



## My Faith Story

as spoken by Christopher Voigt  
when WYDo8 visited  
St Joseph's Primary School,  
Murgon, on 28 August 2007

*Take up your cross each day and follow me!*

This is Christ's call for all of us....

**A new challenge each day –  
a new opportunity to live life to the full.**

I am Christopher Voigt, an active member of God's church here in the parish of St Joseph's. I come from a Christian background and so, my faith has always been an important part of my life.

I was always a bright child who could do anything I put my mind to – music, sport, gardening, cooking – to name a few. But at age 15, I became ill. I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I would wake up in the morning exhausted and hardly able to get out of bed. I often slept up to 16 hours a day – and still had no energy. As time went by, I missed more and more school, and in my senior schooling, I only managed 2-3 days a week at school. What was always a breeze became more and more challenging..... I couldn't do what I had always done and I was frustrated. Life was boring. I didn't feel fulfilled.

– My faith was beginning to change, – to deepen, – to grow, – to become mine in a way I hadn't ever imagined. But I didn't know what was happening. I no longer felt at peace. – My soul was yearning for something more.

I had a dream that I was to become a Catholic priest. At that stage – not yet being Catholic, I was a little confused by this and passed it off as – OK, – whatever, – I don't understand, – God its up to you....

Well – it certainly was, – Little did I know that soon after, I would attend Mass for the first time, and really find an inner peace. There was something about the Mass that I was drawn to in a very special way...  
- The EUCHARIST!!!

God was at work and I had to learn to trust!

Amazingly, as a non-catholic, I ended up at the catholic uni in Brisbane. During the year I spent there, God called me into the catholic faith. I recall quite fondly each day walking to and from uni through Mount Maria college, as it adjoined the campus at that time. Each day I would see the statue of Our Lady high up on the side of the building, and over time I became quite fond of Mary. I believe she was praying for me, as Christ was drawing me closer to Himself and into the Church. So, on 24th May 2000,(co-incidentally, Feast day of Our Lady Help of Christians), I was confirmed. The cathedral became my parish church and I became an altar server there.



**Christopher Voigt**

My faith was alive and I was inspired to serve God. I felt that I was being called to the priesthood, and spent the following years, both in Brisbane, and when I returned to the parish here, as well as while I was in Toowoomba, discerning the vocation to which I was called.

After prayerful discernment and spiritual guidance, I found that my vocation, however, did not lie in priesthood, but in matrimony; and now I have a beautiful wife, Gillian and a gorgeous little daughter, Bridget.

We have settled onto a farm outside Proston, and have begun a business growing flowers. It has certainly been a challenge.... – starting a business and a family at the same time, while in the middle of drought and insect plagues. – I always did need a challenge.

Some days it can be very discouraging as a farmer, but I have found that prayer is an immense help in keeping on top of things. I have found that being able to just talk to God like a friend, in the middle of everything and letting Him take the load off my back is really encouraging.

As part of my faith community here in Murgon, I have been involved with a parish youth group, I have served in music ministry and I continue as an altar server, now helping guide the children of our parish in this role as well.



As a young person, life is a challenge. It is not easy to be Christian today, in a society that discourages us from worshipping God. But we need to be open to God's calling on our life.

Too often as young people, we feel isolated in our faith, as though we are the only ones. We are often torn between standing up for what is right and standing out, or keeping quite and going un-noticed. Peer pressure is a very real thing for young people, and when there seems to be no-one on our side, it is easy to give in and go with the flow. We have so much to live up to, that often it can become overwhelming. We often feel afraid to stand up and proclaim the gospel to the world, for fear that we will stand alone. . . . . But I encourage each one of you – YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

I was in Brisbane just over a week ago for the Archdiocesan Youth Day, when the World Youth Day Cross was there, and I can assure you, the faith is alive in the hearts of young people. The sheer energy and joy of those young people was amazing. We were no longer the minority, but as a group of hundreds of young people gathered together, all believing in the same faith, we felt the power of God. As part of that group, I really felt inspired to share my faith. – Even when I feel alone. To look at the person beside me where ever I go, as a child of God – To see Christ in them. – To take up my cross. – Forget my worries and concerns and follow Christ – to love those around me and share the Good News of Salvation. – To not only believe it in my heart, but to live it in my life.

A new challenge each day. – A new opportunity to show God's love in my everyday life.

World Youth Day – Sydney 2008 – is going to be an awesome week of faith filled activities. Hundreds of thousands of young people from all across the globe will join together as one with the pope to celebrate our faith in Christ. – To worship God in the Eucharist. – To stand as one people proclaiming to the world God's love for all humanity, and the salvation that we have offered to us through Christ's life, death and resurrection.

I hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon all of us, and especially the young people when we gather in Sydney next year, and really awaken in us, a passion for our faith that will transform the world.

I personally hope that World Youth Day will deepen my faith. I hope that it will ignite the flame of faith that I already have, that Christ will humble me and that I will return from it, open and willing to do whatever Christ requires from me.

I would encourage anyone who wants to, to join with the rest of the world's youth and go to World Youth Day next year. If you have an open heart, **IT WILL CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH, AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE.**

Pray!!! Pray for the youth. – Pray that God's Spirit will enliven our faith. – Pray that God will open all our hearts to the vocation that He has for each of us. – Be that, Priesthood, Religious life, Marriage or Single.

As we stand here before this cross. Remember, it is a symbol of our faith. Inscribed upon it are these words from the late Pope John Paul II – “My dear young people, I entrust to you the cross of Christ! Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity.”

Take some time today to go to the cross. Let Christ speak to your heart.

Look to Mary as an example of how to follow Christ, even when we don't understand.

Let us open our hearts to God.

Together let us take up our cross and follow Christ – wherever it may lead.

