

Thomas Posul - My Vocation Story

I am Seminarian Thomas Posul from St. Joseph Parish in the Upper Mendi area of the Catholic Diocese of Mendi. I am the second born in a Christian family of ten children. I received the Sacrament of Baptism and First Holy Communion from the hands of Fr. Colman Studeny, OFM Cap on the 23rd of March, 2008. On the 04th of October, 2008, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of Bishop Stephen Reichert, OFM Cap.

In this paper, I would like to share my vocation story and seminary life experience. To be truthful, I had never entered a church in my lifetime. Though my parents were Catholics, I did not even think of following them to the church. After I completed my Grade 12 studies, I was involved in lawless activities such as drinking alcohol, terrorizing people, car theft, tribal fighting, and hijacking ballot boxes during the 2007 General Election. In doing all these illegal activities, I had many enemies. As a result, my life was in danger. So I decided to change my life in 2008. First I thought of building a house and next I was planning to look for a school to pursue my education. So one morning I decided to go to the bush. On my way, I saw the Catholic Church's gate had fallen to the ground due to a heavy rainfall in the night. Without paying much attention, I walked away. However, my inner being forced me to go back and remove the fallen gate. Immediately I turned back and removed everything quickly, because I do not want other people to see me. However, the wife of the catechist saw me. As I was about to leave, she called me and give me some pig meat. From that moment, my plans changed completely. Instead of collecting building materials for my house, I rebuilt the church gate. After the completion of the gate, I converted to Catholicism.

Anyway, not long after receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, I visited my parish priest and asked him for spiritual books. He handed a book titled "St. Francis of Assisi." It was the story of God's call on St. Francis to rebuild the ruined church of St. Damien. Theologically, he was asked to rebuild the ruined spiritual lives of the people during his time. That book inspired me so much, and so my vocation started there somehow. With the help of my parish priest and three Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM) who were working in my parish, I wrote a letter to the Capuchin Vocation Director. I did the entry test to enter St. Fidelis Seminary in September and passed it.

In 2009 I entered St. Fidelis Seminary as a Capuchin candidate. The following year, I moved to St. Padre Pio Friary in Madang and did my postulant. Unfortunately, I was down with malaria so I took a year out. In 2012, I left the Capuchins and joined the diocesans. As a Diocesan seminarian, I went to St. Fidelis Seminary and completed my Spiritual Year of formation. From 2013 to 2015, I did my Religious Studies at Good Shepherd Seminary at Banz, Jiwaka Province and graduated with a Diploma and Advanced Diploma respectively. In 2016, I did my pastoral experience at the Cathedral Parish of Mendi Diocese, under the supervision of Fr. Robert Gigmai. At the same time, I furthered my studies at Good Shepherd Seminary and graduated with a Bachelor's in Religious Studies. This year, I was given the privilege by my bishop to do Theological Studies at Pontificio Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide, Via Urbano VIII, lb- 00120 Citta Del Vaticano, Rome. However, for this first semester, I am currently residing at Holy Spirit Seminary and taking up some of the theological courses at Catholic Theological Institute. I might leave at the end of the semester. In this regard, I sincerely and reverently thank Bishop Donald Lippert OFM Cap for his unwavering support towards my vocation.

In a similar acknowledgment, I think it is better to acknowledge how valuable and important some people are to me. Firstly, I thank the Heavenly Father for my life and vocation. Being a seminarian is a vocation. It is a call to be fully formed as a real human person. It is call to be a good priest. It is a call to be at the service of others. Secondly, I thank God for the gift of my parents, family members, benefactors and friends for their generosity and prayers during the years of my seminary formation. Thirdly I would like to sincerely thank all my seminary formators. I acknowledge their dedicated service especially in forming me to be the kind of person I should be. I feel that I have survived the usual test of growth and development in the Four Areas of Human Formation. On one hand, I believe that I gave my utmost best and made use of every opportunity. On the other hand, I do realize that I have in some way let you down. I will learn from my mistakes and never to repeat those same mistakes again.

Collectively, the priesthood formation in the seminaries means a great deal to me because of the many wonders, affection, and delightful experiences. I am praying that the good Lord will continue to send forth his Spirit to enrich my knowledge, sustain my spiritual hunger, and alleviate my unforeseen obstacles and challenges so that I may persevere in my vocation and become a good priest - a Holy Priest.

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