

## MY VOCATION STORY

The Road I am Journey On.

A vocation is a calling from God. It is an invitation from God to someone to follow him. Like in the Gospel of Matthew (4:18-20), as Jesus was walking along the shore near by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them "Come follow me and I will make you the fishers of men. At last they left everything and followed him.

### Family Background

Simon Jonathan is my name. I am from Manus Province, St. Francis Xavier Bundralis Parish, under Kavieng Lorengau Diocese. My parents are Beno Popei Jonathan, currently the Provincial Labour Officer of Manus Province, and Paula Sepoken Ndromoi. She is a simple house wife. Both of my parents and their entire families are devoted Catholics.

From my patriarchal side, my father came from the clan of Pamachau under the Titans tribe, and from my matriarchal side, my mother came from the Phu-unuw clan under the Tribe of Chutu-uw. My family status is not so much a wealthy family as a moderate living. We were (10) ten of us in the family. We have two pairs of twins, a fraternal and an identical set of twins. Unfortunately, we lost one of our brothers. He died during before birth. And so we are nine of us still existing, six brothers including myself and two sisters. I am ranking as forth born in the family.

The family is the first vocation which God has chosen. And out of that conjugal love that our parents have for us, we are chosen to be born on this planet earth. We are not born by chance but by a purpose. Families are the channel of life. Therefore I did not choose to have this type of family, but it was through God who has given it to me. My parents were the first influencers to me and especially to my vocation. The very most is my mother, who stands out every time in all my difficulties and challenges, beside my father often times. However, financially I received aid from my dad. I love my parents and even my siblings very much as I do love myself. The family always encourages collaboration, is friendly to everyone, and above all we learn to love, share, and respect each one of us in the family.

### The Description of Myself

It was in the evening hour of 4th September between seven and eight in the year 1999 that I was born. On the same date the family was celebrating my elder brother's birthday. I was given birth by my mother at the Lorengau General Hospital in the central part of Manus Province. As an infant born into this world, I started to cry with a blank brain, and mother used to come and try to comfort me and told me to shut up, but all her words were nothing to me as a baby.

### My Childhood.

I grew up in the remote village of Tulu in the North Coast of Manus Province called Lupuk. All my childhood life I was spending in the village with my elder mother and her husband together with the children. While the entire family was living in town, such that my father was first employed as the Clerk working with the Health Department of Manus Province.

However the year 2002 didn't go well. My dad had to retire from his job and also had a conflict with his adopted brother. He was the adopted son to them. Therefore he decided to quit, and the family had to leave the town Upper Ward 6 and withdrew from there. And in the year 2004 they came to my mother's village Tulu in the North Coast of Manus where we were living together with my mother's parents.

And that was the new beginning of the life in the village. We now started to get used to the life in the village, the types of food, culture and tradition, and eventually our life was completely transformed from an urban to a rural setting. And we didn't want to return to the past life of the family.

The life in the village was comfortable to us and sustained us most in our temporal needs and wants. When dad saw that the family was settling. He insisted again to look for a job to aid us his children in our financial needs for our necessities, especially food, clothes, school fees etc. It happened that one late evening while the family was having the Rosary together, a

local man came and transmitted the message to him saying my father's position was vacant and they really needed him to go back. He immediately on the next day got on the boat and off he went to town. And that was 2005. He began to work again for another three years, and in 2008 he applied for the vacancy position of Provincial Labour Officer of Manus Province and he was undisputed. And so he gained the position as the Provincial Labour officer of Manus Province, working together with the Labour and Industrial Relation until the present year 2021.

#### My Education Journey.

In the year 2005, at the age of seven I started my education journey. My mother enrolled me to one of the community schools in Tulu village called Tulu Elementary School. Recently it had become St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School, and today it is still known as St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary and Primary School.

The first day of my school was all boring, I was worried and scared. As time went by I started to adapt to the situation most especially in the classroom and to my classmates. At seven years old among the many students, it was all fun to me thinking that we spent every break after lesson in playing games. I did my Elementary Prep until grade two and the year ahead 2008, I continued my grades three up to six in the St. Thomas Aquinas Primary School. Unfortunately, I was not able to complete my upper grades seven and eight due to some situation, the strain among the community and the teachers. My parents transferred me to Dungou Mashu Primary School, an agency school operated under Evangelical Church Of Manus (ECOM), staying with my mother's brother, and I went to school.

However the treatment of his wife was very cruel and tyrannical to me, not the way my parents and my elder mother and her husband treated me. Often time I didn't eat anything before I went to sleep and I even went without breakfast before I went to school. It was a kind of corporal punishment given to me, and that really deteriorated my learning, and I could not cope well in class because of too many absences. Therefore I had to tell my parents that I must not stay here any longer. It would be better to find me another school elsewhere where I could continue my upper grades seven and eight, or eliminate me and repeat the class the next year.

And so in the year 2013 and 2014, at the age of 14 gone up to 15, my parents transferred me to Lorengau East Primary School where I proceeded on with my education in grades seven and eight. I was living with my aunty from the patranial side and went to school.

From then on I started to assimilate my education seriously in contrast to my early years of schooling. I was chosen by my class matron as a class captain of my class seven (B), and gradually became popular and friendly to the students and the teachers, and was appointed as the school head boy in the year 2014 grade eight. It was not because that I was popular and famous in leading the students in the different direction. Besides, it was through my action, behavior and attitude that brought attraction and admiration to convince my fellow companions and the teachers in the right use of quality /strength in a positive way to the students of my age and those ahead of me. This helped me so much in my academic performance and my results. It was very good showing that I could do well in my National Examination. When the time came I did extremely well in the National Exam. I received the awards topping the grade eight students in the school I was educated in. I came first in the combined subject in the External and in the Internal, second in Social Science and third in Science, and I was awarded by the School Head Mistress for good student leadership at the end of my graduation day.

In the year 2015 at the age of 16 I was selected to continue my grade nine at the Christ The King Papitalai Secondary School, a Catholic agency school. There were so many students who came from the various Primary Schools to attend the same school I was in. It was enjoyable to meet friends from distinguished parts of the province and to know more about them. However, as the time passed, there were influences from different students from dynamic background, knowledge and behavior in different ways I almost got entangled in their influences. Nevertheless, these didn't ruin my life completely.

The thought of getting a proper education was considered, and I treasured it very much. I came to conscious that education was very paramount in my life .According to my perspective, it was a means of fulfillment. And so again in the year 2016 I did extremely well as I completed my grade ten and was eligible to continue on my upper secondary grades eleven

and twelve in the year 2017 and 18 at the age of 18 going up to 19. And before passing through the final Examination. I sat for the entry test, especially for the young men who aspired to join the priesthood ministry of Christ entering into the Seminary in that year 2018 in the mid-month of July. And for a surprise, I was accepted with one of my classmates by the Rector of the Sacred Heart Seminary Rapolo in the East New Britain Province in the late month of October on the same year 2018. And so after successfully completing my grade twelve, I was selected to further my study at the Institution of Business Study in Port Moresby. However, I had already been accepted by the Sacred Heart Seminary Rapolo, and there was no any other concept of mine to choose other pathways in life. And so I was approved to enter the Seminary a year ahead to continue my study in Sacred Heart Seminary Rapolo.

#### Seminary Life.

Therefore in the year 2019 at the age of 20, I entered Seminary on the 18th of January together with the other young men from the other dioceses in the Niu Guinea Islands to begin our preparatory stages one and two.

The first year of mine was a bit challenging to me at the first trimester. You know everything was on a program and schedule, and it was difficult for me to suit myself with the rules and the norms of the seminary. I was thinking that the life in the Seminary would be equal to the life outside the seminary. It turned out that the life in the seminary changed my entire life. Here I was now no longer waking up on my own timing. Everything was scheduled and structured well. All I had to do was to be obedient, listen, think, and follow it.

I was feeling like my life in the seminary was my comfort zone. I felt like I was really in the presence of God in everything I did: my action, my attitude, my intimate relationship with the Lord through my prayer life, my regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament, attending Mass daily, the sacrament of confession, spiritual direction and the fervent love I have of Blessed Virgin Mary helped me to persevere and discern my vocation in the two years of my preparatory stage in the year 2019 and 2020.

#### My Personal details.

Personally for me I am a young extrovert and the autonomous person. I have a good sense of humor, a keen and the most reliable person to those who are in need. I have respect for others, am obedient to others who are in authority, and I am honest, transparent, and an easy going person.

There are certain times when I am not happy I get easily frustrated when seeing things are not in order or not properly done. I almost give up and lose my temper by breaking property, my anger rising so quickly and eventually I swear or retaliate.

In doing so I come to realize that, there are ways and possibilities to overcome these bad attitudes or behavior, especially the challenges and obstacles in life. And what is it? When things happen right away on the present moment, I usually go away, walking on my own to a silent place. I stay there for a few minutes to let my anger cool down or I engage in the act of prayer. I actually pray over it and ask the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to give me a peaceful and clear understanding mind and to forgive and forget.

I recalled back to my childhood at around the age of 4 when my both parents were out during the day. My father went to work and my mother went to the market. It happened that my father's younger brother was very frustrated with us. My younger brother and I were playing in the house and made a lot of noise, and he got the sticky tape and fastened our mouths, arms, and feet and locked us in the room. We tried to call and shouting but nobody could not hear us, until mom returned back from market. As she was opening the door, we came out and reported to her all that had happened.

It will be very complicated for us to forgive those who do wrong against us, but that is not the solution to solve the problems or matters. It would be better to confront the problem as the pathway of peace by let go of the past experiences and move on with life.

In addition to that, I think back to my primary schooling days. I was once a school head boy. I really found it was very uncomfortable for me at times when it came to the disciplinary board meeting. I sometimes felt uneasy to express or point out the issues concerning the student body. Enthusiastically I remember one of the most unmemorable event I had during

those days. I was a very exemplary student and a role model for all the students despite the hardship and challenges. The qualities of leadership had made me always have a responsibility since my primary schooling days until I completed all the requirement of the secondary level of the education. I began with being the class captain from grade seven, head boy grade eight, class captain grade nine (F) and ten (B) and grade eleven social prefect and grade twelve liturgy committee. And I believe many more responsibilities will be given to me as the life goes on.

In regards to my health, I am healthy, well groom and presentable. I have no any disaster in my body or any other health matters. I am a passive smoker, I did away with all the vices since my childhood until the point where I am today. I don't entertain drugs and alcohol into my life, because I know that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and it shall not be abused for bodily satisfaction.

### My Faith Journey

I am devoted to my church (Roman Catholic) and to the God whom I served and believed in as a Catholic faithful Christian. I first received my baptism in the year 2000 by the Reverend Priest Fr. Clement Taulam at St. Michael Lorengau parish. And in the year 2010 I received the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion by the vicar general at the time, the late Fr. Dominic Maka, and the next day I was receiving the sacrament of Confirmation by the late emeritus Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni (MSC).

During the moment of my reception of the sacraments, baptism especially, when I was one year old, I didn't know what was actually happening to me. All the others, Confession, Communion and Confirmation, I received when I was in grade five actually in the year 2010. I was all scared and terrified in the first place I didn't know how to control my fear. It was my first moments also and all sorts of thoughts orbited my mind. But latter afterward it became back to normal.

Like Simon and his brother Andrew, I too felt being called. The inner desire to become a priest was something born within me when I was still a child in my primary schooling days, and I treasured it very much. My desire began with the Eucharistic Adoration; I would sit patiently and gazed at the Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Not only do I gaze at the bread but also admire how the priests serve during the time of adoration. Which I had a motivation; why do I want to become a priest? One (1) music and (2) songs that was my motivation behind my desire.

Seeing the priest wearing the liturgical vestment during adoration and Mass, gave me the inner unexplainable desire to become a priest.

I remembered when I was still a little boy, sometimes, I would be running after my parents, especially my mother, during the time of reception of the holy communion, looking up to the priest hoping that he would also give me my share. But my mother would tell me I did not have the right age to receive holy communion yet.

I believe that the desire to become a priest was not forced upon me by my families or relatives. It is my own desire, a call I felt within me. That is why I am still journeying through it.

I have been going to spiritual direction since two years ago, when I did my propaedeutic program in the Sacred Heart Seminary at Rapolo, on every last week of the month. My spiritual director or companion was a Christian Brother by the name of Ignatius Kalok from the White Bay of East New Britain Province. I was feeling relief when I went for the spiritual direction. Spiritual direction really guided me through my spiritual journey, despite worrisome life experiences and blockage in life. Spiritual direction deterred me from all my problems and burdens and gave me a clear knowledge about myself and my purpose of being here in the seminary.

### My Concept about the Priesthood.

Priesthood is a body of the ordained religious practioners or the ministers of the church. As clergy, minister or rabbinate, it is someone who was willing to give up his life to follow the ministry of Christ and his priesthood as a disciple and follower. The priest is the person who works or is qualified to perform religious duties and ceremonies. Who is another Christ, serving in the person of Christ?

The life of my family is well connected to the life of priests who sometimes came and visited us. Some of them are my role model. I really admired them, how they gave their homilies and celebrated the Holy Mass, especially Fr. Clement Taulam back to my secondary life in Papitalai Secondary School. However, there is also someone who opens up my mind and gave me a lot of encouragement, challenging me and even taught me so many vital things particularly to the life I am journeying through. And that was Fr. John Andria Cabrido, an SDB. He was once my lecturer, formator and my former rector who contributed the most to my life as a student back then in Sacred Heart Seminary Rapolo. He is my favourite priest I have had in life. He expressed so many words to me, but one I can still hold on to was: it's not our journey but it is our goal we have to accomplish it.

#### Spiritual Year.

I did my Spiritual Year program at Good Shepherd Seminary. I was really happy and ready to take up the courses regarding the ministry of the priesthood in the years to come. It is inspiring and peaceful in the formation to discover God more closely and to ponder the way God is working in the whole race day after day.

This year also is a very important year for me that has once and for all come and gone. The program itself is a whole human formation and more into the maturity in the spiritual growth of a person. I have come to experience God in the integral formation through the solid personal prayer, companionship, recitation of the Rosary, novenas, adoration, recollection, confession, Bible reading and my personal reflection and the daily Eucharist. And I have learn so many vital things given to me by the formators and the lectures as such as Theology of the body, church documents, code of the canon law, New Evangelization, how to read the Bible, etc., just to mention some.

And I believe that God will help me truthfully to fulfill my calling and to serve the people of God in various ways: what I am striving for in my life. I am feeling being called, yet I do not know where it will end. I do not see the road ahead of me, but I believe that the inner desire I have to please the Lord is what has been causing me to come this far. And to follow Jesus, I would like to proceed on to the next stage or journey of my life to the priesthood ministry of Christ in the year 2022.

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