

This is my Vocation Story



OLIVER AVARITT

How it Began Hello, my name is Oliver Avaritt and I grew up in Georgia. I am twenty-five years old and am one of two children. I grew up in a Catholic family in which my parents made sure my younger sister and I received the Sacraments of Initiation but did not always encourage us to grow deeper in our faith. We went to Holy Mass on Sunday and participated in religious education at the parish. I identified as a Catholic and knew I was drawn to the Church, but I did not understand how to integrate my faith into every aspect of my life. God put a desire in me to know and learn more about my faith. At the same time, there were other influences pulling me away from my faith.

My Faith In my freshman year of college, I began to discover the authenticity of what my faith could be. College was a time of great spiritual growth for me. I began attending Mass regularly including daily Mass and connected with the Catholic campus ministry group, where I made many friends who encouraged me to know Jesus more. I attended a wonderful parish, which was within walking distance of campus. Together the parish and campus ministry program ignited my desire to be a faithful young adult dedicated to serving Christ. My prayer life became important, I learned how to pray, and I felt myself growing in my relationship with Jesus Christ. I began to take on various leadership roles in campus ministry and reaching out to other students. This awakening to the faith was my first step toward God's call.

*"My prayer life became important,
I learned how to pray, and I felt
myself growing in my relationship
with Jesus Christ."*

—Oliver Avaritt

My Vocation I remember well my first discernment day. A friend encouraged me to go to a day of recollection sponsored by the local archdiocese. He failed to mention the gathering would be focused on vocations to priesthood and religious life! I was surprised to see a place full of seminarians and their brother priests. I believe this was God's first bold way of

inviting me to consider a vocation to serve Him deeply.

The following year a new priest was assigned to the college parish and he expressed great joy and energy while working there. He would often suggest to me after Holy Mass that I should consider a religious vocation.

Thankfully, God is patient and persistent; he continued to put people in my life who would encourage me to look deeper at what God desired for me. I had another powerful experience when I attended a young adult conference where 6,000 students attended Holy Mass. It was truly incredible to witness hearts

Called to serve The Winter Class of 2017



changing and being transformed by God over those few days. This was also my first introduction to religious orders and I spoke with many vocation directors who were eager to help me discern. After much prayer and discernment, I spent one year as a volunteer with a lay brothers community during which I experienced a deep immersion into religious life. I felt God calling me to be His priest as the year progressed. While I find the work I do intriguing at times, the attraction to religious life and the priesthood

has only gotten stronger. I experience peace when imagining my life as His priest. I pray that God will continue to affirm these desires.

Called to Serve Over the last few years, God has blessed me by revealing gifts He has given me. During my first job working as a tutor and mentor to youth, God provided the tools and words to make it happen. I continued to work more with students and youth and realized I had a love for it. When it comes to discussing the faith, I love having conversations with people about it. I think that is what drew me to helping with campus ministry at a high school. I have been discerning with the Dominican Order for almost two years. With every visit I make to one of their communities and the more I learn of their ministries, I feel God leading me to them. It is comforting to know

“I felt God calling me to be His priest as the year progressed.”

—Oliver Avaritt

that God calls imperfect people like me to follow Him. I know now entrusting the Lord and the Blessed Mother with my vocation will lead me to the path of joy and fulfillment. I am well on my way to entering the order this summer, but I have a great financial burden to overcome first. This is why I am working to raise funds with my fellow Labouré aspirants, so we may all be given the opportunity to continue discerning God’s will and enter formation.

Prayer & Invitation Prayer is most important to an increase in vocations. Please offer up a prayer for my Labouré classmates and me in our continued discernment, that God may continue to lead us closer to His will. You can contact me at oliver@laboureaspirant.org to learn more about our fundraising efforts and with any questions you may have.

—Oliver Avaritt

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.