

The Story Of A Vocation

Christ Calls A Tondo Boy

I AM a Tondo boy. Ben Ulo was from Tondo. Ben Kidlat and Ben Kulani were from Tondo. My name is Ben. When I thought of becoming a priest, I didn't believe it myself. I was not as very bad as the other Bens I knew; but I was not very good either. Until I entered the seminary, I never knew what it felt to be trained in a school run by priests. My parents were not rich. Besides, the public schools were very near. I couldn't afford to spend an hour and forty centavos to school and back each day. I might as well have spent the extra hour for horsing around before class hours, and the forty centavos for the latest movie-craze in town. And I preferred double-programs with Tarzans and cowboys and Arabian Nights . . . even if I had to cut classes . . . (and pilfer from my father's pockets!).

In my school life, I was not as popular as I could have been perhaps had I grown heavier by seven pounds. My gang-mates told me that I looked like Ichabod Crane, and that smart girls hardly ever fell for chaps my size. I knew that without their telling me. But I knew too that I had a special knack of making myself tick with the girls and the campus crowd. When I was elected class vice-president once and class president twice, I made many enemies. When I was elected Mr. Sophomore, I made more enemies. This, I knew, was politico-social life in the campus. And I loved every minute of it.

In other words, I loved my school because it was my second home. There, I began to learn how to grow up away from my mother's apron-strings. But I loved my home much more because it was my second school. There I began how to learn without books. I just watched, and did what they did there. And my three brothers with me. And we just watched them live, and lived our lives their way. *They*, of course, refer to my father and mother and a pair of maiden-aunts who knew what they were doing whenever they locked me out many a night on the side-walk without supper because I drank gin. That was how they drilled us out of our horse-sense. But we were happy; boisterously happy indeed in our house which looked more like an army barracks of course, but which did not make it less a home. Because God was there.

In our home, we stuck close together. We prayed each night

(Continued on page 22)

OPERATIONS....

(Continued from page 19)

found that only four were using fertilizer for their crops, only one employed the "Magasana" and "Margate" systems of rice planting, only a few used ready-mixed feeds for their poultry, and some even had superstitious beliefs and practices in their farming.

Mr. Talian reports that now these farmers are beginning to adopt the scientific techniques learned from his class. They are abandoning antiquated ways of soil cultivation and livestock raising.

The soil of Mambajao has been enriched by centuries of lava flow from towering Hibok-Hibok. With their newly learned methods, these farmers are better equipped to bring out the greatest potential of the land.

CHRIST CALLS....

(Continued from page 8)

together, and went to Mass each Sunday together. We ate our meals together, and picnicked and clowned around and pillow-fought together. In Tondo, there are not many happy homes because there are so many empty houses. If it's not the parents, it's the children who run away. I never thought of running away from home — even to a place called seminary. But it was at home where Christ began to call me. Because Christ was there.

I heard the call again on a camping-hike. We were Boy Scouts. Eight in that band that day. It was a windy day. I saw one of my comrades run to chase his wind-blown cap. The next second, I saw him smashed under the heavy tires of a lumber truck. A screech, a shriek, and he was dead. It happened so quickly. I didn't even find time to think. And when I recovered from the shock, I started to think. And I thought of becoming a priest. At first, I could not quite see the connection. I shrugged it off like a silly idea, and I picked up from where I left off. I re-joined my gang and tried to have a good time.

I heard the call again in a dancing hall. Very bright and full of balloons, and plenty to eat. It was our Freshmen-Sophomore Prom. I was Mr. Sophomore, and I was dancing with Miss Sophomore. It was a funny place indeed for Mr. Sophomore in his right mind to wish to become a priest. But Mr. Sophomore in that dancing hall did wish to become a priest. And he was in his right mind.

This time, I decided to give what I

FATHER FELIX....

(Continued from page 13)

confusion in despotical governments. Humiliation is good for the soul, Mr. Lopez."

"And so, when you and I go to Confession, provided only that we mention all of our mortal sins and are truly sorry for them, resolving to do our best not to sin again, through this humiliation, we can not only cleanse our souls of sin but we can also achieve peace and happiness.

"We may dislike ill-tasting medicine. But we know that it is good for our body. We know that it will bring pulsating physical health back to our diseased organs and limbs. So we take it. Similarly, through the disagreeable ordeal of sacramental confession, an ordeal instituted by Jesus Christ Himself according to the Holy Bible, we can bring pulsating life to our souls.

"Confession sometimes is disagreeable," Father Felix concluded, "but in its results, it is beautiful, it is heavenly."

thought was a silly thought a chance. I told it to my parish priest. He promised to pray over it with me. He urged me to start attending daily Mass. And I did. My folks were puzzled. And, of course, I felt awkward.

I heard the call again and again; and I knew that Christ really wanted a Tondo boy. And I felt somehow that He wanted me. It was hard to believe. But I knew that this was the beginning of the end — end of all my silly ideas like smoking cigars and drinking high-balls. For now I finally began to learn how to think sense . . . because I finally learned how to pray. And I saw everything fall into place; the cigars and high-balls and Tarzans and jazz and noise — things to which I clung most vehemently like an urchin to his paper-toys. What if the wind had blown the wrong way the day my friend died, and drove me instead chasing my own Scout-cap to my own death? Or, what if Mr. Sophomore had dropped dead in the middle of a jazz? What if . . . ? Contrary to fact conditions of course! Perhaps, it was because God wanted me to live on, and become a priest. Certainly, Tondo needs another one. Perhaps, Tondo needs me.

Not long ago, I met an old chum from Tondo. His name is Ben. He, too, wants to become a priest. He cannot believe it himself. "I feel too normal for that", he chuckled. I chuckled with him.

"I felt too normal too", I said. "Perhaps that's why Christ is calling you as He has called me. Because if priests weren't normal. He wouldn't wish to call them in the first place. Because they won't last."