

# in a Word™

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St. Augustine Seminary



(Photo by Fr. James Pawlicki, SVD)





Logo by Brother Daniel Holman, SVD

From the very beginning of their missionary efforts in the Southern United States the SVD priests advocated for ordination of African Americans. The story of their efforts is well documented. You can review that history by going to the [September 2020 issue IN A WORD](#).

After years of advocating for a seminary permission was finally given in 1919. In 1920 the Sacred Heart Preparatory Seminary opened at Sacred Heart Church in Greenville, MS. The seminary grew rapidly. By the end of 1920 there were 16 students. The second year would begin with 26 students. However, the space and facilities for the seminary were not adequate for the number of applicants that were growing. So a move to a larger and more permanent site was necessary.

From the very beginning the SVD knew that a new location for the seminary would be needed. So in June of 1921 they purchased land in Bay Saint Louis, MS. Almost immediately plans were drawn up and construction began. Father Christman came to Bay Saint Louis in the summer of 1922 to inspect the construction. The building would be built in one year and on September 16, 1923 the Seminary at Bay Saint Louis would be dedicated.



By the end of 1920 there were 16 students in Greenville studying for priesthood



Building where students lived and studied. Lack of space was apparent so the move to Bay Saint Louis





*Divine Word Missionaries of the Southern Province of St. Augustine*



At the annual retreat of Divine Word Missionaries in June of this year Bishop Terry Steib, SVD inspired the confreres with his retreat reflections. He reminded the young missionaries of their link to the past and the faith of those who came before them.



**The present missionaries are a diverse group but they are grateful for the past and continue to share their faith as did missionaries of old. They look forward during the coming year to remember and celebrate the dedication of the seminary in Bay Saint Louis, MS 100 years ago.**

### *IN MEMORIAM*

Father Brendan Murphy, SVD was born in Ireland on August 20, 1939. He was ordained on September 14, 1973. He spent his missionary life serving in the African American Apostolate in the USA Southern Province. He served in many parishes and in later years learned Spanish and became involved in the Hispanic apostolate. He passed away July 4, 2022



Rev. Brendan Murphy, SVD  
1939-2022



Rev. Walter Bracken, SVD  
1945-2022

Father Walter Bracken, SVD was born April 25, 1945 in Belle River, Ontario, Canada. He was ordained December 18, 1971. He was well known for his humor, warm personality and love of the people he served. He was instrumental in his leadership of Retrouville retreats and helped many couples and families through his counsel and ministry. He passed away July 1, 2022



# in a word or two



## New university scholarship program named for Sister Jamie Phelps

By Chris Herlinger Catholic News Service

Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans and the Adrian Dominican Sisters have signed an agreement to endow \$500,000 for a scholarship fund honoring Adrian Dominican Sister Jamie Phelps.

The scholarship will provide financial assistance to students enrolled in the advanced degree or continuing education programs in Xavier's Institute for Black Catholic Studies.

Sister Phelps, formerly Sister Martin Thomas, is a renowned theologian, educator, community leader and scholar who served as the director of the Xavier institute from July 2003 to August 2011.

Adrian Dominican Sister Elise Garcia, the congregation's newly elected prioress, said the endowment honors «Dr. Phelps» remarkable contributions to the IBCS, the Black Catholic community and the church at-large.»

She also said in an Aug. 8 statement that the endowment is a means of reparation for the congregation's "past participation in structural racism and in support of new pathways toward racial justice."

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, current director of the institute, said "the sisters' investment responds boldly to the need for solidarity that engenders right relationships in the Body of Christ." She said the institute looks forward to this collaboration, adding that its participants are "immersed in a unique learning environment rooted in critical theological studies that focus on Black approaches, critiques and contributions to systematic and pastoral theologies, ministry, aesthetics and education."

Sister Phelps was instrumental in the institute's establishment at Xavier, the nation's only historically Black Catholic university. She served many years as a member of the institute's faculty and was associate director for its degree program.

"My life objective is to assist in the inner transformation of the human community by participating in the education of Christians and other religious women and men committed to using their knowledge and expertise for the construction of a more inclusive world by sharing their knowledge and experience of God," she said in a previous statement.

*Herlinger is international correspondent to Global Sisters report.*



## New documentary on Sister Thea Bowman highlights her faith, justice work

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A new documentary on Sister Thea Bowman shines a light on her life and work as an advocate for racial justice and intercultural understanding. The idea for the documentary came to Franciscan Sister Judith Ann Zielinski, who wrote and produced the film, after the 2020 death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis. "I thought, I have to do something, what can I do?" and "Thea Bowman popped into my head. She was a Franciscan sister, a woman who had been fighting systemic racism in her own time and in her own way."

The documentary is a comprehensive look at Sister Thea, the first African American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and one of six Black Catholics known as a "Servant of God." It also makes a case for her sainthood and for contemporary spirituality, Sister Zielinski said. "Going Home Like a Shooting Star: Thea Bowman's Journey to Sainthood," comes from NewGroup Media and the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi.

Along with archival media of Sister Thea, the documentary features interviews with her colleagues, friends, fellow Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, former students and African American scholars, priests and bishops. **The one-hour film, a part of the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission's fall documentary season, will begin airing on ABC stations nationwide Oct. 2.**

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. IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; consultant.

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