

MY EARLY VOCATION

“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am, send me!” (Is 6:8)

I grew up with my grandparents, devoted Catholics who went to daily Mass. We prayed the Angelus and the Rosary every day. Their piety kindled my attraction to the priesthood. As an altar boy, I would accompany our parish priest for the barrio Masses. This exposure to the life and works of a priest instilled in me a desire to be a priest someday. I nourished it through constant prayers and active participation in the parish.

After high school, my family could not meet the financial costs for me to enter the seminary so I went instead to a Catholic college and took up Psychology. My parents in the meantime encouraged me to keep my dream and vocation alive. We somehow knew that if God is really calling me to be a priest, He will make a way for me.

I lived in a nearby parish as a working student to earn my food and lodging. After my college studies, I decided to work in my profession. This served as a period of patient waiting whether seminary life was really meant for me.

Though I enjoyed my work and the company of friends, I felt unfulfilled with something missing in my life. I went through a period of discernment and prayerful reflection. I visited the tomb of my former Spiritual Director, an Irish missionary to our Diocese, praying in the Church where he used to be the parish priest. We used to read the Gospel passage: “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Mt 16:25) I remembered how he offered his life for the Diocese until he died of heart attack in his early 50’s. He was instrumental in the establishment of parishes and the building of schools especially the college where I graduated. He died alone in his room, away from friends and loved ones.

My reflections and prayers convinced me to pursue my childhood dream to become a priest. After 6 years of Philosophy, Theology and Pastoral exposure, I applied to the Archdiocese of Newark, again moved by the good example of my Director. He was faithful to Christ’s call to go and preach the Gospel to all nations. Like him, I commit myself wholeheartedly to the service of the Gospel, leaving my loved ones back home for the sake of God’s people.

“Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.” (Mt 19:29)