

My Vocation Story – Father Andrew Kim

I think I have an unofficial world record. I have been a seminarian for twenty years. I am the last seminarian among the sixty of my class mates. My friends made a joke, calling me a permanent seminarian, like a permanent deacon.

Nearly twenty years ago, I joined the seminary in Korea when I finished secondary school. I was eighteen when I joined the Redemptorists. It was nearly time to make my final vows. But I wasn't sure that it was God's call for me. I wanted to experience more about world and different societies and people. So I decided to leave the seminary.



Maybe that time I didn't listen to God's voice clearly. I wasn't sure what God wants from me and where I could go to follow his voice.

When I left the seminary, people started to talk about me rather than bless me or encourage me. They tried to figure out why I left the seminary, what kind of problem caused me to leave the seminary. There was a lot of gossip about me. Some of my friends treated me as a betrayer or failure.

I was hurt and suddenly stopped all relationships with people. I hated people. I blamed the church. I was very stressed and depressed. My parents and family members were worried about me.

One day I visited one of my spiritual directors and asked his advice. He knew that I was confused about my vocation. He didn't push me to go back to the seminary, instead advising me to listen to God's voice. But I didn't know how to listen and determine what was God's voice from among all the others voices we hear. I thought that God is always keeping quiet and never saying anything. I was more confused than ever.

During my gap years I travelled to other countries. I experienced different jobs and tried to open my mind, tried to listen to what God wants from me. During this time, I think I met Jesus on the street and in work places. I saw the face of Jesus on people and experienced his life in their lives. People shared their lives, their stories and problems with me. They treated me as their brother and friend. I was very happy and I realised that Jesus wants me to serve him through serving the people of God. I knew that he was calling me all the time. I decided to join the seminary again.

But there was a problem. I was only thirty eight years old but I was too old to rejoin the seminary in Korea. Then, one of my priest friends suggested that I go to New Zealand and join a seminary there. I didn't hesitate to say yes. I knew clearly that it is God's calling to come to New Zealand. I am very happy to be here and happy to follow God's calling.

All of us are on the journey towards God. Sometimes we lose the way and we do not know where we are supposed to go. But if we just stop what we are doing and listen carefully with our heart, we can hear Jesus whisper to us deep in our heart. And this whisper will lead us in the right direction. We just need to trust him and remember his words, "Come follow me."

Father Andrew Kim was ordained on 9th November 2012 and is currently serving as Assistant Priest at Ss Peter & Paul Parish, Lower Hutt, together with Father Bruce England (Parish Priest).