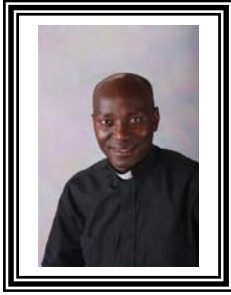


Deogratias Massawe
Third Theology - St. Meinrad School of Theology
Parish: Umbwe Parish - Moshi, Tanzania
Birthday: March 31



I was born in Tanzania (East Africa). I am from the loving Catholic family of eleven including my parents. We are five boys and four girls but my younger brother passed away six years ago. He died of malaria while he was in his second year of college. I am the fifth born out of nine which means I have three elder sisters, one elder brother and one younger sister and three younger brothers. My Dad and Mom are both alive.

I do not remember exactly when I started thinking about seminary. However, when I was in primary school and attending the first communion classes, I can recall being moved to priesthood. By then, I just admired how the priest dresses, stands at the altar and says the Mass. I also admired them when they come to our school (primary school) to teach religion. I wanted to be like them. At home my younger brothers and I used to gather together and pretend as if we are celebrating Mass. We used to take a banana and cut it into small pieces like hosts and distribute as if they are hosts. I did all these childish things before receiving my first communion. Soon after my first communion, I became an altar boy in a view of becoming a little priest. We thought altar boys are little priests. (I am using altar boys because in my place only boys serve at the Mass.) I remained an altar boy for several years until I completed primary school. At this time I applied to go to the seminary but there was a heavy competition because more people wanted to go to the seminary than the seminary could accommodate. We had to do another examination and other check-ups and the first few with good grades and manner were taken and I was among them.

I did my high school in the minor seminary which is run by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Soon after high school, I went to Kampala, Uganda as part of seminary formation training under the Spiritans. In Uganda I was assigned to work with the HIV patients. I did this ministry for one year. It was my first time to work in the hospital as a chaplain. At the beginning it was a little hard and I used to get disturbed when I saw how people were suffering but later I got used to the situation. The biggest challenge I was facing was how to help people especially when they were crying and seem to lose hope. I used to feel helpless and sad that I am not doing a good job. Most of the HIV patients knew that there is no medicine and probably they might die. When they shared their feelings and family problems with me, I used to feel sad and helpless. I always wish that I could be able to help them but I figured out that I cannot help much apart from listening to them and consoling and praying with them. I also realized that my presence and caring is enough.

After one year working in the hospital in Uganda, I went back to Tanzania to continue with my college education at the Spiritan Missionary Seminary. I graduated in 2002 with bachelor of philosophy. My religious congregation appointed me to come to United States for further studies. I accepted the offer and came to U.S. in the Fall of 2002. I stayed in San Antonio, Texas for what we call Novitiate which is the initial stage for religious life.

In the Fall of 2003, I came to Chicago to study theology at Catholic Theological Union (CTU). I choose to complete dual degrees (M. Div and M.A.) with a Biblical Concentration.

After 2 years of theology, in the Summer of 2005, I went to the Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas to do my CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education). Among the reasons I chose to do CPE was to develop the skill I started in Uganda at Mulango Hospital of working with the HIV patients.

After my summer CPE in Houston, I went to Conway, Arkansas for a one year ministerial experience. This was part of priestly formation in the Spiritan community. It was while I was in Conway that I met Bishop Sartain, then bishop of Little Rock. I really enjoyed meeting him and was very impressed by him.

In the fall of 2006, I returned to Chicago and CTU and stayed there until I began another CPE residency, this time at Deaconess Hospital, Evansville in the Fall of 2008. During my time at CTU, I began to consider the diocesan priesthood. (I had been in formation with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Spiritans, for over 10 years.) As I began to look at different options for diocesan priesthood, I looked at the Diocese of Joliet because of my brief connection with Bishop Sartain. Realizing that I should not chose a diocese simply based on the bishop, I visited the diocese, liked what I saw and decided to apply. This Fall I begin my theology studies at St. Meinrad School of Theology for the Diocese of Joliet. I am hoping that with God's help I will attain my goal of priestly ordination in your diocese.