



John Ronaldo G. Abulag

Pastoral Year

St. Mary, Mokena

Birthday: September 5

Every time I hear the word *vocation* I can't help thinking of my own family because God used them as an instrument for me to be able to respond to God's calling. At the time of my conception, my parents were very poor and during her pregnancy, my mother had a difficult time. My parents did not give up on me. They let me see the sunshine and experience how beautiful life is, especially when we do all things for Him.

I was born on March 31, 1969 in the province of my mother, La Verdad, Talisayan, Misamis Oriental, Philippines. And on April 20, 1969 I was baptized in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish. Perhaps that is the reason why I became so attached to the Blessed Virgin Mary at an early age. Or perhaps it was because my mother was so devoted to the Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Lourdes during her earthly life.

I am the eldest in the family which includes five brothers and one sister. In addition to my biological siblings, I do have one adopted sister, a niece of my father, and an adopted brother, a nephew of my mother. One of my biological sisters was once a postulant in the Congregation of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Charity but she did not continue to pursue the religious life and is the one who is now taking care of my father. I have only one brother who is not yet married but both my adopted brother and sister are married already.

To continue my life story, my family eventually moved to my father's hometown, Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental, Philippines, where I grew up, went to school and graduated. When I was in third year of high school, I started being active in my parish. I joined the Youth Charismatic Movement, the Choir and, of course, the illustrious Legion of Mary. I also became an altar server. During college I was a Commerce major but was active in many other ways: I was president of the Glee Club, associate editor-in-chief of the college paper and a substitute teacher at a high school. At first, I found all this hard but later on I found it advantageous because I gained confidence, became known around college and made friends.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Commerce, I didn't have a hard time finding a job and, in fact had many over the years, i.e. Curator and Branch Manager of an art gallery, an accountant in a pharmaceutical company and a teacher of Christian Living and Logic. Before coming to the USA I taught basic English to Korean children and received the Father Teacher Award. Despite my work schedule I still found time for my spiritual needs such as going to Mass, Confession, the Rosary and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. I also continued with my weekly apostolate in the Legion of Mary, an organization which I love most.

When I speak of my religious journey, it is because of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She helped me find my vocation. I interviewed with two religious orders who had come to the Philippines to find vocations. At that time, I felt that I wanted to be part of a semi contemplative community and so joined the Society of Our Mother of Peace which brought me to St. Louis, MO. I was not happy because the life was much more contemplative than I expected. After some time, I left the Society and remembering the other congregation, the Dominicans Missionaries for the Deaf, I applied to them and they accepted me. Now seven years later, as a Dominican Brother, I am completing my dream of becoming a priest. Since our community is relatively new and cannot ordain priests yet, my Prior has arranged with Bishop Conlon for me to be a seminarian in the Diocese of Joliet and to serve this community. God willing, I will be ordained in the Diocese of Joliet and sometime in the future, return to my community, the Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf.

I must admit that I have mixed emotions about coming to the Diocese of Joliet because the adjustments may not be easy. But I firmly believe that with the help of my superiors and the intercession of Mama Mary Immaculate Mediatrix of All Grace, things will go smoothly. For now, I am grateful to the Diocese of Joliet for giving me the opportunity to fulfill my dream of becoming a priest of God.