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Hindu to Atheist to Agnostic to Anglican to Catholic to priest

By Guest contributor July 6, 2017  0



Br Robert Krishna (foreground), pictured with his Dominican confreres, will be ordained a priest on 15 July by the Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP, at St Benedict's Church in Broadway. Source: Supplied

A remarkable journey will reach a new stage on 15 July when Br Robert Krishna OP will be ordained a priest by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP at St Benedict's, Broadway.

Br Robert's journey began in Bangalore, India. Originally a Hindu, he became an atheist at the age of 10, and in his late teens considered himself an agnostic.

When he was almost 18 he arrived in Australia and began a science degree at the University of Sydney, hoping to major in physics.

In 2001, about three years into his degree, he decided that mathematics was not his forte. At this time, he also began to suffer from depression.

The philosophical side to this depression was a worry about whether his own life, and judgements, human life and human judgements, and the world in general had any transcendent value at all, or if they were mere “sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

It seemed to him that the only alternative was that the world and human beings had value because they were valued by someone not transient – God.

And the only reasonable historical claimant to divine status was Jesus Christ. He was not mythological but really existed. So he began attending an Anglican Church and was baptised in September 2002.

He now realised that Christ is not merely a figure of history but a person to whom we can reach out.

Around this time, Br Robert encountered some Catholics at Sydney University.

One thing which impressed him was the fact that there were many young Catholics who were happy in living what the Church teaches.

“I was converted through their example and conversations, rather than through their arguments” he said.

Of the latter, one which sticks out was the exasperated comment of the chaplaincy convenor at the time, Robert Haddad: “You’re never going to get all the answers to all your

objections, and at some stage, you need to make a leap of faith.”

It was a throwaway line, but it contains a truth which bothered Br Robert until it ended up convincing him. He was received into the Church in 2003 and confirmed a year later by then-Bishop Anthony Fisher OP, who had just been ordained a Bishop. Robert Haddad was his confirmation sponsor.

Br Robert met the Dominicans through the Sydney University chaplaincy and through a friend who had decided that he would make a good Dominican before he had even become Catholic.

He was introduced to several Dominican priests who gave him a model of prayer and also of devotion to study and preaching.

Around this time, he acquired a strong devotion to St Augustine whose own conversion story and teachings on the grace of the Incarnation strongly attracted the fledgling young Catholic.

He was drawn to Augustine’s image of every Christian as called to witness to the mercy and the condescension of God which he himself receives.

Over the years, he was also drawn to the priesthood by the witness of joy shown by the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia.

After a long period of discernment and delay, he eventually applied and was accepted into the Dominican Order in 2010.

He took the name ‘Robert’ after the last Australian Dominican who died before his entry into the Order, Fr Robert Mutlow, whom he had known as an impressive witness to the generosity of God.

“It is the strange choice of God to call me through and for his people, which draws me to religious life and to Holy Orders” he says in recounting his story.

“Conscious of the difference that God has made to my own life, I feel called to bring God closer to people, particularly as he reveals himself in the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the history and the life of the Church.”

Having received confirmation from Bishop Anthony Fisher when he was Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Br Robert was ordained to the diaconate by Archbishop Anthony last year during the jubilee celebration for the 800th year since the birth of the Dominican Order in 1216.

On 15 July at St Benedict’s Broadway, Br Robert will become Fr Robert Krishna OP, the culmination of many years of searching for that truth, goodness, and beauty which radiates from the face of Jesus Christ.

Written by Fr Thomas Azzi OP.

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