

My vocation story

I am James Mal, a second year theologian from the Diocese of Wabag in Enga Province.

My vocation story starts from the root 'make me complete' a voice that shaped and reshaped my life and bent me to reach where I am now and to look forward for the future call, a call to be a priest. Here I begin my vocation story in brief.

All throughout my schooling life I set an aim to be a medical doctor which was my hard target. To achieve that, I committed myself in studying. On the other hand I am a baptised Catholic, a Eucharistic lover and coming from a good Catholic family background. But the call to be a priest never existed in me in those passing years. It was out of my mind.

When I reached the age of 23 I did my eleventh grade in Passam National High School in Wewak ESP in 2003. One Saturday morning it so happened that I felt within a hunger not for food but Jesus in the Holy Communion as I woke up from the bed. So I went to the nearby church for morning mass. It had rained all night, and the road was bit muddy. Walking along the road, to my surprise I saw a small wooden broken cross with Jesus hanging on it. The left hand side of the cross together with the left hand of Jesus was totally broken off. It seemed to be a some years old cross which was covered by leaves and soil. As I decided to pick it up, all of sudden I heard a soft voice in my heart that spoke, make me complete. I was totally confused and shocked, and I felt the numbness within me because it was the first time I had ever heard such a voice in my heart at my youth. I ran out of words to respond to this voice. I kept silent to hear once more but heard nothing. At a distance I saw some students coming for the morning mass following the same road, so I picked up the broken cross and put in my pocket and went for mass. In the chapel I mediated and asked myself as I touched the cross in the pocket, what does the voice mean to me? Just before receiving Holy Communion I prayed and asked Jesus to give me the meaning of this message. Even after receiving Communion I kept silent trying to listen to another voice but not at all. After the mass I went back to the dormitory. In my room I pondered deeply and reflected as I looked at the broken cross, expecting another voice, but nothing came. I only remember the previous voice make me complete.

Later on I never realised that this voice was working in me mysteriously, and when I did my Gr. 12, the thought of becoming a priest arose in me. Through the experience of the voice make me complete I say yes to this call.

I decided to become a Divine Word Missionary, so I applied to the SVD Formation House at Rabeamul in the Hagen diocese. I was accepted, and in 2006 I entered into the first year of my formation. I stayed in the SVD formation for seven years. However in 2013 after finishing the Novitiate Program in the Philippines, I encountered a health problem - colour blindness, which stopped me from furthering my formation. I did medical treatment for another seven years at home. Finally I fully recovered in 2019. In spite of this medical problem and other hardships, my interest to be a priest has never been died out. It still burns in me, which moved me to write a letter to the SVD provincial council for readmission to the formation program. But the reply was negative. The SVD council members did not approve me because they feared that the sickness might happen again. Then I decided to become a diocesan so I applied to the Bishop of Wabag. Fortunately I was accepted and they posted me on a pastoral formation in the diocese in 2021. This year, 2022, I am doing my second year theological studies, and I still have some more years ahead before I reach the call, a call to the priesthood that will only satisfy the living voice make me complete.