

This is my Vocation Story



ASHLEY PARMER

How it Began Hi, my name is Ashley Parmer. I am one of five children and have lived in Oklahoma since I was twelve. When I was growing up, we struggled with many difficult family and financial issues. We didn't pray together as a family or did much of the "typical" family stuff.

Home:	Oklahoma
Community:	Abby of St. Walburga
Degree:	Theology
Alma Mater:	St. Gregory's University
Occupation:	Assistant Manager

My Faith I had always believed God existed but that was as far as my faith went. A close friend convinced me through a seemingly rational argument that God couldn't possibly exist and I believed him. It was God Himself who came to me years later and convinced me through metaphysical reasoning that He did exist. I remember vividly my conversion to follow Jesus that evening. I began going through RCIA two weeks later and was in the process for two years before becoming Catholic. My faith in God and our relationship had a major positive impact on other unhealthy relationships.

My Vocation I was attending a state college with the intention of supporting myself. One day I drove to the pastoral center because I knew the chapel was open and I knelt down to pray. At the time I still didn't really know how to pray, so in my anxiety I began rambling the 'Our Father' prayer but was stopped by a quiet whisper. It was God who said to me "speak from your heart." This is the moment I began to learn how to pray. Everything in my head and on my heart flowed forth. Inspired by that experience, I enrolled in a Catholic University. God certainly knew what He was doing because at the university was everything I needed to grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally. Fortified by this growth I began to discern a vocation into monastic life.

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—Ashley Parmer

Called to Serve The moment I realized I need to pursue a religious vocation whole heartedly was when I attended the final profession of a brother into monastic life. I felt such consolations from the Mass and every reading spoke to me intimately as if it were Jesus Himself who came down from heaven just to speak to me. During the Holy Mass, the reading regarding the call of Samuel sparked a memory from my childhood.

When I was eight I remember being in my bedroom alone and drawing. I thought I heard my dad call me so I ran downstairs and outside where he was working in the garden. I asked him, "Dad did you call me?" He replied by saying he had not called me, so I went back to my bedroom to draw. Again I heard a voice call me and thought it was my dad. So I ran down the stairs again and outside to ask if he had called me.

Called to serve The Winter Class of 2017



Again he said, "I didn't call you, but if you do hear your my name being called again to say, 'Here I am Lord, your servant is listening.

I walked up the stairs back to my room and waited for my name to be called again. Little did I know that God was going to call my name a third time but in a new way and at a different time. He called my name at Mass. When I was attending the final profession of the brother, I knew at that moment God was calling my name again. I

believe He was calling me to be a light in the world, a world which has become indifferent and dark. He was calling me to serve His people and His Church.

How will I live my vocation? If it pleases God, I will serve Him as a Benedictine nun. The Holy Spirit has led me to discern a contemplative community in Virginia Dale, Colorado. They live a hidden life but not totally cloistered. My desire is to mature fully in prayer and to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ's love. Pope Francis said that we should help the poor, yet I cannot find a single person who isn't poor in this world needing help. All of us live in various forms of poverty. This includes Catholic priests. I have a strong desire to help our priests. The

*"I also desire to build up the Church and bring hope to the hearts of God's people."
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Benedictine spirituality that I have isn't satisfied with just praying for priests. I want to help in concrete ways too. Ora et Labora (Pray and Work). I also desire to build up the Church and bring hope to the hearts of God's people. Jesus has placed all these desires in my heart and with His creative love, I pray He will satisfy them through the monastic community into which I have been accepted. The only obstacle blocking my journey to religious life in the Benedictine monastery is my student loan debt.

Prayer & Invitation I trust that God will help me pay off my student loans. But also as one part of the body suffers so too does the whole body suffer. I invite the members of the body of Christ to help me in this journey to religious life as a joyful sister ready to follow Christ unconditionally and to serve in any manner He wills. Please pray for priests, for my monastic vocation, and for all of my Labouré classmates working to pay off their student loan debt. If you are interested in learning more about our Labouré class, please email me at ashleyp@laboureaspirant.org

-Ashley Parmer

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.