My Vocation to the Priesthood

I was born at T. Sindala Cherry near Madural, India. My experience was of the typical suburban Catholic variety. I was part of a large parish of over 1500 families at Sacred Heart Church.  It was there that I was baptized, made my first communion, first confession and was confirmed.  My sister and I attended the parish grade school and then the co-ed Catholic Amala Annai High School.  Much of our lives revolved around parish and school life, our friends and neighbors, and at times it seemed that all those I knew were Catholic.

My call to the priesthood had its origin in this community of faith in which I grew up—serving Mass, helping out at the parish festival and helping the youth over summer breaks. These were some of the ways I became connected to the local church. My family also helped me grow in faith. I was fortunate to have faithful parents and even a priest in my family (my uncle, Father John Britto, OSM, also a missionary priest).

At the age of eighteen I first began to think about the priesthood. I was scared and intrigued by the thought, but probably more scared than anything. I resisted the thought of priesthood at first and supposed my life would take the normal path of marriage and fatherhood. Though I initially tried to flee from the idea, I felt it in the back of my mind. I thought I could shake the thought of priesthood by becoming more active in the parish, praying a bit more, serving Mass and doing spiritual reading. The result, however, was quite the opposite. The more deeply I entered into the mystery of Christ and the Church, the more I felt called to priestly service. After much prayer and reflection, I decided to join the Missionary Society of Heralds of Good News on June 13, 1994. There I was taught English, Telugu and Spirituality for one year along with three years of Philosophy.

As a college student at St. Joseph's Major Seminary, the idea of priesthood remained. My prayer and work indicated that I might have a priestly vocation, but I was still unsure. I remained self-conscious about even the possibility of priesthood. I was also concerned about the challenges of priesthood and wondered why anyone would choose celibacy. Through prayer, I started to come to the peace of seeing that what God calls each person to, whether priesthood or married life, is that which will make him most happy and fulfilled in life. So I decided and applied to make my first promise to the congregation as lector and acolyte. After four years of theological studies, I became a deacon in April 2005, and a year later, I was ordained to the priesthood on December 27, 2006. Then I was appointed as associate pastor at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Ambattur, Chennal, in India for three years.  After that time, I was appointed as pastor of Immaculate Conception Church and correspondent of Catholic schools in Chidambarapuram in the dioceses of Palayamkottai, Thiunelveli.

In 2012 I came to the Archdiocese of Mobile. My vocation then led me to you, dear parishioners, at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Lillian, Alabama.  I pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen me so that I may be available and approachable to you and that I am given the ability to serve all of your needs through the imitation of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rev. Saleth Mariadoss, HGN