

Chris Van Ingen's Personal Spiritual Journey

Chris Van Ingen

My name is Chris van Ingen. I am twenty-three years old and I have cerebral palsy. I have never let my disability stop me from achieving my goals.

I have always been lucky in my life, even though people have trouble believing me when I say this. *"You're in a wheelchair. How is that lucky?"* The answer is I have the best family in the world.

I have believed in God for my entire life. I prayed to him every time I needed to get through my pain but the truth is at times I was sceptical as to whether or not it worked.

My friendship with a wonderful woman called Jodi brought me to St Francis Xavier Church where I heard the wonderful Fr John Healy. His sermons showed me the same view of God that I have had all my life.

So after some thought I did the R.C.I.A program and from day one I was accepted by the entire parish.

My entire life I have had people helping me do everything and I have struggled to find ways that I can contribute to the community. Fr John and a whole church community have enabled me to do just that.

Using my professional writing skills I have become a regular contributor to the parish newsletter.

I also nominated myself to be a member of the parish council but I had no expectation of being elected because I had only been part of the parish for a short time. To my surprise everyone showed tremendous faith in me.

I have received many miracles in my life but it wasn't until my friendship with Jodi turned into love that my biggest prayers were answered. I secretly prayed she would fall in love with me and the miracle happened.

I genuinely believe God chose Jodi and me for each other. She is my miracle.

After a twelve month engagement Fr John Healy married us at St Anthony's Church Lara on the 20th of May 2006.

The service took place at 3 o'clock in the afternoon with not a cloud in the sky.



Our family and friends, indeed the entire congregation, have noted how happy we have made each other.

There are many people who are surprised when Jodi and I say we are married because they don't expect a person with a disability to have a meaningful relationship.

My relationship with Jodi is proof that love has no barriers and if God wants two souls to be together it will happen.

I felt compelled to share my experience at the spirituality and disability forum as part of the '*having a say*' conference so that other people might be able to have their own personal spiritual journey.

I have accomplished everything I have ever dreamed and prayed for. I am an actor, writer and I run my own motivational speaking business but the biggest miracle in my life is Jodi.

What would I like people to learn from my story? It is simple. My life shows that anything is possible if you believe. The facts are I do have a disability but to God I am just Chris.

Update:

Since this story was written in 2006, Chris has continued to work as a motivational speaker. He addressed the 2006 'Having a Say' Conference as well as the Lighthouse, a Christian nursing association, about his 'We Have a Story' testimony. He has been invited to speak again at the 2008 'Having Say' conference.

Chris has recently self-published a book of his own auto-biographical poetry, Reflections of a Disability, which he hopes will generate enough interest to be picked up by a publisher. The book is available from Griffiths Bookstore, Ryrie Street, Geelong or directly from Chris by calling 0439 750 919.

And Chris still describes his wife Jodi as the greatest miracle that has ever happened to him.