

MY VOCATION STORY

FROM MY YOUNGEST YEARS

I was brought up in a Catholic family. Both my parents were Catholic. In my childhood days, I used to pray with my mother, and she used to teach me how to pray and also brought me to Mass on Sundays. My father was also a faithful church goer and participated in the church activities. From my childhood days, my mother used to advise me to be a missionary. I do remember, I do not know why she say this to me, because my sister was a nun of the congregation of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Of course she is the only one in the family and there are five boys. Also, my elder brother joined the Franciscans as a Friar; but unfortunately, my father was not interested with his decision so after some years in the formation so he came out.

I was the youngest in the family; I received the best from my parents. Anyway, I was not brought up in an educated family.

During my elementary years, I did not think of the priesthood, yet my mother used to mention to me about missionary life. Anyway, my idea was to be a pilot. Through all my elementary years, I wanted to be a pilot. At that stage, I did not even have any idea about the missionary and priesthood life. I only saw the priest in my parish. Though I knew nothing about religious life, but I was very faithful in going to daily Mass without understanding anything during the celebration. It was because of my mother. I do not know why, but I used to do it sometimes, that I went with my mother to attend the Legion meetings. That was the life in my elementary until I received first Holy Communion and the sacrament of Reconciliation. After finishing my elementary, I had to go to another nearby province to continue my education in high school, because there was no high school nearby and the sad thing about my place is we are in the remotest part of the province and the country as well. There are no better government services. Just like in the time of the Stone Age.

Although my mother did not force me to be a missionary; it was just a word. In the high school, I still wanted to be a pilot. However, during my high school years I felt the pain of education because I was a day student and to make things worse, I do not have food to eat. Many times I went to school hungry. That peculiar thing was going on for two years. Once I cried in front of Headmaster's office. I tried my best to give up schooling but I do not know why I still bore those sufferings and continued. Anyway, sometimes I enjoyed school, and at other times I cried for help and I wondered, why and how life is like that? It seemed to me that there was no possible answer to my uncertainty. It seemed to me that I would not enjoy anything in this world, but let my life in the hands of my omnipotent God since I am His own possession.

Eventually at the end of my third year high school, I knew about Diocesan and SVDs. But I do not even bother to take interest to join them. One time, I visited a friend of mine in another high school, and he showed the letter that he wrote to the diocesan vocation director, and its reply. At that very moment I was inspired by that and became interested to draft one letter to the Diocesan Vocation director and gave it to my friend. I asked him to mail it for me, and I went back to my school. I got no reply, so I wrote another letter and mailed it to the vocation office. That time he replied and informed me to keep contacting him until my fourth year in high school. So I was faithful in writing and did what the vocation director advised me to do. Actually I did not see the vocation director or my parish priest during that time, and even did not take too serious about this either.

During my fourth in high school, that was in 2004, the vocation director wrote to me and told me that there will be an entry exam. If I was willing to take the exam, I was welcome. He gave me the date and the time. The time came and I went to take the exam. Anyway, we took the exam as a diocesan candidate of the Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen.

After sometime later, I saw some of my batch received their acceptance letter from the Seminary, before our final exam in the high school. I wonder why not me. I thought maybe I failed the exam, so I did not take it into consideration anymore. I forget all about it. When our

final exam came, I give it my best shot, and I won a place to study further. Nevertheless, I did not think anymore about going to the seminary.

The time came for me to start another schooling year. Only a few days were left, and a church worker approached me and said that the parish priest wanted to see me. I did not even think about the entry exam to seminary, but I thought that the parish priest wanted to help me in my tuition fee to the college where I was now ready to go. Anyhow, I went to meet my parish priest the next day, but he does not know me, he just read my letters and my name only. At last, I confronted him and said, here I am, Jerome. He surprisingly, said, "Are you, Jerome?"

I said yes! He said, "Come with me." Then I followed him without knowing anything until we reached his office and he gave me the acceptance letter from the seminary and said to me.

"Jerome, you want to go to seminary or I heard you won a place in the college too, so what is your decision now?"

I responded and said, "I want to study in the seminary."