

in a

# Word™

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(Photo by Fr. James Pawliński, SVD)

**CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
ST. AUGUSTINE'S SEMINARY  
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS  
OCTOBER 29, 2023**

**BISHOP TERRY STEIB, SVD CALL TO WORSHIP**

Sisters and Brothers,

One hundred years ago, on September 16, 1923, the House Chronicle of St. Augustine's Seminary described the formal opening day of the seminary with these words:

**"Today is marked as a "RED LETTER" day in the annals of St. Augustine's Mission House in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. It was the day of the dedication of this new Mission House, and in the history of the Catholic Church among the Colored people of America, the day of the opening of the portals of the first seminary for young men of their race with a vocation for the priesthood, a day that will be long remembered as an epoch-making forward step....."**

One hundred years later – today – is another **"RED LETTER"** day for St. Augustine's (Divine Word Seminary) because we are celebrating the Centennial Year of this seminary – one hundred years of preparing young Black men for the priesthood right here at St. Augustine's, Divine Word Seminary, in Bay St. Louis, MS! It has indeed been "an epoch-making time!" And so, we celebrate and praise God for this epoch-making time!

We give thanks for St. Augustine's Seminary – A building that stood majestically and tall for over 75 years, a building where high school seminarians lived and studied, where African American students were trained and formed as they discerned the call to be priests and Divine Word Missionaries – despite the odds!



**Minor Seminary Building  
Dedicated September 16, 2023**

We celebrate proudly how many religious teachers dedicated their lives to educating and forming these young men, how many religious brothers and laity worked and ministered on this sacred ground during these one hundred years – despite the odds! If the building that housed the minor seminarians for all these years was still standing erect and could speak, it would mention proudly the hundreds of alumni who graduated from here and moved on! It would recall those students who did not complete the high school years here, but were able nonetheless to move into their respective careers and avocations in life as administrators, principals and teachers, lawyers and judges, guidance counselors, family men, leaders in the political world and in the business field and made our world a better world, a holier world just because they had been here – despite the odds!



First Four Ordinations in 1934  
(fr L) Anthony Bourges; Maurice Rousseve;  
Francis Wade; Vincent Smith

If the oak trees and the pine trees and the magnolia trees that have weathered the storms and hurricanes of the past century and are still growing, trees that sheltered the students over the years and are still growing, could speak, they would say: **"Look at all who graduated from here, all who went to the novitiate and took vows and were ordained here! Look at the first four African American priests to be ordained here (Father Bourges, Father Rousseve, Father Wade and Father Smith). They stood tall in the midst of segregated times! These are the men who stood tall, who served the Lord in trying times! These are the men who were role models for the rest of us!"**



Alumnus of St. Augustine (on right) Fr John Dauphine, SVD was ordained in 1939 and went to Ghana, West Africa. Shown here with Fr. Maurice Rousseve, SVD.

**“And look at all of those SVD missionaries from this seminary who followed them through the years,”** the trees in the courtyard and around the grounds would say, **“strong and courageous, for the sake of the Divine Word, they went out to preach the Gospel here in the Southern Province as associate pastors, as pastors, as teachers and preachers; and some of them went out to serve in Africa, New Guinea and in the Philippines.”**



If this holy ground could speak, it would speak of the alumni who were called to become bishops, carrying with them the charism of the Society they learned many years before from this holy ground: **Bishop Joseph Bowers, Bishop Harold Perry, Bishop Carlos Lewis, Bishop Joseph Francis, Bishop Raymond Caesar, Bishop Terry Steib, Bishop Leonard Olivier, Bishop Curtis Guillory, and Bishop Dominic Carmon**, to mention a few.



If the plaque on the ground where the seminary was could speak, it would say: **“Look at what has been accomplished! Look at what this seminary stood for!”** How thankful are we that St. Arnold Janssen, Founder of the Divine Word Missionaries, would take to heart his own desire to proclaim the Gospel where it was not yet viable and dare to train African Americans to make it possible. How thankful are we that the Society continue to proclaim the Gospel by calling forth vocations from all nations to serve in this Southern Province.

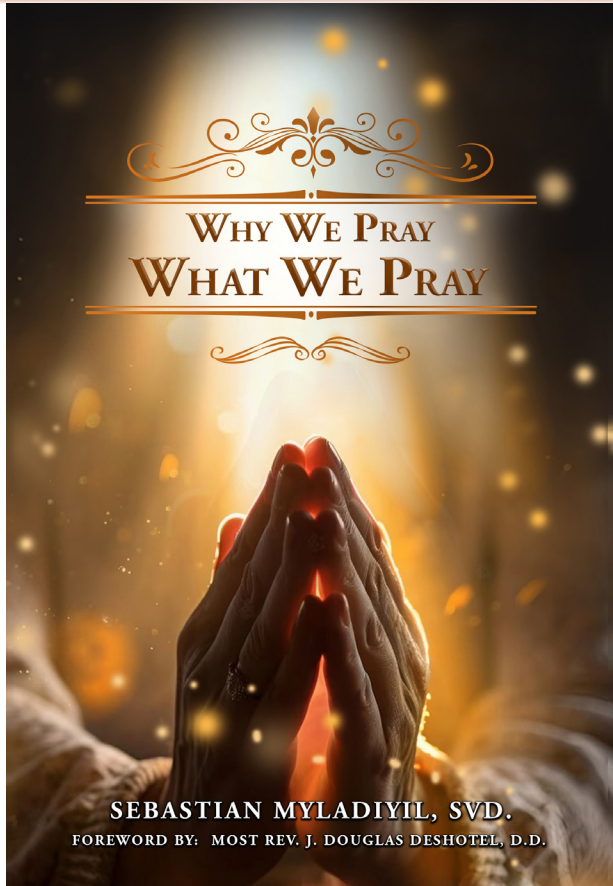
If this holy ground could speak, it would look to all those in our cemetery and to all those who are buried elsewhere, and would say in the words of Jesus: **“Well done! Well done, good and faithful servants!”**

And with this centennial celebration, I believe that the Spirit of Divine Word Seminary – this holy and sacred ground – is saying to us today who have come from our parishes, or who have come from other provinces and countries to proclaim the Word, the Good News: **“Well done! Well done, good and faithful servants!”** – because we are Divine Word Missionaries – and that’s what we do!!!



Bishop Terry Steib, SVD, Bishop emeritus of Memphis, Tennessee, was celebrant for the Mass. He delivered these words at opening of liturgy. Bishop Steib is an alumnus of St. Augustine Seminary. He studied and was ordained at St. Augustine in 1967.

# in a word or two



## THANKSGIVING PRAYER

*We thank thee for friends and remember the friendless. We thank thee for freedom and remember the enslaved. May these remembrances stir us to service, that thy gifts to us may be used for others. Amen.*

Front cover photo is of Bishop Terry Steib, SVD walking in procession for closing Mass of St. Augustine Centennial celebration.

Some 1500 people gathered in thanksgiving to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the founding of St. Augustine Seminary as the first seminary in the United States to train African-American men for the priesthood and religious life. People came for the Mass from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas Arkansas, Illinois, California.

This celebration of thanksgiving included Archbishops, bishops, priests, religious, and laity from near and far. Father Budi Kleden, SVD Superior General of the Divine Word Missionaries came from Rome and delivered the homily. Alumni of the Seminary were also in attendance.

The joyful celebration was impressive and pointed out how St. Augustine Seminary and the Divine Word Missionaries have and continue to impact "countless lives."

Some photos of the celebration are found on the following page.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas.  
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"*Why We Pray What We Pray*" by Fr. Sebastian Myladiyil, SVD takes readers on a journey through a treasury of prayers that are held in high regard in many believers' hearts. This journey transcends cultural and denominational boundaries and will be of interest to everyone who values the power of prayer. The reflections in the book provide an opportunity for the readers to delve deeply into the significance and rich layers of meaning that these prayers possess.

The author carefully examines the historical origins, theological significance, and scriptural basis for the well-known prayers and devotions such as the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, the Glory Be, The Way of the Cross, The Rosary, The Mass, and much more. Through this exploration and insightful reflection, the readers are provided with a greater understanding about the beauty and effectiveness of these time-honored prayers, discovering how they serve as the cornerstones of communal worship and personal spirituality. As the narratives unfold, the readers are also encouraged to look at various aspects of their lives, and through endearing words of hope and trust, offer prayers that represent their unique life situations and needs.

"*Why We Pray What We Pray*" takes the readers on a unique spiritual journey and gives them space to reflect meditatively on the meaning of the words they use in prayer.

One can order copies of the book on [AMAZON.com](http://AMAZON.com)



Centennial Closing Celebration of St. Augustine  
October 29, 2023