

15 years ago. **To. The. Day.** I heard God speak for the very first time inviting my "Yes". It was during a homily about Vocations to the Priesthood in Sacred Heart church, down in Gold Coast. Like today, it was the start of **National Vocations Awareness Week**, and the priest asked an important question to the congregation, **through which**, God spoke to me. He said, *"Have you ever asked anyone to be a priest?"* Now, I can't even remember what I preached about last week, let alone someone's homily from 15 years ago, but I **do** remember that one single sentence because the words were seared into my heart. Through Father's question to the congregation, God **spoke**, giving me an unmistakable sense that I was being chosen and commissioned for something specific.

While National Vocations Awareness Week puts the spotlight on the four states of life to which **every** person is called to discern – marriage, the single life, religious life and the ordained priesthood – it also invites an awareness of the **calling** which **every** baptised person has received from God: to become an intentional disciple of Jesus – **and** to share testimony **of what we've received with others** so that they, too, become curious about the call to follow Him too. The Lord, in our reading today, speaks powerfully to this reality.

*"Listen, listen to me... Pay attention, come to me; **listen, and your soul will live.**"* At the time I heard God speaking, I had a spiritual thirst that I didn't understand. Like many of you, I'd grown up inheriting an understanding of faith in which if I went to Mass on Sunday, said my prayers, and tried to be a good person, then I was doing the right thing, and would be free from mortal sin – sound

familiar? For some reason at that time 15 years ago – I couldn't explain why – I was trying to **pray** and **read Scripture** every day, I was going to a **weekday Mass** as well as Sunday, I'd commenced **volunteering** in the parish, and I was going to **weekly adoration** of the Blessed Sacrament. Looking back, these fundamental elements of Catholic Christian life were my response to God's invitation in our first reading: *Come to the water and drink; listen to the sound of my voice, and your soul will live.*

In the original Hebrew, the words, "*your soul will live*" imply **complete, whole-person renewal and vital restoration**. E.g. hunger satisfied and thirst quenched, all at no cost. See, those seek to listen to the Lord's voice through daily prayer and Scripture – which is another way of describing the person who seeks to encounter Jesus - often comes to realise that they receive **infinitely more** than the effort it costs to invest in their faith beyond what they know and/or grew up with. They come to **know** that God has called them to something greater than where they are. Hearts soften, limiting beliefs loosen, and love grows because they're no longer the same person.

This National Vocations Awareness Week, I encourage you to embrace the responsibility to promote vocations to the priesthood, but also to the vocation to follow the person of Jesus more intentionally. Yours and my capacity to actively accompany other people to encounter Jesus depends upon the recognition that God is calling you to something greater than where you are right now. Your testimony of God's active and living presence in your life

carries the Power of Holy Spirit because it is not your spirit who speaks but the Spirit of the Father, who speaks in and through you.