

This is my Vocation Story



DAVID NEIRA

How it Began Hello, name is David Neira. I'm 27 years old and the youngest of four children. I grew up in a Catholic family which immigrated from Colombia. Our Catholic faith and devotional life was always very important to us. Prayer and reverence was something taught from an early age and laid the foundation for my faith life.

My Faith Growing up I remember my faith being nurtured with frequent Mass attendance, deep love for the Blessed Mother, the Christ Child, and attending Catholic school. My faith began to come alive when I was eight years old. I experienced personally how much our Lord and Blessed Mother cared for me. After this experience I began to live my faith in a more personal way. In middle school and high school, I started attending daily Mass, prayed every day, and started to evangelize my peers. The fruit of this really took off when I was accepted to serve one year with NET Ministries. During this period I realized I wanted to live a life dedicated to God and the Church. However, while I felt the Lord was calling me to this, it seemed He was calling me to something other than priesthood. In order to serve the Church in a worthy manner, I would have to be trained in our Catholic faith from an institution with the proper credentials. So I went on to study Theology at Ave Maria University.

"...I realized I wanted to live a life dedicated to God and the Church."

—David Neira

My Vocation While serving as a NET missionary, I first heard the Lord call me to discern a lay consecrated vocation. During a time of personal prayer, I clearly and deeply felt the Lord say within my heart, "I desire to be the universal brother." I was stunned and wrote down these mysterious words. "Universal brother?" I had no idea what that meant! This calling for my life began to become clearer when I encountered St. Pope John Paul II's writings on the "universal brother" and the witness of Blessed Charles de Foucauld. Blessed Charles coined this term "universal brother" as he lived a celibate, contemplative life committed to evangelizing and serving north African, Muslim tribes.

Through their writings I believe the Lord had begun to reveal to me His calling in my life and their words continue to ring deeply in my heart. I believed I knew what the Lord wanted me to do: Contemplative prayer, closeness to the poor and marginalized, a lifestyle of total commitment to compassion, evangelization, and prayer animated with a brotherly heart for all people.

Home:	Minnesota
Community:	Emmanuel Community
Degree:	Theology
Alma Mater:	Ave Maria University
Degree:	Theology
Alma Mater:	Franciscan University of Steubenville
Occupation:	RCIA and Evangelization Coordinator

Called to serve The Winter Class of 2017



I just didn't know how He wanted me to live this in the Church, until I met the Emmanuel Community.

Called to Serve Near the end of college, I encountered the Emmanuel Community through their charisms of Eucharistic adoration, compassion with the poor, and Evangelization. They are a communion of the states of life, meaning they have priests, married couples, singles, deacons, and consecrated laypeople. This last branch of Emmanuel, the consecrated laity, along with their charisms deeply attracted me. The witness of God's people through the different states of life has been a great experience of family. It has been a living witness to Jesus making us all brothers and sisters through our Baptism and calling us all to holiness. Through the community I have served in a Brazilian slum to help in my discernment of consecrated life. During that time I more deeply understood the Lord's great love for me and for others, particularly through His Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament. This great love filled with compassion toward me and the street children I was working with, made me realize the beauty and power of a life dedicated to service of the poor and evangelization. If the Lord could love me in the "slum" of my heart, with its poverty, limitations, and brokenness, then I could see no greater joy than sharing this with the world.

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I have been officially accepted to discern with the consecrated brothers and am invited to spend next year in France living with them. These men live in the world: they are celibate, serve the poor, and evangelize. When possible they try to live in a residential fraternity together and they build this life by adoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for several hours every day. This is the life source for their apostolates of compassion and evangelization. They are brothers and are close to the priests, the married couples, and the singles. Their position as consecrated lay persons enable them to be closer to more people, to live as brothers to all. This vocation demands simplicity of life and availability of mission (as part of the formation as well). My current student loan debt is an impediment in giving my life to this vocation.

Prayer & Invitation I invite you to pray for vocations and in a particular way, to please consider praying for me in this discernment. This journey is filled with many challenges and the unknown. Though there are many such "brothers" in Europe, I am the first man discerning this vocation within the Emmanuel Community in the U.S. I am so grateful for your time; to learn more, please contact me at davidn@laboureaspirant.org.

—David Neira

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.