Hera (Indonesian), Michio Akao (Japanese) and Regi Varghese Vadakkettam (Indian) and two from the Chicago Province (Fathers John Szukalski and Khoa Nguyen).

CONCLUSION

It would be correct to say that Divine Word College in Washington began with Pope John XXIII and his introduction of a pastoral year for newly ordained priests. Unfortunately the program was short-lived. With a certain creative flair and constant financial concern, the college morphed into something else, perhaps bigger and better: a residence not only for Divine Word students but for other clerics and religious assigned to the Washington area in search of knowledge. It outlived its purpose and a new start was made at 832 Varnum.

Curiously, the Society of the Divine Word first came to Washington to provide for the professional training of university professors for Asia. In 2011 three of the five priests residing at Divine Word House to pursue graduate degrees were from Nanzan University in Japan. A tradition that began in the 1950s continues on: the place of residence has changed; the confreres change. The mission remains.

With the establishment of Divine Word House on Varnum Street, a new chapter in the history of the Society in Washington began. The final word about the Society of the Divine Word in Washington remains to be penned. It will be done by the future generations of Divine Word Missionaries assigned to Washington, DC.

NOTES

1. Ernest Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries in North America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 161.

2. Bunker Hill Road runs into Michigan Avenue at a very slight angle. Both properties appear to be on the same street.

3. Editor's note: Date of Provincial Council meeting unknown.