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The Phone Call

Before I was on *The X Factor Australia*, before I performed for a pope, before I signed a record deal, and before I picked up a guitar and sang in front of a crowd for the first time, I was an alienated, messed-up teenager.

Hi, my name is Rob. My mother calls me "Robert" and my parishioners call me "Fr. Rob." I find it surreal being called "Father," especially by people who are old enough to be my grandparents. My own late grandfather used to call me "Father" even though I asked him many times just to call me by my name. In my own mind, I am simply "Rob," but my proper title is "Fr. Rob" as I was ordained a Catholic priest on the fifth of November, 2010.

I never imagined myself serving God and the Church as a priest, and never did I think I would be carrying out my ministry so far away from home! I work in a place called Bendigo, a country town of 100,000 people in the state of Victoria, Australia, 15,570 kilometres from Malta, which is where I grew up.

Even though I fly all over the world now, performing in front of hundreds of thousands of people every year, in my heart and soul, there's a part of me that's still the introverted, terrified person I was as a teenager.

By the time I was sixteen, I'd created my own little circle of hell. I was trapped. Anyone who's been there knows how hard it is. I was literally hiding in my room from dangerous people who I thought were friends. I couldn't escape my