

## MY VOCATION STORY.

My name is Sylvester Kuk and I come from a small village named Kaiwe in PNG. just close to one of the parishes in the archdiocese of Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province. My vocation started from a very humble beginning when I left school in 2008. During that time I had no choice to further my studies in any institution. However, I found myself useful in my parish and family participating with the youths in church activities and helping my parents at home. It was almost six years, and one time my parish priest Father Boniface Umba from Chimbu asked me if I was interested in joining the priesthood formation. So my response to him was yes. That was around August 2014, and in September of the same year Father arranged for me with other interested candidates to do our entry test in the diocesan hall. The vocation director of the diocese came and supervised our exam, and we finished in time and submitted them to him to be corrected and to have the results sent to us.

Around November I was accepted to start my religious studies in 2015 at St. Fidelis seminary in the Madang Province. When I heard that; I was full of joy, but at the same time I was with passion and curiosity of experiencing new friends and a new environment. But when I went there and stayed for a month and towards a year, I begin to adapt to the place and the people. For three years I studied there and completed the program in 2017. And at the beginning of 2018 my vocation director and the bishop told me to move on to do my philosophical studies in Good Shepherd Seminary in the Jiwaka Province. That was again another feeling of nervousness and wonder, thinking how would the studies be like or what would be the approach of the lecturers and so on.

Nevertheless, I coped with the situations and conditions as I used to do when I first entered the seminary program back in 2015. But, as I progressed on, the studies began to get tough and hard for me. But through the grace of God and with my enthusiasm in learning I persevered through the hardship and challenges of studies and spiritual formation. As I completed my three years of study, the bishop and his consultants recommended me to do a year of pastoral in one of the parishes. After I finished my pastoral in 2021 I applied for theological studies in Port Moresby at Holy Spirit Seminary 2022. Currently I am doing my second year of theology in Bomana Catholic Theological Institute.

As I travelled through the years, I realized that the door to go in to begin the formation program was wide open and many brothers went. But in the process of journeying through, the road started to get narrow and many brothers left. In 2015 there were forty-two brothers including myself who entered the seminary. However, currently we are nine of us attending Holy Spirit Seminary. And I personally thank my benefactors, guidance, parents and relatives who are supporting me materially and also in prayers. I thank them that the good Lord may bless them and always keep in good health.

So as to conclude my story I wanted to make a small reflection of how I experienced my life as a seminarian over the past years. I felt that to be a seminarian was a privilege for me but a benefit to my diocese and moreover to my family and friends at home, though I did not stay with them most of the time because I was busy with my studies in the seminary. The only time I had with them was during Christmas holidays. Nonetheless, I had faith and courage that whether in small or big ways God has blessed them by giving his grace to them so that they did not do anything to obstruct my journey towards priesthood. I am still struggling with my own weaknesses and difficulties and continuously sitting on the fence discerning my vocation. Therefore I need your prayers to overcome the temptations I encounter in my seminary life. And I also pray for other brothers that if I do not make it, then they should make it to the priesthood for the good of all people and for the glory of God.