

IGNATIUS LONGEWANA

MY VOCATION STORY

To start off with my vocation story, I would like to say a word of thanks to our Heavenly Father for the knowledge, understanding, and the courage that he has given me to write my vocation story. I myself have faith in him that he himself will help me. I kindly ask for his guidance upon me as I proceed on with my vocation story. I would also like to thank Fr. Rector for giving me the opportunity to write this vocation story of mine. Although I have a long story to tell, to make it short and sharp I am briefly going to share a little more about my life. With all this I am very happy to write about my life.

Ignatius is my given name and also a Christian name and Longewana is my surname or family name. I was born in 17/04/1996 in our little village called Muro under Mile Parish. When I was still a small boy, my mother and father played a very big role in looking after me. I grew up under the care of my parents until I was 7. In the year 2004, we were the first students to start the Elementary Level of Education in our village for two years, from 2004 to 2005. From that time, it was my parents who paid more attention to my life. It was at that time I remember I was first taught by my parents to pray in our vernacular (tokples). Despite this, at that time I was yet a small boy and many things I could not grasp from my parents and other people in my village because of a lack of understanding. But my earliest memories of encountering God during that time were during prayer in my own family. Why I say this is because apart from other things, prayer is the first thing taught to me by my parents.

After these two years, I started my first year in Mile Primary School. I entered grade 1 up till grade 8; from 2006 to 2013; these eight years I came across many things in my life. The experiences of people, events, places etc... it was about that time I came to realize that I have little understanding of my life and of other peoples' too. However, I came to know a little about God and about myself. For me there were many defining moments which I experienced or come across in my life. Some I myself have experienced, have noticed, and have known. But some I did not know or experience. Instead, other people knew about and have noticed them.

On the other hand, it was at this time that I experienced many challenges and temptations all throughout my entire life. The most important challenge that I have experienced up until today is about financial support from my parents. This made me so worried that I was ready to live the school and stay in the village, but the Lord in his special way helped my parents solve this problem and help pay for my needs. After my eight years of primary education, I was being selected to continue to the next level of education, which is the secondary level of education in Palmalmal Secondary School. I entered the secondary school and did grades 9 and grade 10 for two years; from 2014 to 2015. When I was yet a small boy, my aim was to become a teacher. I said to myself I would rather become a teacher or a pilot.

Anyway these two aims or goals suddenly disappear from my mind when I finished from grade 10. I thought I was not going to continue to grade 11 and 12 because I thought that I failed my grade examinations. But at the end I heard that I was eligible to continue to grade 11 and 12. That was from 2016 to 2017. I entered grade 11 and then continued to grade 12. In 2017 while I was doing grade 12, they appointed me to become a C.R.E prefect to lead the priest less service for the students and teachers, those who are Catholic, during Sundays and I did it. That was my big leadership experience when I was in Palmalmal Secondary School in 2017. In fact, this leadership led me to change my mind, and to enter the seminary; my aim of becoming a teacher or a pilot disappeared from my mind, and the aim of becoming a priest became stronger in my mind. This helped strengthen my desire to enter the seminary straight after I finished grade 12, and now I am very happy for the decision that I made.

After I had completed my grade 12, I was invited to join the come-and-see programs. Soon after the program, the Vocation Director gave us the entry test and out of the other brothers, only two of us were accepted to enter the seminary as the first year propaedeutic students; namely myself and Stanton Latomene. While we were in the seminary, there were in different programs and activities, which we were required to do. I myself however did not even know the rules and regulations of the seminary. I thought it would be the same as of the secondary school, but later I came to realize that seminary is the best place ever, compared to any other institutions in the country. It has been difficult for me at first because I did not know for sure much about the formation programs of the minor-seminary, but later on as I was going through the seminary life I come to understand more about the life in the seminary. While in

the seminary, they grouped us into the five areas of formations;

- Educative Pastoral Community Formation (E. P. C)
- Intellectual Formation,
- Human Formation,
- Spiritual Formation, and
- Pastoral Formations.

As for myself, I was put under Spiritual Formation, to be the leader of the group for one year of the propaedeutic program which was in 2019. This was another experience of the leadership I have in my life as a student in the seminary. From that time, when I was doing my two years of propaedeutic, I encountered many challenges in my life which also tempted me to leave the program and go home, but through the many graces of God in my personal prayer life, I was able to complete my two years of propaedeutic programs successfully, and that enabled me to continue to the next program of my seminary life, which was the spiritual year last year 2020 at St. Fidelis Seminary in Madang. I really thank the Lord for such a privilege given to me.

Furthermore, during this time when I reflect back to my past years, I come to discover that there are several persons who have had great influence in my life. First are my parents who have given much of their time in looking after me. The second person is my uncle, who is now the prayer leader in my community. He also helps my parents in giving advice; I myself also admired his way of living, the way he treated people in the community, his attitudes towards prayer and the way he gives his life in taking care of the old people in our own community. I really admired him so much. The third person that also has great influence in my life was my former vocation director, who is now the rector of the seminary. Fr. John. A. Cabrido. He helped influence my life in many ways. He encouraged me to pray every day, especially the holy rosary, visit the Blessed Sacrament, and always told me to do good to others. I really like him because he always fulfills his duties with love, walking to visit the people in the remote areas; no matter whether the place is close or far, even there is no proper road but he has the great desire to reach the people. In the future, if I really become a priest, I will do the same thing as he did.

However, the last person who gave much of his time guiding me throughout my two years of propaedeutic in the seminary was my first spiritual director. Fr. Michael Morando. He was the person who kept directing my life throughout my two years of propaedeutic when I had spiritual direction with him. His advice and wisdom made me to be more responsible for my vocation and also his encouragements to always live and act like a seminarian all through my entire life, helped me to become who I am today. Even though I have come across many challenges and temptations in my life, I still follow my commitment to seek help from my spiritual director, to help me to overcome such challenges and temptations in my life; on the other hand, because of the trust that I have and because of the relationship which I had with my spiritual director, it has helped me to respect my fellow brothers and even leads me to respect other people and even my family members. I really appreciated my spiritual director for his time and effort put into directing my life.

Finally, I have come to the end of my vocation story. To finish off, I have already discussed much about my entire life and my experiences although I do not have much understanding or knowledge about other persons' life especially the saints, but here with regard to the little knowledge that I have, I choose only one as my role model, and that is Saint Francis of Assisi. You may ask why I choose this saint. If we look carefully at the life of this saint, we may see that he had done enormous work in his life. I really like the way he lives his spirituality. One of the outstanding virtues that I like from this saint is the virtue of sacrifice. He sacrifices his life in looking after the poor people. I really admired this way of life. I wish if I really become a priest I am ready to live my life like this saint. I ask for his intercession to intercede for me that God may help me to accomplish and achieve what I am aiming for in the future as a diocesan priest.