

MY VOCATION STORY

My Vocation Starts with my Family

I was born at Nuku Sub-health Centre on the 05th of October 1995. My father (John Suwongel) was a training catechist and currently he has also been appointed as a member of the Diocesan Team of Pastoral Animation (DTPA) team in Nuku Denary. And my mother (Antonia Suwongel) is just supporting him in his work. They were very blessed with six kids, of which I am the third born child. They raised us up in a very Catholic and Christian way. Though my father has a little knowledge, still this little knowledge was supported by his great wisdom, and he was able to support us in our daily needs. My mother always cooperated with him and they both gave their best to us, so that even I cannot measure their love and care for us.

However, it is in this environment that my vocation came out. When I was still a child (5-7), I was always interested to guide my grandmother (my mother's mother) wherever she may go because she was too old and could not see things or directions clearly. So I really enjoyed it as a child to guide her, but many people used to be afraid of her, thinking she might turn into ghost and attack them. Even sometimes they would try to discourage me from guiding her into the dark places during the night. But I used to cry and say that, "No! She is my grandmother and she will not attack me." Then I would continue to guide her wherever she wanted to go. However, after a year, or so, she died.

In those early days of my life, I didn't realize it, but when I was already a grown up, I come to realize that these were the moments that God wants me to serve Him.

My Vocation Start to Grow in my School Life

Then, when I was 10 (2006), my father enrolled me in St. Martin de Pores, Mukili Primary school (Mukili in Nuku, West Sepik province) to do my grade one. From grades one to seven I was randomly appointed as a leader in the class, and finally when I did my grade 8, students appointed me as their vice S.R.C. (students representative council) president. This was the time that I come to realise my abilities to become a leader. My school academic result however, at that time were not really good, unlike the previous years of my studies, and so I did not receive any awards. The only thing that I received was the Holy Bible, which is the award from C.R.E (Christian Religious Education). When I receive this award, I kissed it and somehow tears start flowing down from my eyes and the words that just started coming out from my mouth was, "I will serve you Lord." These words were just coming out without me thinking about them.

As the time passed, I was selected to do my grade nine and ten in Pamaya High School (Nuku). However, when the school was constantly having the problem with food and water, I decided to go to St. Francis High School (Nuku) after the first term and studied there. When I went there, the principle just accepted me to study there without asking me for any transfer certificate from my previous school (Pamaya high school). While I was doing my grades nine and ten there, I was very much involved on the musical part of the liturgy and based on my talent and big interest, they appointed me as the student in charge of the liturgy. Then when I completed my grade 10, they awarded me with a guitar; and a chemistry formula book was also awarded to me as my academic award on personal development subject.

Then when the selection list for grades 11 and 12 came out, I was accepted to study in Don Bosco Secondary School (Vanimo) and this was the very happiest moment in my life. As I continued my studies there, I maintained my same identity as was before. I was the one always leading the rosary after night study, giving the goodnight talks to the students, and always assisting in the musical part of the liturgy. Even sometimes I assisted the priests in the holy mass on Sundays and solemnities. While studying there, with the greatest desire of becoming a priest, I was always attending the retreats in the St. John Mary Vianney Minor Seminary (Vanimo). After the fourth time of attending the retreats, Bishop Ceasare Benevento-PIME asked me to write my interest letter to him expressing my interest to study for the priesthood, and so I wrote to him expressing my interest, and he accepted me.

Then, before my grade 12 graduation I received the acceptance letter from the Bishop of Vanimo to study in St. Charles Borromeo, [Diocesan Major Seminary (Vanimo)]. This is the highest, the greatest and the happiest moment that I ever have had in my life. However, during the graduation I was awarded with the Don Bosco leadership award, which makes me excited

as well to join the seminary. This award is normally given to two students, one for the one who studied for four years and the other same award is given to the one who studied for only two years. So, since I studied only for two years (11-12), I received that for two years, but the prize is the same, a guitar, and this made the years 2016 and 2017 very successful years for me.

After my graduation, I went the next day and enquired with the Bishop about my arrival date to the seminary after the Christmas break, and the Bishop said that my arrival date will be on the 21th/ January/ 2018. So after my holiday, I went straight to the seminary and this was the beginning of my seminary life.

My Vocation take its form in my Seminary Life through the different formations

In the first year of my seminary life, I did not go straight to the major seminary; rather, I did my orientation year in minor seminary for at least nine months and then I went to major seminary. While I was in the minor seminary, I was studying about the basics of the Catholic Church. This was the time I tried to prepare myself to take up the studies in the major seminary. The subjects that I studied in minor seminary in preparation for major seminary were;

- Salvation history
- Church history
- The catechism of the Catholic Church
- The different parts of the Liturgy
- Life of the saints
- English grammar.

Then when I entered the major seminary the next year (2019), I still continued on with the same things, but this time the work was more in detail, and also I studied the philosophical courses. In the major seminary, I come to learn more about different types of formation like spiritual formation, intellectual formation, human formation and pastoral formation. As I continue my studies in St. Charles Borromeo (Vanimo) from 2019 -2021, my interest of becoming a priest was always increasing. And the sources that I come to draw my strength from, was the Holy Eucharist and Mother Mary. I always visited Jesus in the Tabernacle every time before lunch, and prayed the whole rosary within a day. The grace that I always praying for, was to be wise and this was taken from the book of wisdom (Wis.9:10), where King Solomon is praying for it. And not only praying for that, but also I always pray for the grace to live a holy life.

And as now, I was sent here to Holy Spirit seminary, Bomana, to do my theological studies, I am thinking of maintaining that same spirit. So, since I already started it, I am thinking of continuing with the same style, but this I also understand that it is through my cooperation with the grace of God. So, as I continue to reflect upon my vocation, I come to realise that I was called to extend the mission of my father who is the training catechist and more on that, I am convinced that the Lord is calling me to follow him more closely. On this note, I am always praying and also asking people to pray for me and my vocation to be fruitful.