

This is my Vocation Story



ALFONSO MENDEZ

How it Began My name is Alfonso Mendez and I am twenty-three years old. I am the eldest of three boys and had the very special gift of being raised in a Catholic home by both my maternal grandparents and my parents.

My Faith Growing up we went to Mass every Sunday and learned to love and respect the Church and our priests. My grandparents taught me my Catholic faith and traditions both of which continue to shape and inspire me to practice our Catholic faith daily. At an early age, a prayer life was instilled in me to pray daily in the morning, before every meal, and in the evening before going to bed. My grandmother has always prayed the Rosary and I remember sitting next to her and reciting the prayers with her. I have never doubted my faith, but like many have had it gradually deepen over time.

My Vocation My calling to the priesthood started when I was about fifteen years old in confirmation class with my friends. I started to ask questions about my faith which drew me deeper and inspired the teachers to invite me to attend a Bible study with adults. That is when things really took off. By the end of the confirmation classes, I was working and studying with the pastor one-on-one.

He was the one who planted the seed of my vocation by suggesting I pray and consider a vocation to the priesthood. From then on I was encouraged to be involved with my local church through various ministries. Additionally, God put many priests in my path. They are priests I call friends and who have helped me discern priesthood as my vocation.

*"I had an encounter with
God who is alive and
answers our prayers."
—Alfonso Mendez*

This call grew deeper in my heart through seeing God's merciful hand in His care for others. In November of 2010 my mom was extremely ill and the doctors assigned to her case, had done all they could for her. She required a full liver transplant without which her survival rate was less than ten percent. With a transplant waiting list of hundreds, it seemed the only remaining possibility was for God to perform a miracle. I prayed then like any son would and encountered God in a

deep and special way as I asked Him to save my mom.

I kissed my mom good night and left the hospital. Shortly after arriving home, my dad and I received a call from the doctors. They asked us to return to hospital immediately so we could sign the consent forms for the liver which was an exact match for only her. The next day my mom went into surgery. By God's divine providence she made it through alive. After this incident my faith and love for God grew tremendously. I had an encounter with God who is alive and answers our prayers.

Called to serve The Winter Class of 2017



I know that sometimes in His love the answer may be “No,” but I now know above all else that He is listening and He cares.

Called to Serve The call to priesthood continues to grow in my heart, and with certainty, I know God will put me where He wants me. As the years have passed, I have found myself working in management for the healthcare industry and feel all of the lessons I’ve learned will be called upon, God willingly, as a future priest for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, working with all of God’s children. He continues

to draw me to care for those who are mentally and physically ill and to work with at-risk youth while sharing the blessings and gifts He has given me.

Since my own confirmation class, I have served in various ministries but the most challenging and rewarding are the years I served as a catechist leading a group of children to their first Holy Communion and first Reconciliation. It is both humbling and a great privilege to work with the youth in our community, to serve as a role model, and share with these kids a love of our faith.

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I have actively discerned my vocation to the priesthood over the past three years now with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. I completed my undergraduate studies in the spring of 2016 from Cal State Los Angeles. Though teaching me much that will be used in my vocation, this education has created an obstacle of student loan debt which is now holding me back from starting the formation process and entering the seminary.

Prayer & Invitation I invite and encourage you to pray for more vocations to the priesthood. We are facing an extreme shortage of priests and religious here in the United States. We need to encourage our youth and ask every family to pray for and encourage their sons and daughters to hear God’s call. The invitation is to all, but only a few respond to it. Please join me in my response as I ask for your financial support and continued prayers for my vocation and of those of my fellow Labouré aspirants. I trust in God that He will provide the means for us to continue on this journey and thank you in advance for your help to get us there. To learn more, contact me at: alfonso@laboureaspirant.org.

–Alfonso Mendez

Why I'm writing

I am not only an aspirant to religious life; I am also a fundraiser for these vocations. A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 out of 2 aspirants have student loans and thus most communities and dioceses cannot accept them. 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 student loan amount of \$60,000 before June 30 for a Catholic non-profit that helps aspirants like me — The Labouré Society. Through Labouré, my fellow aspirants and I work together as a class raising donations from \$10 – \$10,000 to deliver each of us into formation. 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 sharing our stories, remembering us in prayer, and financially investing in our future.

At the end of our class, Labouré will issue awards based on individual effort and the funds available to Labouré. 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. Plus, every aspirant in Labouré has been accepted by their diocese or community and is required to work and liquidate their assets as able to make their own maximum loan payments.

At the beginning of our class, we met and participated in an intensive 3-day training on the ethics 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.

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!

LABOURÉ

Winter 2017 Class of Aspirants to the Priesthood and Religious Life



▶ Our vocations story videos are online at: www.LaboureSociety.org

About The Labouré Society

Why are we 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)

What have we accomplished?

- Operating since 2003
- Listed in the Official Catholic Directory
- Over 250 assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life
- A network of thousands of praying bishops, priests, religious, families, and singles
- Over \$5 million awarded to aspirants for loan mitigation
- Labouré program support from bishops, superiors, and vocation directors nationwide

How do we do it?

Our Aspirants:

- Discern a vocation & are accepted into a diocese or religious institute*
 - Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
 - Apply to Labouré & meet intake requirements
 - Are trained in ethical fundraising – empowered with practical tools, personal mentoring, & accountability
 - Share their vocation stories and participate in building a culture of vocations and evangelization
 - Raise funds for Labouré to benefit many vocations
 - Are awarded monthly payments towards their education loans
 - Receive final award payout after 3 years & 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 the loan amount (loan consolidation, asset review, financial counseling, employment, etc.) prior to acceptance into the program
- Trains each aspirant in biblically based philanthropy
- Forms a semi-annual 'class' of aspirants
- 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

LABOURÉ
BRIDGE TO MIRACLES

1365 CORPORATE CENTER CURVE • SUITE 104 • EAGAN, MN 55121 • LABOURESOCIETY.ORG • 651-452-1160



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 reallocated toward current or future aspirants.