

MAUREEN MARQUEZ PRANADA

My name is Maureen Marquez Pranada. I was born on May 27, 2006 but it is May 28 on my birth certificate. I am from Sitio Manggahan, Brgy. Daraitan Tanay. It is a rural place where electricity is not available. People there just use solar panels to have light in the evening. As for my elementary education, I actually did not have the chance to have pre-school and kindergarten classes. I was not able to learn the basic alphabet at my younger years. Because of parents' financial problem, I was sent to an orphanage at Boso-Boso, Cogeo, Manila at a very young age. When I was asked about my grade level of schooling, I don't even know what to an answer. I just chose to be with my friends. However, upon staying there, I got bullied that made my parents to fetch me. That time, my parents decided to let me have schooling in our place. They enrolled me to Magata-Manggahan Elementary School. When I entered there at the age of 7 as grade 1, I was a quarter late. My parents prepared a small string bag with a string bag with a pencil, eraser, sharpener, pad paper, and 8 colored crayons. My uniform was just given by my other relatives. I went to the school without wearing the complete required uniform because I just had a slipper since I didn't have shoes as other students do. Having classes was not that good for me. I can't relate to the lessons since I don't read or write. But there was a chance when our teacher had the rule of "Non-reader, no lunch" that was the time I learned how to read and write appropriately because I tried to listen carefully since I feel the call of my stomach. Then after that, I had an improvement. I also learned how to count in English without any help from my parents. I was also tasked by my teacher to be one of the tutors in reading. My family moved to Kamagong General Nakar, Quezon just before my recognition day in grade 1; so I wasn't able to attend it. They didn't also expect me to have awards or anything from school. Then back to school again, I proceeded to grade 2. I experienced to be a hired seller for 10 pesos of banana cue with my friends. For a child like me, it's a privilege since I would be able to buy something with that amount of money. I also experienced having sweet potato or "kamote" as my breakfast and lunch before going to school or just drinking coffee when we really didn't have anything to serve. There was also time when our place got affected by a typhoon and our house collapsed. It's my mother who asked some of our relatives to



let us stay with them while rebuilding our house. But as of this time, I could say we don't have yet a good house though we don't live in our relatives' house anymore. Those times did not hinder me to stop my education. Then after finishing grade 2, I was unexpectedly awarded as 3rd honor of our class. Following grade 3 to 6, I became the first honor student of our batch. When I learned about the Sisters of Mary School, I tried to have entrance exam and interview. Surprisingly, I passed. Actually, I almost got lost since I was left by the service going to the school here in Cavite. Luckily, one of the graduates fetched me together with my mother. Though I will be away from my family, I still chose to study here for free. Again, staying here for the first time was a struggle for me. I was just in the middle section of our batch when I was in grade 7. The most challenging for me that time was understanding subjects with English as medium of instruction. I actually don't know how to speak and understand English since in our home, we don't speak it since almost all of my family members did not finish schooling. However, I somehow unexpectedly learned how to speak it when our sisters implemented to have "English only policy" for every week days in a week. Though I really had a troubled grammar, the good thing is I learned English. I became with honors that made me part of the highest section in our batch which is section A from grades 8 to 10. It's a blessing and honor for me and my family to receive awards from the school that offers high quality education. I am now a grade 11 student. I chose to have architectural engineering in college. I dream to be an architect since I want to help my family soon and build a house that I long for.