

PERSONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By: Thomas Binanbiba Bamoah.

I was born on March 1, 1976, at Konjatedando, a small village in the Northern part of Ghana to Bamoah Ukal and Bemome Uyom. Sadly, my parents are deceased. My father died in 1993 when I had just completed Junior High School. My mother died in 2011. They died as non-Catholics, however, they admired and respected Catholic priests even though they were traditionalists. My parents named me Binanbiba, but because of Western influence, my dad's name, Bamoah, was added to my name. The name Thomas was added through baptism, especially in my official documents, an act which is not a cultural practice in the ethnic community I belong to. According to my culture, people are named after their ancestors or seasons or calamities etc. The parents' names are only assumed when an identity is called for with regard to one's parents. Thomas is my baptismal name and a name from my grandfather. My middle name, Binanbiba, refers to the calamities that happened before I was born. My mother lost two children during childbirth before I was born. My mom believed that those two children hated themselves and not her. Binanbiba means you hate yourself. Marriage, in many cultures, is a very important social phenomenon that plays a vital role in procreation of human beings (Genesis 5:2). Genesis 1:27-28 says, "so God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created male and female, blessed them and said "have many children so that your descendants will live over the earth and bring it under their control." My parents observed all the traditional marriage rites. My father married two wives, and they gave birth to ten children. My mother had five children, and my stepmother had five children. Thus, I have nine siblings who have been very supportive throughout my entire life.

My parents were traditionalists and did not go to school. They were farmers. My parents secretly told me (so my siblings would not be jealous), that I was always their favorite child because I bear, conspicuously, both their physical and character traits. I guess my parents were so lucky since they share so many qualities.

If you need to see my mum or dad's height, skin color, or even smile, you just have to look at me. They were both quiet and talkative at the same time, depending on what the situation called for, just like me. They could be very strict with rules and did not take lightly any form of irresponsibility they have noticed in their children. My mum frowned upon poor dress and untidiness. She loved order and advanced planning. She was a wonderful cook. She prepared delicious dishes that anyone would love. My dad was full-bodied but took life easy, and did not condone any kind of exaggeration. He believed in beauty too, but learning was his passion. He loved seeing domestic animals walking around his compound, as well as crops luxuriantly growing in his fields.

As children, we lived in a small village and in a small home with eight simple houses: five belonged to our parents in which we all stayed, and the remaining three to each of my married brothers. At the beginning, we lived in a grass-thatched house, which was later iron-roofed. Our homestead stood in the middle of a banana plantation and a number of tall trees. We played soccer on our yard. The ball was made from polythene bags compressed to a round shape and beautifully sewn with a thin rope made either of sisal fibers or manila. This was

how I learned to play soccer, though, at times, I would go home limping because I had ripped off my toenail while playing. My parents would laugh at me or quarrel with me instead of sympathizing with me. They would tell me that they had warned me against playing soccer with the larger boys. It is hard for some people to believe that we played barefoot. However, I would still go back to the field to play soccer as soon as my toe healed. My childhood years through adolescence were fun, since I spent most of it with my parents, siblings, and childhood friends. As I grew up, I enjoyed mates who were the same age as me. The age before adolescence is quite memorable because of the games I played with my friends: the hide and seek games, role playing, soccer and wrestling, *et cetera*. The games were so engaging that sometimes we played till late in the night and reaped punishment from one of my parents or older siblings, depending on who first noticed that I was late. I never lived away from home during this time. It was only after my junior high school graduation that I had to live away from home because I was in school.

My parents were life-long peasant farmers. It is through their enduring labor that all of us were able to survive the rampant child mortality rate and hunger in Ghana. May God reward them in ways best known to Him. I owe much to my parents, and of course my siblings too, though only in a minute proportion. They taught me spirituality, etiquette, and discipline of every kind that is necessary for worthwhile living in this challenging world. Since I came from a purely traditional family, as a child, traditional faith was to love other people and obey elders. I learned the Catholic faith when I went to Catholic schools. My dad also supported me in my faith, God, and love for my God. Although he was a traditionalist, I recall that my dad always carried me to church on his bicycle and picked me up after church. He always told me that you had to be in church before the priest begins mass and insisted that while in church, I had to remain attentive to what was going on till the priest leaves. There was no running out or getting absent-minded in mass like other children did. I learned early in life from my dad's friend, who was a Christian, that Jesus was hidden in the bread. He warned me that the Eucharist wasn't just bread, but was Jesus secretly watching how I behaved. I did not dare play around in church lest Jesus would strike me with more irreparable wrath.

I started formal schooling in a nearby village elementary school in the year 1985, which was a Catholic basic school. I completed the sixth grade in 1991. I went on to junior high school in 1992 and finished in 1994. I then continued to St. Mary's Minor Seminary from 1995 to 1997 and proceeded to St. Charles' Minor Seminary from 1999 to 2000. I have learned the Catholic faith because I went to catholic schools. Because of the uniqueness and effectiveness of the formation I received from the various levels of my education, particularly with the Catholic schools, I have come to deeply love the Church. I never joked with prayer life. I had to ask my dad's permission to be baptized in the Catholic Church, and he granted me permission to do so. The Holy Eucharist and meditating with the Holy Rosary have become a significant part of my personal life. In fact, I thought of becoming a priest since 1995 because of my deep love and commitment for the Church. Since then, my desire to become a priest has never wavered for any reason. I thank God for having priests who inspired me, particularly the chaplain at my former minor seminary. They were hardworking, intelligent, prayerful and, preached well. Apart from the fact that they were my tutors, they continued to encourage me to be diligent all my life, and I must confess that I have benefited immensely from their advice. Because they always inspired

students not to give up, I have also borrowed that philosophy, which has helped me not only be inspired but also to inspire others never to give up in life.

In school, I loved music and singing. I am a person who loves sports, and so quite often, I go jogging and skipping, not only to enjoy these exercises, but also to keep myself healthy because I believe in the adage which provides: “a sound mind is a sound body.” After high school, I had to rewrite my private school certificate to better my grades from the school. I had challenges, but I still knew what I wanted to do with my life--be a priest in the Catholic Church. Therefore, in 2005, after a successful application, I was admitted to St. Victor’s Major Seminary and attended spiritual years at St. Michael’s Major Seminary from 2005 to 2006 and St. Augustine Millenium Major Seminary from 2006 to 2007. I was both excited about going to a different school over nine hundred miles from home, even though it was within my own country. Yet, I was also scared because I was not sure of what awaited me in the new school and that I would be away from family and friends for a long period of time. It took me time to adjust to the new environment, culture, and a new way of doing things. Seminary life was squarely a new breed of life for me. It was the first time I was to live a very strict and disciplined life. Although I had some training in the minor seminary, it was not strict like the major seminary. The weather was cold because the seminary was situated in the highlands of Ghana.

I suspended my priestly formation after philosophy in 2007 to seek a job to provide for some family needs. This marked the end of my priestly formation program for some time. The period between the time I left the seminary and got a job was challenging. Little did I know that it would take me forever to get even a minimally-paying job. In order to keep busy and avoid being consumed by stress, I went to my former elementary school to offer voluntary teaching services to the pupils there who, in most cases, had no teachers, let alone qualified ones. In 2008 I was assigned to help the Parish home visitations and Hospital Apostolate. My duties were visiting the sick in Gnani Clinic and homes; visiting the aged at Gnani Witch Village; visiting small Christian communities to share the Word of God; teaching Catechism in non-Catholic schools; helping with distribution of food and water at Gnani Witch Camp. With inspiration from Jesus’ mission statement “the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to Lord.” This gave motivation to take on a special apostolate in Gnani Witch Camp by visiting the inmates and helping distributing foodstuffs, water supply and other relief items. Witches Camps are a common phenomenon in northern part of Ghana. Gnani Witch Village or Camp is located in the north-eastern corridor of Ghana. Persons mostly women accused of witchcraft reside in this village. Fearing for their lives, these women ranging from between the ages of forty and eighty and even above banded together for protecting in sanctuaries know as “Witch Camps.” The old women and sometimes men are accused by their close relatives or family members; even children can accuse their parents. The incidents that normally leads to witchcraft accusations among the people of Northern Ghana are, sudden death of a family member, serious illness, bad dreams or nightmares, envy, and jealousy. When one is accused it becomes difficult for him or her to live in the community as a result of the stigma on him or her. The measures taken against the accused persons in their communities is either ostracization, torture, or death sentence. In order to avoid these inhumane treatments, the supposed witches take refuge in the Gnani Witch

Village. Traditionally, these accused witches are believed to have caused a lot of harm to their communities by killing members of their families. Some families therefore, abandon their old relatives, who are accused, to fend for themselves for a year with only a few items to visit them, as a result, the inhabitants live in the a deplorable state, lacking the basic necessities of life, for example food, clothing, water and shelter. The Gnani Witch Village serves as a secure home for the accused persons. The majority of them, who are very old are left to the mercy of God fearing people who occasionally come to visit and, seeing their plight come to their support. The Roman Catholic Church in Gnani is helping to dispel some of negative beliefs regarding the accused witches and took upon herself to support the inmates in the camp. I was assigned to Witches Village for a one year special apostolate in order to organize some relief items in the form of foodstuffs and clothing to support these vulnerable inmates as part of the Church's social responsibility. The Church also provides housing, blankets, pays their hospital bills, and supplying them water. Water is a serious problem in the Witch Village as well as the Gnani Community. I did this for one year before I was finally admitted to Akrokerri College of Education in 2009 to pursue a diploma in basic education, which I completed successfully in 2012. I was then posted to St. Hebert R/C Basic School in Akrokerri as a professional teacher. I taught there for five years. In 2013, I was admitted to the University of Cape Coast for a Bachelor of Education in Basic Education. I successfully completed that degree in 2015.

My strong leadership qualities landed me a couple of leadership positions. I served as a college prefect, as a chairman and member of the National Executive Council of the Association of Catholic Teacher Trainees, and as a member of the College Council, among others. These experiences have equipped me with the ability to work with anyone and any group, especially if their visions do not conflict with what is objectively right and also the vision of the Church. For me, working together with some people for a common cause requires hard work and commitment, without which no common objective can be achieved.

I taught mathematics and science until the year 2016, when I decided to continue with my formation to become a priest. I wish to note that my desire to be a priest overwhelmed me more when I was out for these years. I felt I needed to serve God's people as a priest, though there were many challenges along the way. Through a lot of prayers, discernment, consultation and spiritual direction I finally resigned as a teacher and applied to my home diocese again. I was attached to one particular parish in order for the priest to observe me. This year was a remarkable one for me because a number of good things happened in my life, though for me, it happened a little too fast. I was privileged to have the opportunity to come to Notre Dame Seminary to study theology, and it has been an exciting year.

I have met new people and made many new friends. I have come into contact with new cultures and a variety of foods. There are striking differences between my country Ghana and the United States of America. On the day I set foot in this place, I got really scared about the high humidity. It is quite unlike my country where, though, it may sometimes get hot, it has never been so humid to the extent that I experienced here. In the few days before I reported to the seminary, I again experienced a strange phenomenon. In Ghana, people walk around a lot; we walk either to work or from work, and we mostly walk in the company of others. It is unusual to find someone walking alone even when the other person with them is a stranger. Yet,

here I saw few people walking around, and I wondered if there was a daytime curfew. As I interacted with the people here, I discovered that they were as friendly as Ghanaians but only in a different way. This, I guess, was the beginning of some of the great experiences in my life, which I find both exciting and scary.

In Notre Dame Seminary, my first pastoral ministry assignment was at Chateau de Notre Dame Nursing Home, New Orleans. During the first semester, I was assigned to one resident but during the second semester, I was assigned to four residents, two in the Nursing home and two on the apartments side. I was instructed by my supervisor to meet with residents assigned to me at least three times in a week. I began my ministry when I received the names of peoples to visit. I quickly located their room numbers and began the ministry by praying for them and for myself that the Lord would give me humility, understanding, common ground so that I could communicate openly, and freely with one another to make the visit fruitful. All the people I was assigned to visit had various medical problems and are undergoing treatment and need our attention in pains and prayer. I had a great experience in the ministry and I am glad to serve the Nursing Home Ministry. I don't think I will ever forget the fascinating people God has entrusted in my care. It was truly a thing of joy and I thank God for the opportunity of using me to touch the heart of these people.

It has been a long journey, and it will require that I sometimes run fast rather than walk this long road of Seminary life. I came braced for the journey, because I know that God brought me to the United States for a specific purpose which He will, with my cooperation, ensure that I accomplish. I will depend totally on God, because only He will be able to ensure that I achieve what he wants me to become. I am sometimes scared of what the future holds for me, but I cast my doubts unto the Lord.

A RELIGIOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By: Thomas Binanbiba Bamoah

I came into this world on March 1, 1976. I was told that I was born in Konjatedando, a small village in the Nanumba South District Wulensi in the Northern part of Ghana in West Africa. Sadly, my parents, Bamoah Ukal (my dad) and Bemome Uyom (my mum) are deceased. My dad died in 1993 at the age of ninety (90) when I had just completed Junior High School. My mum died in two thousand and eleven (2011) at the age of eighty-four(84). They died as non- Catholics, however, they admired and respected Catholic priests even though they were traditionalists. Although I was born in a pure family that practiced traditional beliefs, I am a Roman Catholic. I am not employed, and I am currently a student of theology at Notre Dame Seminary.

I learned African Traditional Religion from my paternal grandparents and my parents. Like every other native family in the Country that worshipped traditional gods, my parents made sacrifices and oblations to these gods to ask for protection and success in their daily lives. The most special prayers of request were for fertility and for protection from enemies and pestilence. In the Northern part of Ghana where I come from, African Traditional Religion accounted for about twenty (20%) percent of the population, Islam accounted for four-five (45%) percent of the population, and Christianity accounted for thirty-five (35%) percent of the population. The traditional beliefs shaped Ghanaian faith until the arrival of Islam with Arab traders in the Northern part of Ghana and the later advent of Christianity brought to Ghana by white missionaries from Europe, most notably from Portugal. After the arrival of Islam and Christianity, African Traditional Religion began to slowly wane in its influence. Christian missionaries came through the coastal regions of the Country, and the evangelization process took a longer time due to language barriers, other factors, and malaria infections of the missionaries.

I have nine siblings who have been very supportive throughout my entire life although they are not Christians. I learned about Catholicism because I attended Catholic schools. Because of the uniqueness and effectiveness of the formation I received from the various levels of my education, particularly with catholic schools, I have come to deeply love the Catholic Church. I do not joke with my prayer life. The Holy Eucharist and meditating with the Holy Rosary are a significant part of my personal life. In fact, I thought of becoming a priest because of my deep love and commitment to the Catholic faith. It is worth noting that my siblings share the same father, but we do not all share the same mother, and so, we are different just as East is different from West. Sometimes, this makes me ponder on our God as the creator. I wonder what and how much time it took Him to form us all so differently and in such a beautiful blend.

According to Reverend Thomas J. Richter, “the call to the priesthood is a great mystery which comes directly from our Lord Jesus Christ and is instilled in the heart of one called Saint Peter, the great apostle and Pope, who was certainly surprised at his calling. He felt his unworthiness and fear, which were expressed in the words ‘depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man’.” It is in this backdrop, I will say that the call to the priesthood today is not that

different. Christ continues to call men who are unworthy and also often surprised at the growing desire for the priesthood and who almost always are frightened at the prospect of leaving everything to follow Christ. This is why some of us have decided to live a celibate life as a priest to serve God in a deserving manner.

To put it plainly, I am African by all means. But within the bigger African culture, I belong to an ethnic group called Konkomba of Ghana. The Konkomba people have a distinct African religious heritage. They believe in the existence of one God, whose name is Uwumbor and whose attributes are similar to that of the Christian God, Yahweh. He lives far beyond this earth, and he is the originator of all that is. His hands touch every corner of the earth, but he dwells in the expansive ranges called Liyopa a uwumbor (God of Hill top). The Konkombas worshipped God facing hills or looking at the top. They offered sacrifices of burnt offerings of bulls, goats, and rams. They prayed to him at both individual and communal levels through the family head. Whenever there were calamities, the Konkombas sought the help of seers and diviners who had a direct link with Uwumbor. This is the basis of my faith in the Supreme Being without which Christianity would make no sense. The African people condemn individualism in the strongest terms possible. This means that we are expected to uphold the value of community life. Community life is not just immediate or extended family but includes the whole village. One is expected to know every member of their village and offer support whenever their help is needed. A true Konkomba will not understand how one would think of himself most of the time or be alone. A real Konkomba reaches out to all people, for they are all his brothers and sisters. They are one blood such that he would never take the life of another; otherwise, he and his children, and his children's children would be haunted the rest of their lives as long as they live on this earth. They are one blood because Uwumbor created their first parents, Liyopa, the ancestral father, and Uwumborpee, the ancestral grandmother.

This communal way of life lives within me. I enjoy reaching out to new friends, even strangers. I feel that I should treat everyone as a brother or sister. I believe that Uwumbor did not create just the Konkomba, but all people. Irrespective of who they are, where they are, how they look like or what they possess, I strongly believe that Uwumbor wants us to love each other in a fraternal way. I do not like it when people become too cautious with each other even though we belong to the same human race. Yet, this is what interacting with different people has taught me over the years. I have had to adapt even to some ways of life opposed to my basic values and beliefs about human relationships. For instance, I want to make everyone feel at home in my company, and so I chat and smile at everyone and converse with almost everybody I meet. However, this can sometimes be construed wrongly when I venture out of my cultural boundaries. Other than being an African, a Ghanaian, and a Konkomba, I must always bear in mind that there is somebody somewhere who may be in dire need even more than me. So I am encouraged to look at money, and any form of wealth and possession as a means not to gratify my insatiable desires but as an opportunity to provide service to my brothers and sisters who are in need. Konkombas, just like the Diocesan priest, believe in hard work, commitment, responsibility, and accountability in one's duties.

My family means so much to me. It is because of my family that I learned the important values of life, the values of responsibility, love, sincerity, hard work, commitment, and many

other values. I am the fourth child born in this family of many siblings. My siblings are the closest friends that I have, and we depend on each other all the time, especially in times of need. My parents are the guardians of our family bond and friendship. They always ensured that we came together whenever possible. Though I do not have material wealth to offer to my family, they count on me for advice since I have vast knowledge about general life based on my studies in the college, university, and Seminary formation, as well as knowledge in the secular field. I, together with junior brothers, who are also Christian, play the crucial role of spiritual directors to our family, especially our siblings. Our family members take our advice, since they believe we are guided by God. Whether we are guided by God is debatable and depends on where one stands while looking at us.

I came from a humble family, whose life was built on the foundation stone of hard work, responsibility, and the fear of God. My family depends on farming for food and financial income. My dad was a farmer and a committed father to his family. My mum was a peasant farmer and a committed traditionalist, and above all, a loving and caring mother. I grew up in a family where we had our meals together, shared all kinds of basic things, like bathing troughs, and we even ate from the same dish. We worked together and played together as children and, in the evenings, we played as a family. My siblings and I still do this when we are all back home.

We have always gone home for family children's celebrations and family reunions, especially now that some of my siblings are married and stay with their families at their own homes. I thank God that my family has never been forced to relocate from the very place where I was born. I came from a place where land is inherited from parents, and it remains a permanent property of the owner. In my community, all members must possess a piece of land where, when they die, they hope to be laid to rest. I have never, never seen a person in my village who has deserted his ancestral land for another distant place.

I think that the experiences of life have taught me a number of lessons: One, that I must appreciate myself as I am; two, that self-pity is a worthless thing; three, that self-doubt is the mother of every failure in life; and four, that God can do for me all that I cannot do for myself. These lessons have built a profound and mature personality in me that is not shaken by anxieties and unnecessary fears. My very existence is my personal relationship with my Christian God. I came into this world on a pleasantly cool evening, with the birds chirping their final evening songs and well-fed animals mewing as they returned home to rest. I was born at dusk, the time when everything that had to be done that day was supposedly accomplished. This means that my birth was, in the Konkomba traditional understanding, an accomplishment. It is the reason that I was named Binanbiba, which implies that my birth took place at dusk or that the hope of me living was restored. Thus, my birth has a deep sense of accomplishment because of past calamities. Thank God that I survived the birth process.

I also thank God for Fr. Joe Raina, a German priest who came to my country as a missionary and established a mission and school in a nearby community. I was blessed as a child to be enrolled into a catholic mission school, St. Michael Primary School, which was managed by the Catholic priest at Holy Spirit Parish in Chamba. Since it was a Catholic institution, I learned the prayers of the Church and their importance, along with other religious education

instructions. This background gave me a great desire to be a Catholic. After my Junior High School at Chamba, the pastor at Holy Spirit Parish, Fr. Eugene Sigme, then sought admission for me at St. Mary's Minor Seminary in Lolobi in the Volta part of Ghana. At school, I joined catechism classes and was baptised on October 20, 1996 by Fr. Paul K. Anyidoho. I experienced the Eucharist for the first time with joy and gladness and became a true part of the Christian family. I felt like a saint as I received communion, and I asked God to grant me the graces to be faithful to him and to serve him devoutly all my life. When I went home during school vacation, I informed my family that I was baptised and was now a full practicing Christian. They were upset with me, but as the time went on, they agreed with my decision. When I returned to school after the holidays, I was assigned to wash and iron the school chaplain's clothes. I also joined the Altar servers and was inspired more to serve God as a priest because I admired the school chaplain so much. I developed such a love for the Mass that I sometimes pretended to celebrate mass. Some students mimic their teachers in school because they admire their teacher, but I wanted to emulate my priest, the chaplain of our school.

Because of the uniqueness and effectiveness of the formations I received from the various levels of my education, particularly with the catholic schools, I came to deeply love the church even more and was confirmed on December 3, 1996 by the Most Rev. Francis Anani Kofi Lodonu, who was the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ho. Since then, I have been committed to the Church practices. I have never left nor have I ever imagined deserting the Catholic Church. I have always believed that through the church we can always meet God and attain sanctification of life. Thus, I have learned to pray and remain dedicated to God and committed to the Church. I completely depend on God through prayer, to help me be the kind of person he desires me to be. I have learned from my parents and own experiences to implore God's help through prayer in difficult moments and to pray unceasingly when hope seems to fail. I was always inspired and touched as I watched many priests pronounce the words of consecration. I want to be like them. I couldn't think of a greater honor than the privilege of bringing Christ down from heaven. It was at this moment that I started feeling the desire to become a priest. I felt that God was using these few signs to awaken my senses to pursue a vocation to priesthood. From that point onwards, my desire to become a priest intensified as I sought to give my life to the service of the Church. I wanted a deeper relationship with God totally devoid of worldly distractions. I have confirmed my initial enthusiasm that only the Catholic priesthood can satisfy this deep longing in my heart.

But one day, I declared my intention of becoming a priest to my mum and my senior brothers. As traditionalists, they could not withstand my intention to become a priest without having Children. My mum asked me, "What do you think are the greatest contributions you could make as a priest?" I replied: "As a priest, I would dedicate my time and talent to prayer, teaching the catholic faith, and engaging in pastoral activities." I applied to the Diocese of Yendi and was admitted to St. Victor Major Seminary in 2004. In 2005, I enrolled in St. Michael's Major Seminary for a spiritual formation year. From 2006 to 2007, I went to St. Augustine Millennium Major Seminary for philosophy. In 2008, I left the seminary and stayed in the house for one year before I went to college to become a professional teacher. After completing this study, I taught in a basic school for five years. During these five years, I could still hear the voice of God calling me. In 2016, I reapplied to the Diocese of Yendi again. In 2017, the bishop

allowed me to come to the United State of America to continue my formation at Notre Dame Seminary.

I would like to profess that ever since I left my country a year ago, my relationship with God has improved. I knew that even if God did not help me, I would deal with the enormous changes in my life. These days, I find my heart closer to God than ever before. Imagine that you went to a foreign country and you found life so different from what you were used to. What would you do? Would you put your life in God's hands? This is what I did--I let God be the driver of my life, which made my life a lot easier. The spiritual direction, the formation, and the friendly chats with the people around me have greatly helped me cope with the new demands of my life. Through these conversations, especially with my spiritual director, I have been motivated to create a strong bond with God and to love his word and refer to it for guidance and encouragement and hope.

I recently heard a young Catholic teacher, Chris Stefanick, say: "We should seek to discover what God's vision for our life is, and when we know what God's vision is for our lives, we should have a vision of what we want our life to be, based on God's vision. Our vision focuses on our decisions, and it is our decisions that determine our destiny." What Chris was speaking of here is what we should all be doing to become that person that God wants us to be. We can find out what God wants us to be by studying The Catechism of the Catholic Church and through pastoral ministry by helping people to practice our Catholic faith--the faith we were taught when we went to catechism classes and the faith we continued to develop throughout our life.

Did you ever share something about your faith with someone? If you did, at that time, you were a servant of God. The servant of God is someone who shares the faith that we live. Yes, we use books and formal training on methods, to impart the faith to others, but the most important part of being a Catholic Priest is sharing the faith you live out each and every day. The priests are people who share their faith with others. They are life's everyday heroes; they work as stay-at-home spiritual fathers, school teachers, managers, nurses, yes and even retirees. The only difference between them or any other person is their sacrifice in response to Jesus' words: "Do you love me, feed my sheep." This is Jesus' vision for our lives. I believe that true fulfillment can be found only in God vaguely here on earth and perfectly in the life-to-come as a servant of God. This belief defines the goals I set in life and my attitude towards life and life achievements in general.

I know that I have to die someday, and that day can come in a twinkle of my eye. So I want to make use of my days on earth to be close to God, love everyone, and to achieve my goal by feeding His sheep. If tomorrow never comes, count me as one who willed only the best, though I never claimed to be the best. I give thanks to the Loving Father, Creator of the Universe, who calls His people to follow Him and worship, to be with Him and with one another. I thank Him for having called me to assist others in their prayer to Him. May I be worthy of the trust placed in me through my example and service in bringing others closer to Him. I also thank Him for the opportunity to serve others in His presence and for filling my heart with joy and peace. I took inspiration from Jesus' mission statement that states that "the spirit of the Lord is

upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery to sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord". I pray that may your Spirit always guide me so I may grow in your love by the grace of the heavenly Father.