

## BENEDICT POLEI

I have three sisters and one brother. I am the second in the family and was born on the 9th of December, 1990. I came from a very simple family, living on the isolated island called Unea (Bali) in West New Britain Province. Unea is my Parish in the Kimbe Diocese. There is not much development reaching our island since the missionaries left us. We struggle on our own to earn money from the cash crops [cocoa and coconut]. In fact, God grants us so many kinds of fruit crops, garden foods and a part of this is the FAITH, meaning to say faith is very strong or effective on our island.

I was taught by my grandparents and immediate parents on how to recite prayers. They really tried their best to teach me about the Catholic faith in my childhood. However, my aunt bought me a rosary when I was in elementary school. That rosary I was using for family prayers, morning and evening, but not personal prayer. Guided by my parents, I learned how to use the rosary and reciting the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and the Glory be. I managed to do it well but not in pigin or English. The common language which I was familiar with was my mother tongue. A very significant thing about the Catholic faith which was introduced to me was the history of saints.

They have been telling me and my brother and sisters the stories of our namesakes [our given names]. These names are taken from the pidgin Book of Saints, bought by my father. As a child I was very interested to hear the life story of my namesake, St Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine Congregation. His life story really motivated me to be a person in the future. When growing up and attending elementary school St Benedict's life story was always in my mind. Very excitingly I often told my parents and peers that I'd become a priest in future. This ambition was drawn from the story of St. Benedict. I really loved this vocation, but very surprisingly this desire got off of my mind. This happened when I entered the S,D,A primary school called Nihilani in W.N.B.P. Bali Island.

I entered Nihilani SDA Primary School in 2004. I did grades three [3] to eight [8]. In 2009 I completed grade 8, and then I was selected for Kimbe Secondary and Kambubu SDA Secondary School, in Rabaul. So I have decided to go to Rabaul [E.N.B.P], because I wanted to explore or experience the place. To make it short, I completed my grade 12 in 2013 and I was supposed to do further study in Sonoma SDA College, but it was impossible. God had a plan for me to enter the seminary.

The journey which I went through was not easy. I really faced challenges in life, physical and spiritual. Physically I was fit, I enjoying myself in all programs of the institution. I took part in all Sabbath activities like, leading the prayers and hymns, giving reflections, etc. So when doing all these my spiritual life was already out of place. I never attended the Sunday Mass, did not know the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, but did manual work on Sunday. In fact I never let go what I learned from my family. The rosary which was bought by my aunty when doing elementary, I brought with me all the way up to grade 12. It's still with me now.

They made me cry two times, regarding the discussion of the pope. This incident was one of the factors which was reminding me of my childhood dream/gold. Through God everything is possible, and through the prayers of my family, I returned to the Catholic Church. When reciting the rosary on my own I could hear the very soft voice calling me for His vocation. Therefore, I wrote to my vocation director while doing grade 12. In 2014, I participated with the youth and prayer groups back at home. In 2015, I entered the Seminary, SHIMS, Rapolo, I did propaedeutic 1, and Propaedeutic 2 in 2016. Last year I completed my Spirituality year in Putput Formation Centre, and this this year, 2018, is my first year at Holy Spirit Seminary, where at Catholic Theology Institute I am doing Religious Study.

In this case I really believe and confirm that FAMILY is the first seminary or formation centre. I'm saying this because I experienced it. I wish that all families must do the same to their children. The vocation to the priesthood and religious life will increase if the foundation is okay. Father and Mother are the first formators.

Thank you, by Benedict Polei. Deo Gratia.