

The Seeds of Today are the Blossoms of Tomorrow

Autobiography Melchior Maron.

Like a drifting coconut, I am being tossed into the wide open sea. I do not know where I am going and where to stop in such an infinite journey. There will always be windy storms, crushing waves and drowning waters. But the time will come when everything is going to be peaceful and calm. The beginning is always the hardest and with Jesus always on my side I can persevere through this today's world of modern technology. God knows what is best for me when life gets challenged, and I need to have patience to wait for Him to get me through this dark tunnel of earthly pleasures.

Family Background.

It all begins from an unknown world of conception throughout the 36 weeks of painful gestation. In the middle of October 20th 1998, I was finally delivered into this earthly endeavor of ascetic life. Culturally, I was named after my grandfather as "Wayi." Being the youngest and the last sibling in a family of six boys with no sister was a different story altogether. During my childhood, I was being used as tool boy by my elder siblings, since I was regarded as the least among all. It affects me in a sense that I am not being valued or not a member the family.

Imagine how will life be for a single person, a working person, to feed a thousand mouths. This was the real physical situation in my family. My father working as a soldier, though earning sufficient income, yet he cannot manage to satisfy all our daily necessities in today's expensive world of money. Honestly speaking, my family is not really wealthy. On the other hand, as a housewife my poor mother always did all her very best to sustain our family's welfare while the father was always away.

Socially, my family relates well to my extended families and relatives and the clan as a whole. We practice the patrilineal system of hereditary in my society. In both parties of my father and mother, we had an enormous landmass. Thus, this enables us not to rely every time on money but to cultivate the land for sustenance. With the little support that my father exerted financially, we never went sort of anything. Though at times we have had quarrels within the family due to misunderstanding, that does not last long simply because our father is person who has a faithful heart towards us his children and the family entirely.

Yes, I really appreciate the support given to me by my family towards my upbringing, especially in my education and my staying here in the seminary. The most challenging support is of finance. Anyway, despite the difficulties there is always a pointing out to something good. I am the heart of my father and mother and the apple of their eyes. My father never denies me of anything. Whatever I asked for is given me. I can still recall his astounding response to me, he would say, "I will never promise you nor say no to you but I keep it as it is." Surely, I know that with a firm hope whatever I asked for is always provided. My family practices the Catholic faith, especially, my mother, which through her piety I come to have a deep sense in fostering the faith. So with a fervent heart, I fearlessly say that; "being born as a Catholic, I will live as a Catholic and die as a Catholic." Most of those days were spent with my caring parents and siblings. The concern of my parents was that they do not want us to be cared by another family but to always stay close to them. Whether we had anything to eat or not, still they both never abandoned us. The idea was that they do not want us to imitate and adopt others' bad attitude and disordered morality.

Educational Career

I entered into the battle of education in early January, 2006, at the age of seven. The idea in my head about education was to learn and gain knowledge but further than that I was totally blank. I did my elementary schooling at Pitirait Elementary from 2006 to 2008. The first word I can still clearly remember that I spelt it correctly and got a tick from it was the word "kapul". I continued on my grade 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 in Worei Primary while my grade 4 was in Igam Barracks Primary School. In 2015, with a perfect result I was selected for grade 9 to Papitalai Secondary School. The four years of my secondary schooling was very tough and competitive. Peer pressure was very strong and often distracted me frequently from my studies. I developed many bad habits and addictions, and as a result my academic performance was very poor. On one occasion I was nearly expelled from school, but Jesus was always there for me. After all, I managed to successfully complete my secondary education which ended with the grade 12 fi-

nal examinations. I was selected to a tertiary institution for further studies, but I did not turn up to it since the acceptance letter from the seminary come first so I said, first come, first served. It was from that moment on I made up my mind to enter the seminary.

My Personality

Being who I am and knowing my basic human qualities can be good and bad to me in one way or the other, because, if I am intellectually bright academically, then with the knowledge I have it can draw me away from God. But if I am wise enough, I will use this gift of knowledge to help others in need and help them come to know God. The positive quality that I am honest, generous, hardworking, obedient, forgiving and peaceful. On the other hand, the negative qualities I have is that I am not really open, always being quiet, not confident, fearful, doubtful, and give up easily when confronted with challenges. Furthermore, I do not relate socially well with my opposite sex. I believe with God nothing is impossible and I keep this quote always in my mind which says, "All locks are made with their own keys to unlock it, therefore, God will never give me a problem without any solution to it." By going to spiritual direction regularly, thinking positively and reading books about saints can benefit my personality. Above all it is important to offer my intentions through prayer to Mother Mary by praying the holy rosary daily.

Personally, the most challenging problem I encounter is the feeling of lust and desire for sex. But I have managed to overcome it. Regarding my health I am physically fit and healthy without sickness or diseases, neither tuberculosis nor diabetes. But lately I was identified to be infected with hepatitis B. Despite all these issues I will do my very best to overcome it by taking ownership of my emotions. Furthermore, I do not have any adolescent problems. My leadership experiences I have was when I was in primary and secondary school I was being appointed among other students as prefect assisting teachers in their duties. I love volunteering when I feel at ease with myself. If not, I will hurt myself by forcing myself to do that particular work. Charitably, I help others who ask for my help and generously give to others even though they do not expect me to do so.

I have a lot of friends in my life. Just to name a few they are, Charlie, Tokey, Simon, Memel, So-on, Kichawen, Damien and many others. Above all, the favorite one is Newton. He is an open friend to everyone, very funny and talkative; especially in cracking jokes. Being advanced in age was the point in which he usually gives me positive and sound advice in confronting negative personalities that we sometimes discuss. The other reason was that he was the only male in his family, so he loves creating good relationship with other boys to make them his brothers. The main influence of him upon me was to get me out of my self-centeredness. The most unforgettable moments I had was when I was being told that I was selected to do my secondary studies and the times of joy with my girlfriend. It appears as transitional moments of maturity and great achievement in my life. Besides, it has an endless ripple effect in my life in building my educational career and my social experiences. Obviously, as teenage sexuality is very strong that we tend to express it in romance during puberty. It influenced me socially to relief the stress in me and to love and be loved within the society. By doing so it helps me to be morally and sexually matured by positively interacting with my opposite sex. Apart from these experiences, I was a happy person at last after the completion of my grade 12 final examination. I felt like being freed at once after the thirteen solid years of formal education, because it was the end of a chapter of my life. At that time I came to come to reflect upon my life as an educated person. Did I really commit myself to my studies in the years gone? Anyway, as an educated person of my country, province and community, how can I contribute meaningfully towards the betterment for them?

Do I have a smoking history? Yes, of course. I was an active smoker for four years at the secondary school, but I have now overcome it. Peer pressure is one factor that has a greater impact on my smoking habit. It is not that I desired to smoke, but since I was in a group I had to do what they expected of me in order for me to be part of that peer group. Due to excessive smoking I looked skinny and lost a lot of weight. Slowly I come to realize that I did not have respect for my body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. As a result it affected my studies, prayer life and my health. I was grateful to the seminary that the health and nutrition class that was taught to us by the sisters at Vunapope Hospital encourages me to be convinced of my health and challenges me to overcome my bad habits and addictions.

I am always proud and happy to be a Catholic which boosts me to practice my faith every time. I thank God for creating me and I was privileged to be brought up in a devout Catholic family. Through my parents, especially my mother, I come to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of my faith and religion. I barely remember when I was baptized for I was still an infant. That was the gateway of my initiation as a pagan into the Church as a child of God. During the years of my education I was fortunate to be enrolled in a Catholic Agency school which broadened my understanding about Catholic teachings and its norms. In 2013 while doing my grade 7 at St. Mary's Worei Primary School, I received my first holy communion. I felt Jesus is truly alive and is present in me. Recently, on the 21st of September 2018, I was confirmed by Bishop Rochus Tatamai at Christ the King, Papitalai Secondary School. Since then, I did not often go for the Confession and Holy Mass because the parish was far away. Only on Christmas or by chance when the parish priest come for pastoral visit then I was lucky to receive the necessary sacraments. While on my school holidays I helped out with my parish priest with the serving at the Mass. At the school I participated actively with the other students of my parish to prepare songs for the Sunday Mass. Right now my parish priest is Fr. Arnold Neyeh, MSC. He is a man of prayer who wholeheartedly daily celebrates the Mass with fervid reverence. He is always available for confessions and he diligently fulfills his pastoral work with perfect knowledge and a positive mind. Apart from that, he also help enroll the youths in the parish to various technical schools in order for them to become useful human resources in supporting their families and the parish.

Seeing what he did inspires and motivates me to study hard and take seriously the formation that I undergo in order to be like him in the future. He is a person who can understand his parishioners and responds with love and care in doing what is expected of him. Especially, he is someone who is sensitive to what is happening around him and responds with openness. I first realized my initial calling when I was in grade eleven. That is from seeing Fr. Martin Kareng coming to the school for the Come & See Program. Without being persuaded by my peers and family, I pursued this greatest desire deep within me that drives me to endeavor this life long quest. On the other hand it is through the prayer of my mother, who tirelessly prays the holy rosary daily that she wanted one of her sons to become a servant of God. After an endless period of time dreaming about all sorts of jobs I wanted to have in the future and the sum of money I would earn, I see that there is nothing good I can attain from it. It is as if there is no pleasure at all in such a life. The greatest obstacle I believed to have repelled me from my vocation was the consumption of alcohol, but I have overcome it. It all depends on my prayer life and commitments that will determine my destiny. Apart from that I must ask myself, "Why do I believe myself to be called to the priesthood?" Because it is for the salvation of my soul and for those entrusted to my care. I do not see it as a hindrance to me but for the greater glory of God's Kingdom here on earth by making everyone the disciples of Christ. On a journey like this to the celibate life I need someone to spiritually accompany me. They are there to assist me in directing my motives to appreciate my past and to let go of it and move on with heads held up high into the future. At first I did not know what spiritual direction is all about, but since then as I entered the seminary I come to fully understand its essence in my formation. For the first time I was spiritually engaged into it. It enables me to improve my negative practices and nourishes me to reflect a positive personality of who I am. Hence, it molded me to be fully integrated in the four dimensions of my life. I would like to say special thank you to Fr. Michele Morando and Fr. Boniface Holz, MSC for being such kind and helpful persons to accompany me spiritually.

Personally, my knowledge of the priesthood is that it is a life entirely consecrated to the one who is the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ himself. To be a disciple of him I have to be open to his will and by making everyone his disciple. In living a celibate life I have to deny myself, be adhered and configured to Christ and encounter him and have a deeper conversion. It is a life-long quest till death. A priest is a central figure and the one who acts in the person and name of Christ. He is a good shepherd and the one who leads by example.

My favorite priest is Fr. John Cabrido, who was formerly my rector at Rapolo. I loved him very much not because of his physical appearance but for the inspiring homilies that he preached and the insights that often motivated and challenged me. He is also the one who influenced me the most in thinking critically and acting with concision and accuracy. As he usually told us, "cut, cut fast, cut quick and cut clean," because in such approach personally I will be competent and be productive in the field. Obviously, in the ministry as we know you will be the only one shepherding the vast multitude of sheep placed in your care.

A Challenge for Transformation

On the 22nd of January, 2021, we the Kavieng and Daru-Kiunga brothers were the first students to arrive at the seminary. The place was very beautiful and welcoming. It was very cold indeed, unlike at Manus. There were a lot of colorful flowers growing everywhere that beautified the seminary. I spent the weekend cleaning my personal room and easily adapting myself to the environment. The coming week we had retreat with our Director of the Spiritual Year, Fr. Antony Siluvai, SVD. It was about inner happiness, according to St. John Paul II who says, happiness is an inside job. As I reflect upon it, it helps me to free myself from the experiences I had during the holiday and to be focused on my spirituality.

We had the inaugural mass of the academic year 2021 on the 1st of February. His Grace Archbishop Douglas Young, SVD was the main celebrant. His message to us from the homily was concerning the importance of human formation. It was directed to us as individually, depending on how personally I grasp the underlying value of the formation that I am undergoing. This deals with the taking of vices and addictions to bad practices that are commonly seen as an issue in the priesthood. And it is very important to be addressed at this early stage of our formation before it is too late. As the first spiritual year seminarians at Good Shepherd, we were officially welcomed into the seminary. Gradually, I was accustomed to the routines of the seminary as I daily underwent the programs. Apart from the philosophy program, we had an annual program of 270 days out of 365 days. It was divided into three 90 days of study to give an integral formation. The first part was spent for personal growth (Solitude). The other part was spent for a community growth (Integration) and the final part was spent to develop growth in our personal encounter with Christ (Spirituality). Overall, the program was outlined into a 7 C's structure, where Christ is the center of everything. Firstly, it is the "Challenge" that I have to endure like Jesus who was regarded as a rejected stone. This brings me back to my childhood upbringing and its problems of love and being loved and the basic needs that I received from my family and the society. As a child I experienced the love of my family and its brokenness due to poverty, abuses, sickness, etc... only then, it is through the brokenness that I will truly become the corner stone that once being rejected by the builders has now become the corner stone of the house.

Apart from the challenge it is the "Call". In all the challenges that I face, slowly I come to unfold the mysteries of my calling. Responding to this call I must first see myself as a disciple whom Jesus calls to be holy as the heavenly Father is Holy. Like a disciple I am also called to be with him, to be attached to him, to listen to his words & learn from him and to be formed for his mission as an apostle and a missionary to go out and be his witness.

Furthermore, it is also my "Culture" that contributes greatly on how I view my vocation to the priesthood. As Papua New Guineans (Melanesians), we come from different provinces and localities where we see the hereditary of social values and beliefs as very important. Often it can be a hindrance to my calling. But Jesus says, whoever leaves his father and mother for my sake will have eternal life. And it is through the pain of leaving my family ties behind that I will gain Jesus.

After all, it is "Christ" who is and must be the center of everything that I do in my life if I really have decided to follow him in his footsteps. It is not enough for me to say that Christ is the point in everything but I have to prove it so by proclaiming his passion, death and resurrection as prophesied and written. In the reception of the holy Eucharist, he reassures me every time I am with you always. As a teacher and master he (Jesus) has already set an example for me to imitate after him.

On the other hand, it is the "Community" to which I will work with and live in that will have an impact on my formation. Often it is the people with whom I associate who will teach and guide me. Living in a community teaches me to be aware of the needs of others, how they think and express their views, and not to be concerned too much about myself alone. It also taught me to be free and responsible. In this way it leads me to sense the needs of others and to reach out to them. At the end, it is the people that make us priests when we minister to them with a sincere heart. Meanwhile, reflecting on my vocation and the other paths to different jobs in life, I believe myself to be a "Chosen One". The scripture itself says, many are called but few are chosen. To be a chosen one I have to live the life of the saints as imitators of Christ and be the preachers of the Word of God. In the midst of helping others, I need to have a deeper understanding of the sacraments. As a shepherd, I have to smell the sheep and be with them. I have to live my life as a consecrated, be merciful and help them to be holy.

Finally, as per the last stage of the spiritual year program, we have the "Change", a challenge for transformation. It determines and depicts who I really am, whether I transforme (grow) into a good tree producing good fruits. I now become the corner stone, the Temple of the Holy Spirit truly alive to witness the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, as I reflect and meditate on myself throughout the year, I believe in the Lord that I have tried my very best to change and grow with the grace of God in my formation. And there is something I lack which I need to work on it with the help of our good Lord is to go for confessions and spiritual direction regularly as much as possible.

Present Life

As a young man inspiring to become a priest, I would like to see myself as a simple priest, who is being submissive to the authority, to be obedient, and to lead by example and not so much in words. I have to let Jesus be my role model in little works that I do and be holy. After all, there is always someone behind me who supports me in my journey of faith, and they are my family and clan. None of them have any objection to my desire of becoming a priest. Instead, they were generous and proudly gave me words of encouragement and challenged me to strive for my call.

Yours in Christ, Melchior Maron