

My Vocation Story

My name is Luke Lucas Tanda a diocesan seminarian. I come from Pompabus Parish in the Diocese of Wabag, Papua New Guinea. All my family members are Lutheran family except only myself; I am baptized in the Catholic Church. My family members are all subsistence farmers consisting of three brothers and two sisters. I was born on the 2nd of April 1971, and I'm the last born in my family. My parents both died before I entered into the seminary program. One of my brothers also died when I first went into the seminary to do my first year propaedeutic in St. Fidelis Minor Seminary in Madang Province. My mother died when I was a year old, and my father died when I was doing grade nine in the high school. Then my elder sister looked after me together with her children. In her family, she has five boys and no girl. My sister and her husband are both subsistence farmers. I was looked after by her, and I was like the first born in the family and all her family members are Catholic. I completed my primary school in 1985, and in 1989, I completed Grade Ten. However, I was not able to go to further schools. Therefore, I stayed home, joining the parish youth.

Anyway, my interest in becoming a priest grew in 1995, when I was in Port Moresby after some years staying home after I left my high school. During the time when I had dropped out from my high school, and before I enter the seminary program, I joined my youth group in the parish. While animating youths in the parish, I prayed to the Lord to show me my vocation but nothing happened. That time I had many girlfriends. Some asked me if we could get married, but at that time I had no interest of getting married. However, I only offered both vocation in my prayer asking the Lord to give me a good direction. During that time some of my girlfriends got married but that did not bother me. I kept on praying to the Lord. For three years, I was appointed as a parish youth animator.

In 1994, I came to Port Moresby just for a visit and to go back. However, in 1995, an interest came to me to apply to the seminary to become a priest. One night I sat and prayed and asked the Lord; Lord if it is your plan then Lord, you can make all things possible for me because I have no good marks in my certificate. I wrote a letter of interest and sent it to the vocation director Fr. Emilio a MSP priest and Parish priest of Hohola Parish in the Archdiocese of Port Moresby. After few months later, a letter came to me saying, I was accepted me to do my formation program the coming year. At that time the late Archbishop Peter Korongu was the bishop of Port Moresby Archdiocese. That very moment I thanked the Lord with all my heart full of praise and my tears of joy falling from my eyes.

In 1996, I was sent to Boregaina formation Center in the Kwikila District in the Central Province. With me, there were three other brothers also who were accepted: Charles Aisahra from Bourganvil who came from East Boroko Parish, Michael Maharu from Pari, NCD who came from Tokarara Parish and two of us from Wabag. My other brother Elias Murry from Wabag and he came from Sogeri Parish and myself from Waigani Parish. We applied to join the Archdiocese and we were accepted. Our formation Director was Fr. Rollendo a MSP priest from the Philippines. While we were still in the formation center in the middle of the year 1996, Archbishop Peter Korongu died. However, we were told to stay there for a year so we completed that year and ended successfully.

In 1997, Charles, Elias and myself we were selected to go to Ullapia, St. Peter's Chanel College in Rabaul to do our first Year. In the middle of the year, five weeks before the second term holiday, I got sick and I was admitted in Kokopo General Hospital for three weeks. After they discharged me from the hospital, I attended one week of class, and we were told to go for holiday. Those brothers from the Archdiocese of Rabaul went to their own places but those from other dioceses like me were told to decide whether to go somewhere within Rabaul to stay with friends or to stay back in the school. I decided to go back to Wabag and spent the two weeks at home and went back. The Rector of the Seminary got a ship ticket and gave it to me. I was told to depart to Lae via Kimbe.

On a Friday after we left school, I went and got onto the ship and on Monday morning I arrived at Lae. On the same day I got PMV and on the Tuesday I arrived at home in Wabag. However, after two days of my arrival from Rabaul, I got sick again and I was admitted in the hospital for eleven weeks. That time I was not able to go back to school in Rabaul because I missed eleven weeks. I was not able to call the school Rector and the vocation director in the Archdiocese in Port Moresby because there was no telephone or mobile phone at that time. Anywhere, I had to stay home and forgot all about going back to Rabaul or to Port Moresby. In that same year after I had recovered from my sickness, I went and talked to the vocation

director of the Diocese of Wabag. That time Fr. Arnold Orowae (now Bishop of Wabag) was the vocation director so I told him all that happened to me. I asked him if I could go to the seminary under the diocese of Wabag in the coming year. But Fr. Arnold told me to wait for another year so that I can fully recover from my sickness.

After waiting for a year, in 1999, I was sent to do my first year in St. Fidelis Minor Seminary in Madang. I completed that year and I came home for holiday. During my holiday just before I went to Madang to do my second year, my brother who was the second born in the family died. That was another disturbance in my seminary programs but I went. In the seminary while doing my second year I was not able to do well in my studies, and I got poor academic results. In the second semester in that year 2000, I was sent home. I failed some of my courses, and my GPA was low so I was not able to continue. I complained to the administration if I could complete this remaining half year but they rejected my request, so I came home. In the diocese, I reported what had happened to me, and Bishop told me to wait for another year. Waiting for one year extended up to another four years and I stayed home for four years.

In 2003, I applied and asked Bishop again if he could accept me again so that I could go back to complete my second year in St. Fidelis Seminary. However, Bishop told me this time he will give me the last chance to go and complete the one year. In 2004, I went to Madang and I completed that year. Unfortunately, during our graduation time Fr. Bill Talentino a Franciscan OFM Cap priest and Rector of the Seminary told me that he was finding it very hard to enter my first year marks into my certificate. That was another obstacle for me to enter the major seminary in Fatima. As a result of this, the Rector of Fatima Major Seminary did not accept me to do my first year Philosophy studies so I had to stay home again. That time I stayed home for ten years. Though I stayed too many years at home, I still prayed to the Lord what would be my vocation. I prayed, Lord your ways are not my ways and your plans are not my plans and your timings are different from what I plan but Lord, Lead me to my vocation in which you have called me.

In 2015, I told Bishop Arnold Orowae again if could give me another chance so that I could go back to the Seminary. Then Bishop accepted my application and he told me to go and do my Spiritual Year in Madang in St. Fidelis Seminary again. Bishop gave me another chance saying, Lucas, this is your final chance and we will not accept any more application from you if you happen to come out again. In 2016 and 2017, I did my Philosophy studies in Fatima Major Seminary. In 2018, I did my Pastoral Year and I was told to do my pastoral in Sari Parish in the Diocese of Wabag. In 2019, I went back to Fatima Seminary and I did my third year religious studies. Now, this year 2020, I'm doing my second year in Bomana Theological Institute. However, during my seminary times or when I was out of the seminary programs, I used to complain to God, my Bishop, my rectors, my spiritual directors and other peoples that one day I will become a priest. With this, now I also pray that I will complete all of my three years successfully, and I will become a priest.

Therefore, I thank all those who have supported me one way or another to come this far. Here now, I'm also seeking for more assistance to complete my remaining three years here in Bomana Holy Spirit Seminary. That's all and thanks. May God Bless you all.

Yours in Christ

Luke Lucas Tanda (Seminarian)