

# This is my Vocation Story



Tucker Brown

**In the Beginning** Hi, my name is Tucker Brown, I am from Spraggs, PA, a small town south of Pittsburgh. I am one of two children and grew up in a Catholic family. My father was Catholic and my mother Lutheran, but my mom is the one responsible for my being raised Catholic! Since the Lutheran church was far away she insisted we go to the closer St. Ann's Parish as long as we would go every Sunday.

**My Faith** From when I was young I enjoyed the Mass and serving the poor with my dad through the Knights of Columbus. I remember talking to my dad when I was little about what I might do when I grew up. I really liked serving food at the soup kitchen, raising money through "Fish Fries," and putting money in the basket at Mass to help the poor. I figured, "Maybe I could give money to the poor as a grown up?" Considering I didn't have any money and I liked building things I decided on engineering. There were times when I would think about being a priest, but somehow my dad and I didn't make the connection during that career planning conversation.

Most who knew me growing up would probably say I was a faith-filled boy. Faith instilled in me a deep desire to serve others which directed my life, leading me to pursue a career in medicine. But my path to owning my faith and developing a more intimate relationship with God was not straight. In my senior year of high school, I fell away from the faith, thinking it was due to a conflict between faith and reason. However, all praise be to God, because one sunny day I was overwhelmed by beauty and gratitude for the gift of life and in a short time I began to thank the Giver. Over

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-Tucker Brown*

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the next two years, I tiptoed closer to God and the Church with the help of many along the way. But my faith really grew with the gift of a friend and the gift of my dad. My friend's gift was *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. Lewis' logical and articulate writing helped me overcome a certain embarrassment that came with the notion that faith was only for unreasonable people and not for an intelligent and sophisticated pre-medicine major such as myself. My dad's gift was his faith. He had just experienced a great deepening after accepting his pastor's invitation to attend Mass every day during Lent. When

I came home on summer break, I knew something was up when the TV was tuned to a new channel called EWTN. This was actually a great gift and many of my questions were answered through it. Far greater though, Dad and I would go to daily Mass together, pray the rosary, and have deep talks about all kinds of things. That summer I grew much closer to my dad and much closer to God.

Over the next few years I continued to grow in faith through scripture, prayer, and service in the Church. There were even times during Mass when I would get the feeling that God was calling me to the priesthood. Initially I would dismiss these thoughts, afraid of what they might bring. Nevertheless, God kept working with me. I was accepted into medical school in Philadelphia intent on pursuing Family Medicine. Before the end of my first year, I found my way into the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) and to the Catholic Center for Young Adults (CCYA) - a community intent on inviting fellow young adults into deeper relationship with God. Both my friends in the CMA and the CCYA helped

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**Community:** Archdiocese of Philadelphia  
**Degree:** Pre-Medicine  
**Alma Mater:** Penn State University  
**Occupation:** Medical Student

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# Called to serve The Summer Class of 2018



me continue to grow in faith and discern my path.

***My Vocation*** I had been talking about the priesthood with a good friend for some time, but really I had been tiptoeing - much like I had as I returned to the Church. I finally realized I needed to intentionally discern my desire to be a priest after chatting around the dining room table with my housemates. One of them told us about the addition of another year of formation at the Seminary. He talked about reading the whole Catechism and the whole Bible, living in homeless shelters, and going on Ignatian retreats. All I could think was, "Wow, that is really

great! I want that!" My desire to dedicate time to grow closer to God made me consider more seriously that desire for the priesthood which had been simmering since childhood. Through prayer, counsel, and various events in my life I have grown more confident that God is calling me. And now I do not fear the call, but receive it joyfully and expectantly!

***Called to Serve*** When the desire to become a priest would spring up over the years, it was always a desire to be a parish priest. Perhaps initially it was because that's all I knew. But over time it became clear that what drew me to the diocesan priesthood was largely the role of the parish priest as shepherd. The same desire drew me to pursue becoming a family physician: they are privileged to care for patients over many years, get to know them well, and provide healing on a very personal level. While this is a great honor, I have become increasingly aware of people's spiritual needs; their need for God and the gifts He gives through His Church. The Church overflows with gifts that heal, lift up, and give enduring purpose, hope, and joy. I desire to help people understand and receive the great gifts God offers, and to walk with them as they journey through life.

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Throughout my own journey, my father has been a great support and guide for me, and I hope and believe he is supporting me now through his intercession. My sister and I lost our dad recently to a heart attack. While we will be mourning his loss for years to come, we couldn't help but see the many gifts God gave us. Rather than shaking my faith, this challenge has helped me grow in gratitude; for the time with my dad, for my family and friends, and for the great gifts of faith, forgiveness, and eternal life. I hope to share this same gift of faith with others through the ministry of the priesthood. I am very thankful to

be conditionally accepted into St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. But in addition to many formative experiences, I've accumulated significant student loan debt during medical school. This debt is what stands between me and the great doors of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.

***Prayer & Invitation*** Please join me as I pray for vocations: that all our hearts would be open to receive God's call for our lives and that we'd be filled with the courage to follow it. Please pray in particular for me, my fellow aspirants, and The Labouré Society. Contact me if you would like to learn more about my story at [tucker@laboureaspirant.org](mailto:tucker@laboureaspirant.org).

-Tucker Brown

## Why I'm Writing

*I am not only an aspirant to religious life; I am also a fundraiser for a class of aspirants pursuing the priesthood or religious life.* A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 out of 2 aspirants have student loans debt which prevents them from entering their seminaries and religious communities. It is the only thing that prevents many – including me – from entering formation to become a priest, sister or brother.

*I am seeking to raise the average aspirant student loan amount of \$60,000 before December 31st for The Labouré Society, a Catholic non-profit that helps aspirants like me.* Every aspirant has been accepted by their diocese or community and is required to work and liquidate their assets as to be able to make their own maximum loan payments. Through Labouré, my fellow aspirants and I work together as a class raising donations which will be divided amongst the class and ultimately applied to our remaining student loans. We are blessed to have this opportunity to share our love for God, our vocation stories, and to invite hundreds of individuals to support vocations like ours by financially investing in our future and the future of the church.

*At the beginning of our class, we met and participated in an intensive 3-day training on the ethics, practice, and spirituality of fundraising.* We are learning practical skills that will help us now and in our future vocations. We have also developed as a team to learn from and support each other. You can see our picture below.

*At the end of our class, Labouré will issue awards to each aspirant based on individual effort and the total funds raised.* They will administer the awards while we are in formation over a three year period (you can learn more about the program on the back of this letter). If we leave formation for any reason, we will resume our own payments.

*Will you join our vocational journeys?* Please partner with us and be part of our vocation team so we can answer God's call together!

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# LABOURÉ

*Summer 2018 Class of Aspirants to the Priesthood and Religious Life*



*Our vocations story videos are online at: [www.RescueVocations.org](http://www.RescueVocations.org)*

# About The Labouré Society

## Why is our Rescue Mission needed?

- There are an estimated 10,000 individuals discerning a priestly or religious vocation in the US annually
  - 42% are blocked from pursuing this call due to education loans\*
  - The average vocational 'aspirant' in Labouré owes \$60,000 in education loans
  - Most religious communities cannot assume this debt
  - Most dioceses will allow some debt but have a limited threshold for acceptance
- \* (NRVC, Vision Study, 2010)

## How does our Rescue Mission work?

### *Our Aspirants:*

- Discern a vocation and are accepted into a diocese or religious institute\*
  - Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
  - Apply to Labouré and meet intake requirements
  - Are trained in Catholic based fundraising and provided practical tools, personal mentoring, & accountability
  - Share their vocation stories with hundreds of donors thereby building a culture of vocations and evangelization
  - Raise funds for Labouré collectively as a class of multiple aspirants
  - Receive monetary awards from the funds raised by the class
  - Have minimum monthly award payments made to their student loan agencies over 36 months of active formation.
  - Receive final award payout after 3 years and enter freely into a lifetime of service as a priest, sister, or brother
- \*(The Institute must be listed in the Official Catholic Directory)

### *The Labouré Society*

- Works with aspirants to utilize all personal means to mitigate their loan amount (loan consolidation, asset review, financial counseling, employment, etc.) prior to acceptance into the program
- Trains each aspirant in Catholic based philanthropy
- Forms a semi-annual 'class' of aspirants that raises funds collectively for all members of the class
- Mentors each aspirant to build a unified team; each individual works toward the collective goal
- Provides ongoing accountability to ensure proper preparation & completion of personal fundraising plans
- Equips each aspirant with an online fundraising platform for donation processing, reporting, marketing and communications, assessment of goals, and class interaction
- Facilitates ongoing aspirant/donor communication and updates after aspirant enters formation
- Manages aspirant award payments while they are in formation
- Completes award payout after three years active formation

## What has the Labouré Rescue Mission accomplished?

- Operating since 2003
- Listed in the Official Catholic Directory
- 280+ assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life
- A network of thousands of praying bishops, priests, religious, families, and singles
- Over \$6 million awarded to aspirants for loan mitigation
- Labouré program support from bishops, superiors, and vocation directors nationwide

**LABOURÉ**  
HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS

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The Labouré Society is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and is listed in the Official Catholic Directory. All donations are tax deductible. Gifts solicited by our aspirants belong to Labouré and are dispersed upon board approved guidelines to ensure full compliance with IRS rulings. Aspirants who leave Labouré are not required to repay any funds disbursed but are strongly encouraged to support Labouré however possible. Funds granted but not dispersed to a former aspirant are made available to other Labouré needs.