

This is a very short story of my vocation and how I came to be a Brother in the Religious Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel (CSMA).

Hi, my name is Br. Thomas Lasen. I was just like other ordinary village boys hanging around in the village after being dropped off from grade 10 in 1996. During my schooling period I already had ideas about religious people because there were a lot of SVD priests and SSPS religious men and women who came to stay in my home village Yampu and my parish Par.

Before I went to school, my elder brother had already joined the Sacred Heart Brothers and so that created a way for the religious people in parish and village to know me personally so I was not a stranger to them. Through their character and behavior, I built an interest in becoming a religious myself. As a little boy, I would even act like one my parish priests - I can still remember his given name Leo - and performed the liturgical rituals with kaukau in front of other kids. My prayer life was constant. I even marked the sign of the cross before drinking a cup of water. I didn't pray to become a religious man, but I grew up from the faith of my parents, and they were the very main people who strengthened my faith in God because they were the first group of people who received baptism after the erection of Par parish, so they kept everything the first missionaries told them on how to keep their faith alive.

My high school life ended and in 1997 I was a village boy and joined the youth group in my parish and took part in parish activities. Duty to help my parents was not new to me so I continued doing that as my primary activity during my free times. I had to help my mother with the garden work and my father to collect firewood in the bush.

It all happened that in the same year a guy from Laiagam district in Enga province came to stay in a workshop run by a German SVD brother in my village station. We were telling stories and something clicked in my mind that I asked him why he was coming to stay at Yampu. He told me his story how he became a candidate in the Michaelites congregation. Well I took his address from him and wrote to the late Fr. Ziggy Kruczek in Mt. Hagen. He replied to my letter and each time I received a reply I didn't stop but continued to write back at the same time.

Well, in 1998, I was asked by one of the SSPS nuns who lived in the Holy Spirit Center at Par in the diocese of Wabag to help her taking care of the garden, duties including cleaning, planting, picking and breaking firewood into pieces. I received K30 per fortnight for 4 hours per weekdays. It was big enough, and I appreciated that God was giving me that so I did the job. However, this little money controlled me and I ceased writing vocation letters but actively participated in youth activities and liturgy preparations in the church. Therefore, my parish priest appointed me to the music and liturgy committee in the parish board at Par parish at the end of 1999.

Though I quit writing vocation letters, God's call remained, and I couldn't realized that. One think impressed me was that, one time the late Fr. Z. Kruczek was going to Laiagam and on his way he just stopped over at Par and came to visit me in the garden. We shook hands and he encouraged me and told me to pray unceasingly for my vocation while helping sister do the gardening. After he left, I was thinking about a story they told me from the Bible when I was little boy, that the angel Gabriel visited Mary in the garden in Nazareth with good news and now, if the Michaelites Superior and the vocation director in PNG visited me in the garden at Par Holy Spirit Center, I thought I had good news behind that visitation so God's call still remained.

On the 12th of January, 2000, I was asked by the sister to go with her to Mt. Hagen as her escort. After we did our shopping in the town, we went to collect the mail at Rabiamul Archdiocesan office in Mt. Hagen. It happed that Z. Kruczek was also inside the office. When sister met him inside the office, she reminded him that I was sitting in the car. I was just looking through the window of the car and saw Z. Kruczek coming towards the car, and he came straight to where I was sitting. We shook hands and he asked me on the spot, "When are to planning to come and stay with the Michaelites?" It was just a surprise question at the wrong time. Without any pause to collect my ideas and even not knowing or understanding, the answer just popped out from my mouth saying, "Next week Wednesday." Now I remember that God provided my answer, not my physical body, because He knew my heart because He is

God. So I left home for the Michaelites Congregation on 19th January, 2000.

I started my propaedeutic program from that day till June 2001. Then I continued with the postulancy program till November, 2002. In 2003, I did my novitiate program in Sydney and made my first professed vows of chastity, obedience and poverty in January 30th, 2004. On January 10, 2011, I made my final vows and became the full vowed member in the Religious Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel (CSMA). So now I am here!

I am pretty sure that God's call is a gift from above and it remains. No matter I might have some weaknesses whether, spiritual, physical or intellectual, and would fail in some areas on my formation here at Holy Spirit Seminary Bomana but failing does not have a room when God's call overpowers. Therefore, in my mental prayers, I always joint Saint Paul the Apostle, the hero of the Gentiles, and say, "It is not I but Christ that lives in me.

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