

Name: Semi Berry Tabokom

Vocation Story

I wasn't intending to follow the life of celibacy. Some years back I was once told by my mum, who said, "If you took up religious studies I would be blessed, and when I die and if you are far, don't come for my burial." Then on my 19th birthday she gave me a gift and it was the Holy Bible. But I didn't grasp what she was wanting me to be. And that was in 2015 when I did my year 10 in Lumi Provincial High School.

A year passed, and I went to St. John Vianney Diocesan Minor Seminary Vanimo (SJVMS). In 23th/02/16 I went to the seminary seeking for a space to enroll, but the rector told me the space of the dormitory was filled. Then the other option was to check the Don Bosco Secondary Vanimo.

On the 24th, that was on Friday, the permission to enroll in Don Bosco was granted. The principal told me to come on the next week Monday, the 27th of February. Perhaps, during the eve of this day we had a rosary and my intention was to ask mother Mary to intercede for me to Jesus, asking "What was God's plan for me?" Was he planning me to be a married man, someone who is going to procreate, or he does he want of me to be his heralds?

On the Saturday morning, the message from the rector of SJVMS arrived. The message was not in written words but vocal. The message was "Berry Tabokom you are asked to enter the Seminary before 4.06 pm on Sunday 28th without any late arrival." I received this message with a heart full of joy and thankfulness to Mother Mary that my prayer was granted. I assume that I was called by Jesus to embrace this cross as Jesus did, not to love but to be loved.

The beginning of my seminary academic year was very challenging in a couple of months. I was thinking that the environment would be as other conversational studies. For instance, limited time for spiritual exercise and concentrated more on the studies. I was deciding to leave the seminary and go to the other schools. But out of blue, there was someone behind my subconscious insisting that I have a reflection of how I entered this place.

I was guided by my spiritual director, Fr. Thomas from India. He was a spiritual priest guided by the Holy Spirit to infuse and ignite some of the grounds that I could keep on discerning this call, whether it was the call from God nor from my own instinct. Nevertheless, I was fortunate to complete my first year and was promoted to year 11 and continued on till year 12 in 2019.

Hence, without any hesitation, after my year 12 examination in 2022 I was selected to continue my philosophical studies in St. Charles Borromeo Diocesan Major Seminary (SCBMS). I was in SCBMS for 3 years, still discerning this call, praying and studying and following the norms of the seminary. Then I found myself not to be fruitful but to be faithful. And the desire was progressively increasing to live this life of celibacy and become a herald of Good News.

All in all, most of my brother seminarians of Vanimo used to address me as I am the seminarian whom jumped from the window and did not follow the right process as they did. Notwithstanding, God's call is not a straight line but it's like a breeze that occupied the skies, blew off the mountain side and slipped away on the ocean. It penetrates the hearts of the one who listen from the heart, as God's foolishness is untenable. Therefore I was privileged to accompany my brother seminarians in Holy Spirit Seminary to study and pray. I am now in HSS as a seminarian candidate from Vanimo discerning this call with the heart to be and to live as God wants of me, for his greater glory and the salvation of souls.