Vocation Story: A Journey of Faith

By Fr. Jamil Albert, OFM

As I reflect upon what to share with all of you, I am brought back to the days -- when I was still in high school -- preparing to join our Franciscan Formation House. My discernment actually began much earlier because I always had a special attachment to the Sacred Altar. Whenever I attended Mass it felt like one day, I would be on the other side of the Altar as the Celebrant. Therefore, as we gathered together for altar service meetings -- which would end with a prayer by our group leader -- I prayed only for my priestly vocation. I do not remember any other prayer for myself than for this cause. For me, prayer is the first and foremost element in discerning vocation. Though it is one’s own choice -- it is more the will of God -- that prevails.

I recall that I shared my desire to be a priest to my parents and siblings very early in life. They were very supportive even if they had only one son after having three daughters. It was quite hard for my parents to give away their only male child -- to the celibate life -- but they stood with my choice. I salute my parents because -- despite of all the opposition from our relatives -- they stayed firm and supported me. I firmly believe that religious vocation is a family calling and is deeply rooted in family. It is very important for anyone to have their family onboard to make any small or big decision in life.

In the year 1996, when I completed matriculation, I spoke to my parents to allow me to join the Franciscan Formation. With much wisdom, my father said -- that I was just out of school and had very limited experience -- that I needed to enhance myself further through some kind of work. I needed to learn more things to better understand the will of God. He introduced me to one of his friends for a possible job, and I started working in a bank as a janitor. Though this was a very menial job -- it taught me humility -- this experience prepared me for the service that God was calling me. Meanwhile, I joined college for Intermediate with a group of friends, and we spent our time in prayer. All my friends were very supportive as they also knew my desire for the religious vocation. I strongly believe that one’s company is very important. Good friends are indeed a true gift from God, when they journey with us not to discourage, but to help us better clarify the way to where we are heading.

Since we, as a family, were regular churchgoers, the Parish community was always there to pray for my religious vocation and the Holy Eucharist was a source of strength. The more time I spent in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I gained clarity of what God was calling me to do. I promised to myself that I would never say “NO” to the celebration of the Holy Mass and -- I am happy to say that in my ten years of priesthood -- I have never refused anyone asking me for the celebration of the Sacraments.

I would like to mention the contribution of my Franciscan community -- that did not only support me in my formation years -- but still continues to foster and deepen my religious vocation each day. I am so proud of being a Friar!
The Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul

June 29 Feast Day

By Albernina “Ninee” Pascual-Lopez

June 29 is the Feast Day that honors the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul. However, the Church also recognizes that they may not have died on the same day.

St. Augustine of Hippo said of these two Saints: “Both apostles share the same Feast Day, for these two were one; and even though they suffered in different days, they were as one. Peter went first, and Paul followed. And so we celebrate this day made holy for us by the apostles’ blood. Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labors, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith.”

St. Peter was once a fisherman known by the name, Simon. In those days, the stereotype for fishermen was that they were strong men -- very physical and unafraid of others -- and who had hot tempers and used vulgar language. They were uneducated, acquiring knowledge and survival skills -- by working hard and braving the seas. Yet Jesus chose Simon to be his first disciple and gave him the name, “Peter” which means “rock.” Peter dropped everything to follow Jesus and -- throughout their time together -- he often failed and made mistakes. In spite of Peter’s shortcomings, Jesus loved him unconditionally and chose to see the best in him. In fact, Jesus saw so much potential in him -- that He made him the first leader -- the “rock” of His Church. Seeing how Jesus took an uneducated, sinful man and loved him unconditionally is an example of the Lord choosing the weak and making them strong.

St. Paul, formerly called Saul, had a background and journey of faith that was different from St. Peter’s. Saul was an educated Jew and a Pharisee who enjoyed the high distinction of Roman citizenship. He persecuted Christians savagely and even threatened to have Jesus’ disciples put to death. He was dramatically converted to the Christian faith by Jesus Himself, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He was then named Paul, and from then on, he poured the same energy -- with which he once persecuted Christ’s followers -- into bringing the Gospel of Jesus to many people. Paul’s transformative encounter with Jesus -- altered the course of history which resulted in generations throughout the world meeting Jesus -- through his writings in the New Testament.

Despite their pasts, St. Peter and St. Paul are two of the most daring preachers of the Gospel and are regarded as the two men most responsible for the spread of Christianity. Jesus did not look at the two Saints’ inadequacies. They were sinful, ordinary people who had their share of doubts, failures and shortcomings. What a wonderful assurance that Jesus looks beyond people’s pasts and looks instead at their hearts! May we be like Peter who sometimes failed and stumbled yet persevered. May we be like Paul who proclaimed God’s word to everyone no matter how difficult.
“Practice makes perfect!” We’ve heard this countless times. This is partially true. For us to master what we’re doing -- we need to keep doing it many times -- even until we’ve lost count. But can it really become perfect?

As I was reflecting on how I nurture my vocation, the word “practice” kept repeating in my head. God gave us the “seed of vocation” and it is our responsibility to cultivate and water it as He provides the rest so it will grow, bear fruit, and propagate. St. Therese of the Child Jesus said that her “Vocation is love” and this is true for each of us. Whatever our vocation is, it is all about love. What we choose to become -- married, single-blessed or religious -- is just the “product” of that love. I would also say that “Vocation is relationship” because love is always for someone. Vocation, even for someone “single” is always offered for others. As we all know -- every relationship needs to be nurtured -- to keep it alive and let it grow.

I was led to the Cenacle Sisters where I was introduced to the “19th Annotation.” It is an adaptation of the 30-day Ignatian Retreat which is spread across months so people who cannot go on retreat for 30 straight days may still obtain the same unique graces (“same” because it remains grace-filled for whoever and whenever and “unique” because each person receives graces according to his/her needs). Since I’m working, it suits me well -- because I only need to meet my Spiritual Directress in person on a weekly basis -- and I was given materials to reflect on each day. While I further discern my vocation and then finally give my “yes” to God, I need to do my part. So, I “PRACTICE,” which is something we can all do regardless of what our vocation is.

P - PRAY UNCEASINGLY. This is our gateway to connect with God.
R - REGULAR GUIDE is important. A Spiritual Director will help us discern God’s true will.
A - ALLOW ourselves to receive the support of our family and friends. It’s also a practice of humility.
C - CASUAL TALKS to Jesus and Mary allow us to speak “unfiltered.” They know our hearts anyway.
T - TIME TO MEDITATE is important to quiet our minds and listen to God as He speaks.
I - INSPIRATIONAL MATERIALS influence us too.
C - CONSCIOUS PRESENCE OF GOD is one of the fruits when we are constantly in touch with God.
E - EXPONENTIAL GROWTH of our relationship with God is one of His gifts to us as we exert effort.

While people say that practice makes perfect in almost anything, I would instead focus my attention on God and trust Him. Who can make anything perfect other than the One and Only Perfect Being? Our desire to give our everyday imperfect best is enough for us to think. As we “practice,” we leave the perfection of our beings to God. Our practice is then made perfect.
Stewardship of My Teaching Vocation

By Mimie de Ocampo Huang

When my best friend from college (who eventually became my cousin-in-law), Regina Y. de Ocampo, first invited me to teach CCD (Continuing Catholic Development), she said “It will be one of the best experiences of your life!” She was right!

I was not sure what to expect in teaching CCD at the SSAP since my only previous experience teaching Catechism was many years ago. I was then a volunteer teaching Catholic doctrine to public school students at the Tahan Study Center in Manila.

I looked forward to teaching CCD class with great anticipation. On the first day of teaching Level 5 of Sunday class -- I was immediately greeted -- with different reactions from different students. Mostly there were smiles, but there were also looks of boredom, impatience, and indifference. Three of the Cross started being attentive in class and not only made the Sign of the Cross during our prayers, but even joined the class in reciting the Hail Mary aloud. The girl who was very shy became very active in class and would raise her hand every time I asked a question or asked for volunteers to read aloud. I observed the transformation of these three students -- and in so doing -- I saw the Holy Spirit at work right before my eyes.

Being a witness to the workings of the Holy Spirit in this setting has made my vocation of teaching CCD one of the most enriching experiences of my life.

My experience has encouraged me to attend classes on Catholic doctrine to further my learning and to share what I learn with my friends and family.

This article is dedicated to the memory of our late CCD friend and colleague, Patricia Kirkpatrick Montel, loving wife, devoted mother, and a committed worker in the Lord’s vineyard, teaching at CCD.

Rest in peace, Patricia. 🌹🌹🌹

- From your CCD Family
Stewardship of Vocation: Marriage and Family Life

By Ginger Aglipay

It was during our first year in college when we first met. We were young and entering a new phase of our lives -- and having someone to share that new adventure with -- was a blessing. Seven years later -- that adventure became a journey -- one that made us decide to spend together for the rest of our lives.

Mike and I got married 19 years ago -- and we immediately wanted to have kids -- as many kids as possible. We both come from big families; I have six siblings, while Mike has three sisters. Mike and I were blessed with three good-looking and intelligent children: two boys and one girl. From then on, we wanted to do everything possible to nurture the growth of Miguel, Mika, and Max. We believe that the stewardship of God’s gift of children is to enable them to reach their full potential in life.

Raising children today -- in a time very different from how we were raised -- can be very challenging. Not only do we have to worry about peer pressure -- but more so the social media culture -- that they are exposed to now.

So, we try to lead by example. We expose our children to what’s happening around us, hoping they will learn on their way to adulthood and independence. At times we quarrel over differences in opinions or preferences -- and that’s okay, as long as at the end of the day -- our children understand that we only want what’s best for them. We always tell them that no matter what happens, our love for them will always be there.

Mike and I know that we can’t rely on our own strength to do this. We take inspiration from books, from the guidance of our own parents, and from the practices of our friends. Most importantly, we ask our Lord to be a part of our family, and we pray for the intercession of Mama Mary. Now, as the kids are growing before our eyes -- asking God for guidance to raise them -- is our continuous source of grace and strength. Going to Church every Sunday and upholding traditions like attending the Simbang Gabi in December have nurtured our relationship as well. Our children have accepted that these practices are an essential part of their wellbeing as Catholics and not mere obligations. This is how we know that we are able to nurture God’s gift of family.
Ordinary Time in Extraordinary Times

By Russell Go

Life in these modern times can be described as a fast-paced and interconnected environment. Everyone is set on their own course -- at their own pace -- to fulfill their personal plans and initiatives. Everything was supposedly running its due course until the COVID-19 pandemic happened, which placed everyone in disarray.

Plans were cancelled -- adjustments were made, people panicked -- and “modern” chaos erupted in our lives. The fear that this virus has brought, made everyone uneasy. Uncertainty was a common feeling, as people struggled to adapt to whatever “normal” protocols were established because of this. Though many would say that this is a hindrance to our previous lives -- this pause gave me the opportunity to step back -- and look at life with an unclouded and unrushed perspective.

Now I appreciate what I currently have; now I realize how blessed I am. The small things that we often took for granted -- such as a private room, company, access to food etc. -- all seem amazing to me now, as these were often under-appreciated or just ignored in our previous lifestyles. I forgot that I was already enveloped in God’s blessings and grace. It took COVID-19 to make me realize what He has done, and what He continues to do for me.

Others do not even have the luxury of food and water, close relationships with family, opportunities for solitude and reflection and to foster relationships with others, to say the least. I am reminded that Christ works not always in a grand manner in our lives -- but in the simple things in life -- that people tend to forget and overcomplicate. Yet at the same time, these are the aspects in life that are enough to let us live in a content and meaningful way.

This realization on the “back to basics” needs of life is my personal reminder to reflect carefully on the bigger picture of what Christ has laid out for us. It is funny when I thought that I could only encounter Christ through reflection and writing (personally). But I never realized that I could encounter Him through this pandemic as well.

In the Liturgical Calendar, this pandemic period is set within the Season of Ordinary Time. This is my encounter with Christ. I encourage everyone to take a step back and realize what Jesus is letting you experience during these extraordinary times.
Santuario De San Antonio Parish
Forbes Park, Makati City

Schedule of Masses and Prayers
Starting June 23, 2020

Sunday Masses
6:00 AM Tagalog
8:00 AM Tagalog (streamed)
10:00 AM English (streamed)
12:00 NN English
4:00 PM English
6:00 PM English (streamed)

Saturday Masses
7:30 AM English (streamed)
6:00 PM Anticipated Sunday Mass (streamed)

Guidelines for Mass Attendees
- Pre-registration required
- Only 10 persons allowed
- Ages between 21 to 59 years old
- Must have no pre-existing chronic condition
- P.S. Call 8843-8830 up to 30 to register
- No entry to those with body temp. of 37.6 Celsius and higher
- No face mask, no entry
- Observe social distancing
- Sanitize hands always

Monday - Friday
7:30 AM Mass (streamed)
12:00 NN Angelus or
Oratio Imperata 3
3:00 PM Divine Mercy Healing Prayer
5:30 PM Holy Rosary (streamed)
6:00 PM Mass (streamed)

https://tinyurl.com/FacebookSSAP
http://tinyurl.com/FacebookYoutube
https://tinyurl.com/HomepageSSAP
https://tinyurl.com/instagramSSAP

Santuario De San Antonio Parish
Forbes Park, Makati City

Communion
For the Elderly and Below 21 Years Old

Dasmariñas Village | Mondays | 9:00 AM
Forbes Park | Wednesdays | 9:00 AM
Urdaneta Village | Fridays | 9:00 AM

1. Fill out Registration Form ONLINE (https://forms.gle/ike4UhcAoVFJALkA7); cut-off is 2 days before assigned Communion day.
2. Receive confirmation from SSAP via text message.
3. Attend the 7:30 AM ONLINE Mass at home on your assigned Communion day.
4. Please wait for the priest to arrive at your gate.
5. Please wear your face mask and observe social distancing (1.5m). If your body temp. is 37.6 Celsius and higher, do not go out anymore for Communion.
6. Take Communion by hand, consume Host in front of priest and go back inside your house.
RESUMPTION OF CHURCH SERVICES UNDER QUARANTINE

- IATF guidelines on age restriction to be observed.
- Those with pre-existing medical conditions are encouraged to stay home.
- Wear a face mask & bring sanitizer/alcohol.
- Temperature of 37.6 Celsius & above - stay home.
- Remember to observe social distancing (1.5m).

BAPTISM
- Only the parents and one set of godparents will be allowed.
- Strictly by appointment.
- Please call 8843-88-30 up to 35.

CONFESSION
- Open to 21-59 years old.
- Strictly by appointment.
- Please call 8843-88-30 up to 35.

WEDDING
- Only simple weddings are allowed this year with only one set of sponsors and the immediate family.
- Strictly by appointment only.
- Please call 8843-88-30 up to 35.

WAKES
- For death attributed to or related to COVID-19, wakes are not allowed and cremation or burial must be made within 12 hours from death.
- Wakes should not exceed 3 calendar days.
- Wake attendees should not exceed 10 persons including members of the immediate family.
- Only the immediate family is allowed during funeral masses in the church.
- Please call 8843-88-30 up to 35.

FEED THE HUNGRY
Feed a family today.

Donate in cash or check through church drop-off or via online bank transfer
Account Name: SSAP - Restricted
Account No.: BPI 0291-0327-02

For acknowledgment, kindly send copy of deposit slip/online transaction to ssap_info@yahoo.com or 0918-9036752
Asking for help is a sign of strength. We are here for you. The SSA Parish is offering counseling services.

Please call anytime at 8843-8830/31 and ask to be connected for counseling with a priest.