

ruminatio

The Hallway: Single Life

by Kate Gilday





ruminatio

The Hallway: Single Life

by Kate Gilday



ARCHDIOCESE
OF BRISBANE



vocation
BRISBANE

Copyright Vocation Brisbane 2016

Journeying to 2018: Year of Youth

FOREWORD

“Until God opens the next door, praise Him in the hallway.”

Unknown

What you hold in your hands is an act of praise.

As a young woman currently living out the call to single life, I frequently encounter in myself and in those around me a distaste for this vocation.

We feel like we’re waiting for our lives to begin. All around us, or so it seems, people are being ordained or getting married or heading off to far-distant convents or welcoming their twenty-second child into the world.

And we’re here: perpetually stuck in the friendzone, more than a bit uncertain about what the future holds, feeling futile and inadequate as servants of the Lord because we haven’t yet ticked the neat little box on the to-do list labelled, “Figure out what God is calling me to.”

This little book is an outpouring of my gratitude to God that I am *right here*. As I grapple with the daily call to love and serve the Lord in my present circumstance – a university student, a worker for the Church, a daughter, a friend – I’m frequently surprised by the sweetness of the season.

I get to live out, moment to moment, an acceptance of His invitation to Love. I get to discover in strange and beautiful ways what it means to be present and attentive to the Holy Spirit’s work in me and through me. I get to walk the same road my secular peers are walking, but discover how to tread that path as one determined to be a Saint.

What you hold in your hands is an invitation to praise.

It’s true: one day, God will probably call you and me beyond this temporary vocation to single life into a permanent gift of self, expressed either in consecrated single life as a priest, religious or lay person, or in the sacrament of marriage. But the call of tomorrow does not outweigh the call of today.

God may not be calling us *to* single life forever, but He is calling us *in* single life to walk the road towards eternity with Him. Our vocation in this moment is richer than we dare to dream.

Friends, let's praise Him in the hallway.

Kate Gilday

Vocation Brisbane Field Officer

“Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.”

Ephesians 3:20-21

INTRODUCTION

“Saints are not ‘supermen’ who are born perfect, but rather are ordinary people who followed God with all their heart.”

Pope Francis

Each of the following reflections on the vocation of single life takes its inspiration from someone who walked with Jesus.

Before they were Saints, they were disciples. And before they were disciples, they were just ordinary people into whose lives burst an extraordinary God.

That is the narrative of the journey towards heaven: an ordinary person is called to follow and to fall in love with an extraordinary God. That is vocation.

Within the state of single life, we experience that same call from the Lord that He extended to Mary, and Peter, and Martha. Their stories aren't just once-upon-a-long-long-time-ago. Their stories are our stories: the narrative of an extraordinary God

bursting into our ordinary lives and inviting us to something magnificent.

Take some time to journey with these ordinary people – almost all of whom were living the single life – and discover the parallels of their narrative with yours. As I prayed with these Saints’ stories, I discovered something rather shocking: my story, like theirs, is worth telling, simply because God is part of it.

**i. MARY: CALLED TO THE PRESENT
CIRCUMSTANCE**

“There are two ways of waking up in the morning. One is to say, ‘Good morning, God,’ and the other is to say, ‘Good God, morning!’”

Fulton J. Sheen

“Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...’”

Luke 1:34-35

Today is a gift.

No, let's try that again. *Today* is a *gift*. Let those words sink in.

Nobody has ever received your 'today' before: it's yours, unique and unrepeatable, a personalised and dangerous invitation from God. And it makes absolutely no sense.

Two thousand years ago, a terrified teenage girl stood before an angel and said, "I don't understand." Mary looked at her present circumstance and understood that the gift God was offering didn't make sense in its context. His calling for her was to become a virgin mother, and that paradox was more than she could quite fathom.

God's call defied conventional wisdom, offering not a carbon copy of a predictably beige life, but a beautiful, complicated reality that defied Mary's expectations.

Boxes make things a lot simpler: Mary would probably have been less confused if the categories "virgin" and "mother" had remained mutually

exclusive. And so often we look to conventional wisdom to narrate our lives because it reduces a messy reality of conflicting terms into a neatly defined existence. If today is complicated and incomprehensible, then hopefully it's soon forgotten. But God's way is different: He chooses to use our today.

What does my 'today' look like? When I'm honest with myself, there are a lot of things I don't understand; a lot of complicated, messy realities and what I thought were mutually exclusive terms. And like Mary, it's here and now, in this strange today, that I have a calling from God.

Vocation never fits into the boxes we expect it to. States of life – marriage, ordained, religious – are overarching narratives that describe as many unique journeys as God has created unique souls. The way each of us are called – as Mary was called – to make the Incarnation a reality is unrepeatable: our vocation cannot and will not look the same as anyone else's in history.

Understanding the gift of today is, I believe, the key to beginning to live fully the call of single life.

The beauty of the Incarnation is that it is still unfolding in every heart that chooses to become a dwelling place for Christ – not in some easily defined copy of another’s reality, but in the exact, unrepeatable circumstance in which we find ourselves.

Today is His gift.

**ii. PETER: CALLED TO A RICHER
EXPERIENCE OF OUR ROLES**

“If we loved more, love would give our lives infinite dimensions, and we would no longer feel hemmed in.”

Fr Jacques Philippe, Interior Freedom

“He said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.’ Simon said in reply, ‘Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.’ When they had done this they caught so great a number of fish that their nets began to tear.”

Luke 5:4-6

Perseverance isn't one of my strong suits. I'm a big dreamer and a stubborn perfectionist, and, confronted with my own limitations, mine is a fight or flight response. I *will* very quickly improve, driven by idealism and competition, or I'll throw in the towel.

St Peter was no stranger to failure. When we first encounter him in the gospels, he is discouraged in the face of his limitations. His boat is on the shore. He's worked hard all night, caught nothing, and washed his hands of the whole futile experience.

What's the boat that you've dragged up onto the beach? It might be a person or a relationship that is just too difficult. It might be an opportunity or a mission field that you've had little success in. It might even be the very state of single life: "I give up. It's hopeless. I can't become a Saint in this particular circumstance." Often we see the external fruits of the vocations of those around us and we despair: surely I could do more, *be more*, GIVE more than I currently am.

I think sometimes I expect Christ to meet me in that petulant abandonment of my current situation; to immediately ask me to leave everything and follow Him. I leave my boat behind, adamant that if I'm not on a plane to the developing world or swathed in a habit by 'tomorrow morning at the latest', I can essentially consider myself a failure as a disciple.

But Jesus didn't (at first) ask Peter to leave. He asked him to get back in the boat. The first unglamorous mission Peter got to share with Jesus was the one he was already equipped for: catching plain old fish. And oh, what a catch they made!

Before our new life in Christ takes shape, He first invites Himself into the life we're already living, to lower the nets we already own – but to push out into deeper waters.

Whenever I get sick of the single life – disillusioned with the internal and external limitations I face – this is Jesus' invitation to me: push out into deeper waters. It is not circumstance, he reminds me, that prevents me from making a complete gift of self; it is a lack of love.

Jesus got into Peter's boat. He invited himself into that place of restlessness and failure and despair in order to transform it. He showed Peter how to do the same thing in a new way: to live his secular role in the deeper waters of faith. Jesus' love breathes dimension into our lives, if only we have the courage to let Him into the boat.

**iii. MARTHA: CALLED TO BE
CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION**

"On the surface it was similar to that of everyone around them, but faith, piercing the superficialities, disclosed that God was accomplishing very great things."

Jean-Pierre de Caussade

"... the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her.'"

Luke 10:41-42

One of the supposed virtues of the single life, frequently extolled by vocations offices around the world, is how much time and freedom you have to serve the Church, the poor and those who don't yet know God's love. Martha of Bethany was a paragon of this definition of single life. She busied herself with service, pouring out her whole self to make sure everything was perfect for the Lord. And He told her off.

"You're not choosing the best part, Martha," he told her, "Your vocation is not to incessant productivity and the relentless accomplishing of tasks – it's to be drawn into communion with the God of love. Only at My feet can you be filled with the love you're seeking to bring to the world."

If Martha's work is to have any value, it must flow from a heart like Mary's. How often do we forget this? Yes, single people have the freedom to commit themselves to a plethora of ministries. But when prayer slips away as we become preoccupied with obligations and innovations, when doing things *for* God becomes more important than doing things *with* God – it's then

that Christ tells us off: *choose the one necessary thing.*

I cannot thrive for a single day if it doesn't flow out of prayer – not just words recited or songs listened to or books read, but a concrete and personal dialogue with the One who makes all things possible. When I stop living contemplatively, I stop living. Sure I keep existing and striving towards goals and adjusting my appearance and opinions and hobbies to fit in. But I'm left adrift from that Love which pierces the superficialities to disclose that God is accomplishing very great things.

Prayer is the place where Jesus teaches me how to live right now well. The contemplative life, far from being reserved for particular orders of religious, is the backbone of Christian spirituality and the only foundation for a life of love. My current single vocation is primarily a call to be a contemplative in the middle of the world: to live a life similar to that of everyone around me, but imbued with the fruits of a deep and regular prayer life.

Only a contemplative can truly say yes to living the present with faith, hope, and love; furthermore,

only contemplative hearts hear God's call forward. That's because discernment is not making pro-con lists; it's the process of becoming attuned to the voice of Jesus through. When we sit at His feet, and listen to His word, and enter into His conversation, "Life to the full" begins to etch itself onto our hearts and our lives.

iv. **THE TWELVE: CALLED TO COMMUNITY**

"It is not good for man to be alone."

Genesis 2:8

"The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananaen and Judas Iscariot..."

Matthew 10:2-4

Boy, were the Twelve a motley crew. Several sets of brothers, a few pre-existing friendships, perhaps a father and son; the fiery, impetuous and

overzealous paired with the lukewarm, calculating and rational; the doubtful alongside the overawed.

When Jesus called his apostles, they gave their yes to a journey with Him, but also to a journey with complicated community of peculiar individuals. He was intentional in inviting them to walk with one another, knowing that “as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

Vocations are relational. Married people, called to make a complete gift of self to the other, enter into the complicated experience of community that is family life. Religious communities share a common life of prayer, work and fellowship through which each is led deeper into the gift of self they are making towards God. Those in ordained ministry are necessarily social beings, called to interact with hundreds of souls every day in the same way Christ did.

But as a single person, the relationships – the experience of community – that God is calling us to may not be immediately obvious. Whenever I run a game of ‘Vocations Pictionary’ at a youth group or school, many teams will depict ‘Single Life’ as a

sad, lonely person, perhaps standing in contrast to a group from which they are excluded.

Is this what I experience of single life – life *alone*? There are days when it is just plain hard, days when I cry out to the Lord, “I thought you said it wasn’t good for man to be alone!” I long for defined, permanent relationships – if only to give me a sense of definition and permanence in my own identity. It’s easy to begin listening to the destructive voice within that provokes jealousy, insecurity and a haunting sense that you’re fundamentally undesirable. But the call to be single is, paradoxically, a call to community.

Community life is inseparable from discipleship. If we are journeying with Christ, then we are necessarily journeying with another eleven (give or take a few) whom we are called to love, sharpen and encourage along the road of apostleship.

Who are my eleven? What are the names that Christ has called out alongside my own? As a single person, I know I’m uniquely advantaged to make a gift of self to my friendships, and, in turn, to

receive in those friendships the strength to continue on in my Christian journey.

Friendship is perhaps one of the most fundamental (and fundamentally complicated) vocations God places in our lives. In entrusting us to one another – like the Twelve – as a ‘band of brothers’, Jesus gives us the opportunity to become servants, sidekicks and signposts for our brothers and sisters; to love each peculiar individual as one whom he has loved and called.

v. MARY MAGDALENE: CALLED BY NAME

“Become who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire.”

St Catherine of Siena

“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She thought it was the gardener and said to him, ‘Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher.”

John 20:15-16

No two stories of any two souls are alike: the path to heaven that each person walks is utterly unprecedented. When God calls, He doesn't make sweeping generalisations that neatly divide the world; He journeys with individuals. He calls their names.

Mary Magdalene, three days after the death of her closest friend, stood outside his tomb weeping, wondering what her life meant. In her confusion, she didn't recognise Jesus as he approached her and asked to hear her story. But then he said her name. "*Mary.*" And she recognised him, and all of a sudden, her story made sense again.

One morning when I was seventeen years old, I went, as I usually did during Wednesday's morning tea break, to sit at the foot of the Blessed Sacrament in our school chapel. That weekly dose of Adoration was my refuge from a teenage whirlpool of hormones, gossip and academic stress: at Jesus' feet, all was still.

It was June, and in just six short months I'd be graduating and beginning my time in the real world. My plan was to serve as a missionary with NET Ministries for a year, or maybe two, and then to resume the conventional, conveyor-belt life of box-ticking: university (probably law school), work, travel, a husband, a house, some babies, white lilies at my funeral.

It was June, and in just six short minutes, my plan was interrupted. That day in the chapel, I heard Jesus call my name. "*Kate,*" he said. And I recognised Him.

"*Kate,*" he said, and in that name there was a question – "*Will you be mine?*"

What do you do with that? When the God of the universe stirs deep in your heart an authentic recognition of His all-surpassing love, how do you respond? Well, at age seventeen, I responded by freaking out, googling every order of nuns I'd heard of and making contact with the vocations director of the one that sounded best.

I discerned in a panic, prayed with urgent vehemence and kept my eyes open for signs from heaven, even though I couldn't hear the voice of God over the thudding echo of my own heartbeat. Over the course of many months, I became more and more convicted of my calling to religious life; that is, until Jesus withdrew that conviction completely, replacing it with a fuller understanding of the calling to marriage.

Confused, I journeyed on, only to be led once more into keen certainty that I was meant to be a nun... then once again that I ought to be a wife and mother. As my flip-flopping discernment continued, I begged Jesus for clarity: *why isn't this linear?*

His retort surprised me: "Did you expect it to be?"

Admittedly, I did. I wanted my vocation story to be the neat assignation of Kate to category. I wanted an external conclusion; but He wanted the internal transformation.

"Mary," Jesus said to her. And she turned and said to him, "Teacher."

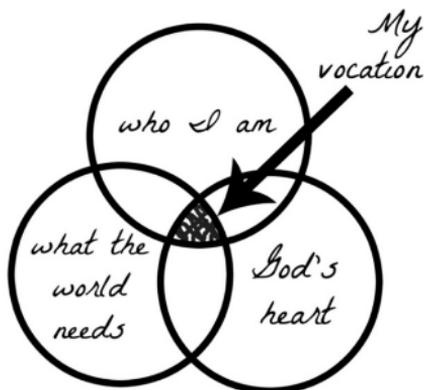
When Jesus calls a person's name, He speaks the one word that allows them to recognise Him fully as the One they are searching for. When He said "Mary," he *called* her – but not so much to a particular course of action as to a mutuality of love in that moment.

"Our hearts are restless," St Augustine tells us, "until they rest in Him." My vocation journey is non-linear, I'm realising, because it's about so much more than discovering my place in the world; it's about discovering the One who calls my name. It's about discovering that, in every moment, God is calling my name so that I can receive and reciprocate His love for me.

When I read *Till We Have Faces*, I discovered that C.S. Lewis' protagonist had already articulated what my heart was coming to understand about the single life:

"I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?"

As I live out this state of single life, I'm coming to understand it as so much more than a hallway. Today is the beginning of an eternal communion of love. Today is my chance to live out this Venn diagram:



Today is utterly unprecedented. And as I journey on in discovering the call that God has for me, my joy lies in the fact that He has already called me – and I have already responded:

“Mary,” Jesus said to her. And she turned and said to him, “Teacher.”

CONCLUSION

*“Lacking answers about the future,
we should prepare to receive them by living today
to the full.”*

Fr Jacques Philippe, Interior Freedom.

It takes a terrifying amount of courage to say to the world, “I don’t know where I’m going.” We want a neatly summarisable description of self to furnish the awkward silence after the question, “What does the future look like for you?” Not having it sorted yet feels like failure – particularly while we watch the people around us settle into their convents or honeymoon homes.

Impatient, we go to God with that restlessness, seeking answers. “I just wish I knew where I was going, Lord! I just want to know who you’re calling me to be.” We yearn and we plead with Him for tomorrow to arrive – for some definite confirmation of the life we’re meant to live, some certainty of what’s to come. And, **while we spend our lives waiting for life to begin, we miss out on what’s right in front of us.**

You see, no matter what state of life the Lord is drawing our hearts towards in the years to come - whether He wants us to love and serve Him and others as consecrated celibates or as spouses and parents - *right now*, God is calling.

He is calling us to holiness and to mission; to make a total gift of self to the world; to grow and learn to reflect Him ever more truly; to fall deeply and madly in love with Jesus.

And none of these things have to wait.

Wherever we find ourselves – sitting at a desk studying, or out with friends, or cleaning salt shakers – we have the opportunity to answer His call.

“Follow me,” He invites us. *Come*. Learn what it means to be in a relationship with God. Learn what it means to be satisfied with Him alone so that you can point to Him as the source of Living Water in a thirsty world. Learn to be still and know that He is God.

That is what the single life is: not being perpetually

“stuck in the friendzone”; not merely standing in a hallway waiting for God to open the next door. Single life is the radical gift of self to God and others **in the present moment.**

If single life is your reality right now, *praise God for that.*

Respond courageously. Love wholeheartedly. Praise Him in the hallway.

“For this command that I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you... it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out.”

Deuteronomy 30:12-14

want from me? What do you want *for* me? Why *me*? Why should I follow You? Why do *You* follow *me*?! Why do you love me? What's going on here?

Here's the truth: You are called. We all are. Listen. Go.

myself be seduced."

10

Everything I have gained, I give it to God. Suscipe, Domine. Having heard His call, having listened, and having responded, I am willing to invest all of myself in it; to follow Him Who follows me. Or at least, that's what I keep saying. Actually doing it, actually letting it be done to me, is, you guessed it, a struggle. That, too, I will leave for another day. As it is, I've spent several hours writing this. I'm currently sitting before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle at Sacred Heart Church. I'll help mum and dad vacuum the carpet and polish the brass soon.

May I dare you to do something? I dare you to find somewhere silent and secluded. I dare you to sit there, and pour over your whole life. Take a good two or three hours, or more if you can, and just contemplate your entire life, your entire being, everything. You may be filled with joy at some memories, or feel sadness and regret when others come to mind. Hold it all. Ponder it in your heart; (c.f. Lk 2:19). All the while, ask God "why?"

What is it for? What does it mean? What do you

As one of my new, Protestant friends would say, this was my walk. It was my journey. This particular journey, and no other, changed me more and more into me. It built me. It confused me. It saddened me and it excited me. It captivated me, exhausted me, and occasionally bored and frustrated me. It worried me. But ultimately, it gave and still gives me great peace. It's my journey.

The thing about vocation is that it's not a command. God didn't say to me "The Eleventh Commandment: Thou shalt be a priest!" It was, and always is, an invitation. This invitation was extended to me so unobtrusively, so sweetly, that for a long time I didn't even hear it, and if I did not (which, looking back, I suppose I did), I did not acknowledge it and respond. And God was okay with that. How do you feel when you invite someone to something and they ignore you? Worse still if they're someone you love, right? Personally, I feel annoyed. And if they keep ignoring me, I might stop inviting them altogether. But God loved me, and followed me through my journey. He swooned me. As Saint Augustine said, "You have seduced me, LORD, and I have let

My music helped me navigate my way through my interior life, as you may pick up in many of my songs. Along side that, I had affections for certain girls and pursued relationships, which was also explored through song, but they always (quite quickly) resolved into good, strong friendships. I believe this is what they were meant to be.

Last year in class, a girl asked me "You're becoming a priest? What if you fall in love?" to which I responded "I fall in love every day!" There's more to say about all that, but I'll leave it for another day.

There will always be struggles in life - call it the Via Crucis. But, as confidently as I can say "I'm called to be a priest," I likewise say "I'm called to be a celibate." They are two calls, really, and if priests were able to marry in the Roman Catholic Church as they are in other Churches, I believe I would still be celibate. I remember at one point several years ago saying to myself, "the next girl I date, I'm going to marry." Lo and behold, it was then that I started pursuing the Church and, evidently, she started pursuing me.

Seminary, how would I have developed in my sexuality? When I talk about the Priesthood to people, the first topic that comes up is celibacy, if not just sex, along with the 'oh-I-could-never-do-that' and 'don't-you-want-to-have-children' sentiments. I have always lived a chaste life. But I did struggle with pornography after I graduated. Then I struggled with the shame and guilt that came with it.

I was wondering today, what if I went straight to the Seminary, having never succumbed to porn? What if I never went through all of that emotional turmoil? Would I be able to empathise with and shepherd others through their addictions? Would I be aware of the incredible injustices of that industry? Perhaps. But perhaps not. Apparently porn addiction can be more powerful than heroin. No, despite what popular culture might be saying (and that culture is changing, by the way), there is nothing good about porn. There is, however, this strange mystery by which God can bring good from bad. Nothing is lost. He uses everything. Through that struggle, I finally 'met' Jesus. In my weakness, I encountered him in the mercy of the priest, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

elsewhere. In fact, there was one promising opportunity outside Catholic Education. But, ironically, I did not feel called in that direction - it was an intersection, and I chose the mistier road; the question mark, as opposed to the full stop.

There are more questions. Why, too, did I waste hours, weeks, years playing music? I never studied music (I didn't feel called - oops, there it is again). I just played. Why? I met people, listened to their songs and stories, networked furiously, collaborated, jammed, chased just about every gig I could... Was this not all vain, if I am in fact called to be priest? Isn't it just irrelevant to my vocation? I think on this, and can confidently respond: no. I would be tremendously the poorer had I not befriended my musical friends, and made music together.

Music is a communion, and it taught me about my faith. Boxing, another of my passions, is a fighting art, and it taught me about my faith. Everything is everything, and it teaches us our faith.

I feel compelled to add something else. Hold on to your hats, folks. If I went straight to the

I am forced to ask the question... did God want that? I mean, if I'm called to be a priest, why did I spend 4 years at university studying to be a teacher, and a year and a half working in a girl's Catholic high school? Why, of all things, did I teach Maths? Why did I do relief teaching across three of the four Catholic schools in Yepoon, with no indication that I was making any real professional progress? I could have applied

and said to my parents and friends "God is calling me to be a priest." Let's say I approached the Bishop, who at the time was Bishop Brian Heenan, and he approved my entry into the Seminary. Let's say I studied there under the Rector, who was then Monsignor Tony Randazzo. Nek minnit, 7 years go by, it's 2016, and I'm ordained at the age of 24 or 25. I would be a priest today, writing a very different reflection on a very different life. Actually, I probably wouldn't be writing it, because I wouldn't be writing to you, because I would not have created the facebook page I originally posted this to, because I wouldn't have any music to share (which is, in part, what the facebook page was originally for)... because I would have simply been a seminarian.

about, not only in my professional life but also in my social and recreational life - and I was falling madly and hopelessly in love with the Church. But I still had not heard God's call.

Eventually, in 2013, I met someone from Brisbane who was running a retreat for young people. When I met him again in 2014, he had changed jobs; he now worked for Vocation Brisbane. His job (which seemed like the weirdest thing in the world to me at the time) sparked something in me. Something clicked. Something changed. I heard something... or Someone. For reasons I still cannot explain, I said to the guy, "I have always thought about this [the Priesthood], but I've never done anything about it." To this day, I do not know where those words came from. I *NEVER* consciously thought about being a priest. Never. With great effort now, I can remember only one or two vague imaginings about a priest doing something priestly, but I was not imagining myself, and if I was, I did not recognise that it was me.

Now, let's go back to 2008. Let's say I went to WYD08, was 'shocked by how God moved' in and through me, had a radical conversion, came home

God moves... you will be SHOCKED at how God
moves ..."

Waking up, the thought crossed my mind, do I really regret going for a skiing trip in New Zealand instead of going to World Youth Day in Sydney? I wonder, what would have happened if I went to WYD08? Would I have experienced God's call on my life, had a powerful conversion, and gone to the Seminary straight after graduating? I don't know... But I actually think that might have happened. I was already falling in love with the Church from a distance, slowly getting to know her.

In 2009 I was nominated to be on the Pastoral Parish Council, if I remember correctly, and slowly but surely, I gained a sense of what parish was, in its many diverse ministries. I was a catechist in a local state school around that time, which slowly increased my faith in a new way. Then, upon finishing my teaching degree, I became a campus minister, which increased my faith again. Note: sharing faith increases faith; hiding faith diminishes faith (c.f. Mt 5:15; Ph 1:6). Before I knew it, imparting the faith was almost all I thought

To be sure, I enjoyed SKI-NZ, and I told them all about that - the unforgettable beauty of the country, the fun and adventure, a little high school crush... But I also encouraged them to avail of such opportunities as WYD to nourish their faith - to give God space to work in their lives. My own words are ringing in my ears, as I finished by saying to them, "... you will be shocked at how

I remember tossing up between going to World Youth Day 08 in Sydney or to SKI-NZ (a New Zealand ski-trip), and picking the latter because I didn't think I 'needed' the former. I had enough faith. That was for people who needed to find God... or weirdos. I, of course, was neither. I said to these children in my dream, "I regret that I didn't go."

I woke up at 5am one morning from a dream that I was speaking to some school children in their lunch break about God, faith and vocation. I told them about my graduating year, 2008, and how even though I was strong in my faith then, praying often and going to Mass with my family, it was not a blazing faith like it is now. It was personal, relatively private, familial, and... that's about it.

FOREWORD

This reflection was written by Ashwin Acharya, a seminarian at Holy Spirit Seminary in Brisbane, studying to be a priest for the Rockhampton Diocese. His reflection originally appeared on facebook, and he has generously shared it as part of our rumination series. While some edits have been made to his reflection, it remains mostly true to his original post.

Seminarians don't come out of nowhere, and Ashwin's story illustrates that each man takes a different journey to the seminary.

Vocation Brisbane would like to thank Ashwin for his vulnerability and for allowing us to share this story. We pray for him and all his brother seminarians.

ruminatio

A Seminarian's Story

by Ashwin Acharya



Copyright Vocation Brisbane 2016
Journeying to 2018: Year of Youth

by Ashwin Acharya

rumination

A Seminarian's Story

