

Jack Keskala - Rabaul

I grew up in a family of three boys and six girls, which makes up a total of ten members in the family. I am the fifth born in the family and the most beloved son in the family. Sometimes I take up the role as the first born because my elder brothers and sisters are all married. As a family we love each other, celebrate together, and live together. This helps me to grow up and become who I am today. My family is a happy and healthy family. We always live together in times of difficulties and problems. I am very much thankful to God for giving me good and concerned parents. We care for each other, are cheerful to each other, and pray for each other. The family members always live in peace and challenge each other to love, care, and share what we have with other people.

As family we enjoy living together and socializing with each other. During the feast days and big celebrations, my parents always prepare nice meals, and then we invite our big brothers and sisters with their families and we celebrate together. The family also takes part in celebrating the special occasions and ceremonies with clan members in the community. Being in a village setting, we have a lot of financial problems. It is because it is in such remote place, so it is very difficult to find money. We did plant cash crops like coffee, but the issue is the lack of road accessibility and therefore, we are faced with financial crisis.

From my childhood to primary school I was big headed and heard hearted, and sometimes they called me a cold blooded boy with many bad attitudes and behaviours. Being a loving in the family, my father never ever laid a single finger on my skin, not even a single moment in his life. I was growing up with a high expectations from my father and the relatives, not only in educational aspects but in tradition and cultural alike. The cultural and traditional aspects are the ones which challenge me a lot in terms of land and possessions since I am named after my father Jack Keskala. After completing primary school studies I was selected to Palmalm High School where many influences took possession of my life, bad and good alike. It was a period of transformation and transition of life.

I first attended Mile Primary School when I was seven years old. Since I was a little boy, I did many bad things that I thought it was good. When in grade four, that was in 2001, I started realising my bad attitudes. In 2001 I received first Holy Communion and followed with confirmation the following year. At that point of time I started to grow in leadership and could speak openly and in public. I also developed the virtue of courage and took up the leadership in leading and organizing the prayers in the school and in the community. However, grades five to eight had a tremendous effect in my life. These were the years that I got involved in smoking and consummation of alcohol.

One day we had a personal development exercise, and our class teacher asked the students to write their motto, goal, and aim. That time the thought of becoming a priest was in my mind, because on the very first day of the schooling year in grade one my mother told me the prophesy of Fr. Edward Meli that later I would become a priest. So I wrote my aim and motto and gave to the teacher to be read out to the students. When Mr. Bilu read out the motto the students laughed at me. They laughed because the motto was simple and sounded funny since we were all mountain boys and girls. And the motto sounded like this, "Go and be the fishers of men." Hence, after completing primary studies I was selected for high school studies in 2006 to 2007, and that's where I met up with outside influences. But I still maintained my leadership quality. I took up the responsibility of looking after the Inland Pomio Cultural Group. I also grew more in the virtue of love, friendliness and openness. Due to the virtues that I had, I became one of the well known students in the school to the teachers and the people living around the school area. Many times I was asked to prepare the liturgy for the big feast days in Malmal Parish.

After high school I continued the studies in Vunabosco Agro-Technical Secondary School. Been a Bosconian, I learned many new things. I went for confession after every two weeks, and that helped me to deepen my faith as a Catholic child. In Vunabosca I also participated in many leadership seminars and trainings. All these things helped me in knowing myself and in self awareness. After Vunabosco I was employed by Tzen Niugini Group of Companies for five years as an air conditioning technician responsible in housing air conditioning installation, repairing of housing air conditioning, and car air conditioning. I was paid with a good salary, but yet I never felt satisfied and happy. One day I was sitting and reflecting and analysing, why even though I have money, yet I am not happy. All of a sudden I remembered my motto from primary school, 'go and become the fishers of men.'

With the qualities and the leadership that I had developed since primary school, I believe and trust myself to overcome the problems that will affect me in the future if it is God's call for me to the vocation of priesthood. As a human person I have negative qualities like ignorance, carelessness, disobedience, and unwillingness in doing what is right. However, with the kind of the formation that I am undergoing now, it helps and confirms to me that if I face any problem along my journey I am sure that I can overcome with God's grace. It always depends on how I love the ministry and how I work with God's people. Nevertheless, when I was growing up I encountered many trials and problems in life. Some of these problems helped and changed my life a lot. I have problems like drinking, smoking, and fighting; I have been in the jail four times and some I cannot recall. Although I have problems, God did not abandon me. Some of those problems help me to recognize God's call in my life. I also have the habit of not denying mistakes. I tried my best to confront the problems I faced in my life and learn from them and not to repeat the same mistake again.

In the village I have many friends; nonetheless, the two best friends whom I used to share ideas with are my two cousin brothers. One is named Theodore and the other Ruben. We love each other, care for each other, and share things with each other. Among the two, Ruben is the one who always talks about education and speak in English. Theodore completed his studies in the University of Vudal and Ruben in Moramora Technical College, and both are working now. These two cousins of mine did influence me a lot. Also the person who had a great influence in my life is Fr. John Cabrido. I thank God for the gift of Fr. Cabrido, for I believe that God called me to the seminary in 2016 through him. However, I did not know the end of my journey since it is God who is the decider for everything in life. He gives according to his own will what is suitable for me and in his own time. I am only the earthly vessel, and he may do to me what he wants and his will be done and not mine. I am just started in the tunnel and do not know what will happen in the middle of the tunnel before I reach the end of the journey.