

Eddie Imei

I grew up in a very religious family. My father was an ex Sacred Heart brother. After he left his religious congregation, he got married to my mom, and that is how I was born. I am third of five children three boys and two girls. I grew up in a very prayerful environment. I can still remember how my parents thought me how to pray some common different kinds of prayer when I was a child. In that way they nourished us with a very prayerful attitude and moral values until we all reached the grown up stage.

Indeed, my parish was the first resettlement of the SVD missionary in Papua New Guinea. The name of my parish is Alexishafen which is located in Madang Province. From there, the SVD missionaries reached out to all the other provinces of Papua New Guinea.

I came to realise who is a priest when I started my primary education. Every Sunday my parents used to bring us to the church service. However, I did not have the plain knowledge that priests were the ambassadors of Christ on earth, ministers of the sacraments, curer of souls, bridge between God and man, servant of Christ Jesus, etc. As time passed and my age increased, I came to know better the ministry of priest like celebrating the Holy Mass, distributing the Holy Eucharist, baptising people, etc. However, I did not really know the intrinsic nature of a Roman Catholic priest. With that limited understanding of being a priest, I made my choice to enter the seminary. And that is described below.

This is how I responded to God's call to the vocation of the priesthood. From nowhere, one fine day, interesting feelings of becoming a priest suddenly stroke me. However, I just kept and accepted it as it is while I continued on with my high school studies. Two years later which is in 2012 the same feeling arose again. That time I informed my parents my desire for the priesthood life. The next day they instructed me to see the parish priest. When I met the parish priest, I was informed to apply, and that is how I came to be a seminarian.

As a matter of fact, I would like to say that my interesting feeling of priesthood life is somehow rooted through my parent's moral Christian way of living. They brought us up with the spirit of the Christian way of living. I can remember that never a one time we missed daily prayer and Sunday mass. Sometimes my mother used to teach us songs she learnt from the white early missionary sisters. You see, she was once in a vocational school so there was an opportunity for her to learn the songs.

In fact, my parents never ever expressed their wish for me to become a priest. They always told us stories about their good times with the early SVD missionaries. Sometimes they mentioned the name of an individual SVD priest, brother, or sister and their ministry. These were kind of interesting stories to hear. Well, I always liked to listen to them. In fact, they really knew well the important ministry of a priest. For me, I did not have the prior knowledge of a priestly ministry when I first talked about entering the seminary. It has all happened after a year in the minor seminary that I started to understand the profound ministry of a priest.

The thing that surprised me most is the reaction of my parents when I told them my desire to be a priest. Certainly, this is the first time I noticed such a joy and happiness displayed by my parents' faces, something I had not encountered in my past life with them. I was a bit confused because when my big brother went to the University of Papua New Guinea, there was shallow joy and happiness on their face. When I saw this joy, I started to guess that there is something important about the role of a priest which made my parents so elated about it. This was the first joy of this kind, and still today when I go home they continue to exhibit that joy. That is very wonderful and encouraging to my vocation. This is also a thing to remember as I proceeded on with my seminary formation.

Currently, I can state that at one point the stories of the early missionaries narrated by my parents were somehow so convincing that it somehow enlarged and improved my desire to become a priest. I came to focus on early missionaries in my parish, and now it my time: I must continue to carry on their ministry in my Archdiocese. As a young man of my parish I was convinced to become a priest as it is the continued work of salvation enforced by Christ himself. Perhaps, there are many challenges to meet on my way, but with the grace of God I hope I can handle it.

God has already called us and granted us the two vital and holy vocations, the call to married life and the call to the priesthood life. In fact, both vocations have their own long-run challenges and sacrifices. Perhaps, for me it is better to understand the reality behind both vocations. Thus, many were called to married life and few were called to the life of the priesthood to bring souls to heaven. To bring souls to heaven is always my point to ponder still today because it is a duty from Christ. And it is a very beautiful ministry.

It is a matter of my choice as God has given us the freedom to choose. In doing so, the interesting feelings of becoming a diocesan priest explode out openly. Therefore, I made my choice to follow Christ by carrying his cross and serve his people later on as a priest. From now on, I feel I am capable of becoming a priest. Joyfully, I always thank God for my parents who brought me up with moral Christian values.