

This is my Vocation Story



ANNE GOEDTKE

How it Began Looking back it is easy and incredible to see how the Lord's hand has graciously guided my path. I grew up the second oldest of eight children in a devoutly Catholic family on a farm in southwestern Minnesota. Our life centered around our faith, spending time together, and playing music. Through attending daily mass, serving the church, and praying together as a family, God laid a sturdy foundation upon which my faith could grow.

Home: Minnesota
Community: Franciscan Sisters of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother
Degree: Music Therapy
Alma Mater: University of Minnesota
Occupation: Music Therapist

My Faith Through summer camps with religious sisters, retreats, and encountering men and women who joyfully witnessed their personal relationship with God, my faith began to take shape. Each time I attended something of this nature, I left desiring more, I was convinced that more existed, and was intent on persisting in prayer until I had experienced it myself. My spiritual enthusiasm waxed and waned throughout high school and freshman year of college. I continued to go through the motions of instilled Catholic habits, but something seemed to hold me back from experiencing the deep personal relationship with the Lord that so many people I looked up to seemed to enjoy.

During my sophomore year of college, the Lord showed me that I, myself, was the only thing holding me back from a full relationship with Him. In this moment I could see how, even though the Lord continued to provide for my needs, a core part of me had never trusted God to take care of me completely. I

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mistakenly believed the only person I could rely on was myself, and in doing so successfully built a wall separating God from me. As I began allowing the Lord to break down that wall, I experienced a newfound closeness to Him I never knew existed. As a result the scriptures began to come alive, I desired to spend more time in adoration, and I started to attend daily mass.

My Vocation Eventually the increased time I spent with God led to a Come and See with an order of sisters, where I vividly recall a conversation with God. I said, "Lord, let's get this straight. I don't want to be a nun; I want to be married and a mother. That is the plan, okay? I'm just attending this discernment retreat to prove that this isn't the life for me. Got it?" In the first hours of the retreat we were told that we would meet with one of the sisters to share our vocational discernment. I panicked inside. What would I tell her? That I was not interested in being a nun? I was to be the first one to have a meeting the next morning. Perfect. "Lord, I'm going to the chapel and you better tell me what to talk to her about," I prayed as I dashed to get a few moments to collect my thoughts before meeting with sister. Sitting there in the back of the chapel, I felt the Lord say three times, "Will you be my bride?"

Called to serve The Winter Class of 2017



I was utterly shocked at the awe, joy and peace that welled up inside me in response to this proposal, "Lord, if this is really what you desire, yes!"

Something I thought was impossible had just taken place: the Lord desired me as his spouse and I was joyful at the thought of it! Needless to say, I now had something to talk with sister about. Following that retreat I set a timeline of one year for discernment. I found a spiritual director and began spending more time with religious sisters.

The year of discernment was a complete gift from the Lord where He revealed not only who He is, but also who I am and how the deepest desires of my heart would truly be fulfilled in religious life. He showed me what I would be giving up by entering a convent, especially: my possessions, family life events, the freedom to travel, choosing how I spend my time, and even bearing and parenting my own children. There were moments of mourning for these things yet, at the same time, He revealed to me how my desires could not be fulfilled by the physical or tangible but instead only by the spiritual and heavenly. Instead of having my own children, I would be the spiritual mother to all, instead of doing my own will I would be free to do His, instead of owning my own possessions, he would provide me with all I would ever need. Even the thought of that was enough to bring me to tears because I could feel the deepest parts of myself longing for the eternal. I experienced Psalm 63: "O God, you are my God—it is you I seek! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts."

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Called to Serve After six months of discernment, my focus shifted from *if* I were called to *where* I am called to serve. Through my spiritual director, I encountered the Franciscan Sisters, TOR of Penance, of the Sorrowful Mother whose mission is to make known the merciful love of God. Their charisms are: crucified love, mercy, poverty, and contemplation. During my visits with the sisters, I saw these charisms in action through their ministry of performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. As I worked and prayed alongside them I saw our Lord showing myself and felt Him saying, "Stay with me here" and "Come, I have prepared a place for you." Almost one year to the date of the retreat where the Lord had initially proposed, I asked the Franciscan Sisters, TOR for an application. I applied and was accepted with the stipulation of being debt-free.

Prayer & Invitation The Lord has provided for all of my needs so completely throughout my entire life that I have all confidence this final obstacle of my student loans are in His hands as well. It is with a deep joy and hope, with your help, I may enter the community of the Franciscan Sisters in August of 2017. As I work to do all I can to pay off my student loans, I invite you to ask the Lord how He is calling you to respond to the financial needs of myself and my fellow Labouré Society aspirants. I also ask you for your prayers as we prepare for our future vocations. Do not hesitate to contact me at: anne@laboureaspirant.org.

—Anne Goedtke

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

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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 reallocated toward current or future aspirants.