

Anthony Paul

In 2006 I did my grade 12 and my aim was to become a medical doctor. I studied hard and did my exams. My exam results were good, and I was hoping to receive an offer from the University of Papua New Guinea. Unfortunately, I was not selected and really worried and stayed at home. A week later I was asked by vocation director Fr. Robert Gigimai to do an entry exam to enter St. Fidelis Seminary. Even though I did that exam, my mind was still in trouble, and I worried much when I saw my classmates get on the plane and fly away.

Luckily, after a month I received a letter to enter St. Fidelis minor seminary in Madang Province. I without telling my parents, I got on the PMV, and I decided to go to Madang. Far surprisingly, Madang was a new place I could put a step forward. Moving out from my little village to such big province with different cultural settings was not easy, but I managed this trouble myself and got on the PMV, and off I went to Madang. At Madang I had neither relatives nor friends at all. The first night, I slept in the bus with the bus-crew. Next, in the morning, I asked the bus crew to show me the bus stop leading St. Fidelis seminary. As quickly as possible, I got on the PMV and went straight to Kap, St. Fidelis. I spent a year in the seminary without going out for term holidays. My place was too far and no money was in my pocket to get a bus and come home. Only during the Christmas holiday, the seminary provided me with the bus fare to come home for holiday, and I came. I completed two years, 2008-2009, the first part of the formation program.

Even though, I had completed my two years in the formation program, the interest of becoming doctor was still burning in me. I planned to leave the program after those years. In November 2009, when my bishop interviewed me, he gave me three letters. I broke open the envelope and saw that I lately received three different offers to different secular institutions. One was to go to Mt. Hagen Technical College, another was to enter Balob teachers college in Morobe province, and last was from the place where I was dreaming to go. A bachelor's program in science foundation in the University of Papua New Guinea. After I glanced through the letters, my bishop asked me. Would you like to go to one of these schools or would you like to continue the seminary studies? I became tongue-tied, and I could not give a quick response. Bishop understood my sign language and gave me a day to think about it. When I deeply thought about these options, my mind and heart was in peace again to continue in the formation program. Thus I destroy the two letters and decided on the seminary formation.

I was selected to go to Good shepherd Regional Seminary in Banz, Jiwaka Province. At the beginning of February 2010, I entered Good Shepherd. I spent the three years in the Religious Studies Program and completed my year in 2012. In 2013 I was engaged to a bush and remote parish in Mendi Diocese as my pastoral experience. I walked the rough mountains, crossed fast flowing rivers, walking miles in the tropical hot sun and cold heavy rains. Walking up and down the mud roads was an interesting game to me. Life was really challenging, but I have to do it because what I experienced was a real missionary activity. Two of my shoes, the strongest boots that I have ever had, were broken, clothes were torn but these things can't be the excuse, I kept on moving. These experiences really strengthened my faith to become priest. My aim to become a doctor disappeared. My focus was on the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The year was spent with these bush people and I completed my pastoral successfully. In 2014, I was sent to Holy Spirit Seminary. I started my theology class. The second year, the seminary did not recommend me to come again for some reports; I engaged another year in pastoral activity at the same place. I completed that year successfully and came back to Holy Spirit Seminary in 2015.

Indeed: this life is not easy; I sometimes put my vocation into crisis. Sometimes my superiors do not treat me in a way I expected, but one thing that strengthens me always is this: If God chooses me to become his priest; no human and evil powers have power over it. I will still preserve in these years of formation. God will still fulfill his call when I am at his will. One thing I learned from these long years of formation is that if God calls me to become priest, I am protected by his grace and love to really find out my vocation, despite the problems, temptations and difficulties I am faced with. It is God who wills my priesthood. Formators may not trust me, Bishops may not have hope in me, but if God wills my vocation, I will still become priest.