

This is my Vocation Story



BILL DUFFERT

How it Began Throughout my life I have always stayed close to the Catholic Church due to the encouraging nature of my parents. As a family we always attended Sunday Masses and I attended Catholic school from kindergarten through college.

My Faith Growing up in a family that attended Sunday Mass together, prayed before meals, and who valued the rich Catholic faith was such a blessing and it helped nourish my beliefs. Through my parents' example, I was taught that keeping God at the center of my life was important. My mother exhibited this through her weekly Adoration vigils and my father through his Mass attendance. Even our family vacations and hunting trips were planned around the local parish's Mass schedule. As a youth, I noticed the commitment of my parents to live according to Catholic teachings and I wanted to practice that same level of devotion. Being an enthusiastic participant in the life of the Church through Mass and prayer also kept me active in the life of Jesus in the Sacraments. Remaining close to reconciliation and Holy Communion gave me the ability to view the visible signs of the Sacraments and imagine the invisible graces being poured out into me and lived out in my daily life.

Even my extended family participated in my spiritual development through their vocational witness. I have an aunt who was a cloistered Carmelite nun, and as a youth, my family and I would travel to

"...I noticed the commitment of my parents to live according to Catholic teachings and I wanted to practice that same level of devotion."

—Bill Duffert

her convent for a visit once a year. I distinctly remember how peaceful it was there and even though I did not fully understand it at the time, I found beauty in the contemplative lifestyle. My love for Mass and the Sacraments were magnified by my Aunt's witness. Although our family visits to the convent were once-a-year, those experiences bore great fruits in my life and I attribute my like for contemplative prayer to the visits to the convent.

My Vocation Although, I had a deep affinity for my Catholic faith, it was not until my junior year of college that I remember feeling as though God was calling me to become a priest. I was an undergrad, living on my own and having fun in the college setting, but I was experiencing a lack of joy. In between my classes, I would go to the on-campus chapel and sit in silence or write in my journal. Journaling during this period brought about strong moments of reflection because it was the first time my prayer became more of a dialogue of talking and listening to God rather than just me praying traditional vocal prayers. Christ used this dialogue to begin to draw me closer to His Sacred Heart, and although the thought of becoming a priest scared me a bit, I slowly began to respond.

Called to serve

The Summer Class of 2016



One day, I decided to ask God to be absolutely clear with me as to my vocation, as if I was giving Him an ultimatum to tell me what He wanted from me. I wanted to grow in holiness and journey closer to Christ but at the same time I had a comfortable life and plans to get married and have a family. I thought to myself, “Okay God, are you really calling me to become a priest?” As much as I tried to ignore it, the answer was still resonating in my heart and mind. Not wanting to hear it because I thought I knew what was best for my life, I tried to distract myself with a move to Arizona and a new job as a teacher. It took me another three years before I could gather up the courage to give that question the attention it needed. Thanks be to God, for His patience and persistence! During a time of confession, a priest, seemingly out of nowhere, asked me if I had ever thought about becoming a priest. I could not lie to him in the confessional. It was at that moment when I had to admit, “Yes, Father, I’ve actually been thinking about it for three years now.” As much as I did not want to, I had to admit that the desire never went away. No matter how many distractions I tried to cover it up, that stirring in my heart was still there. Weekly adoration (including the many vigils my mother prayed on my behalf) and a considerable amount of discernment that followed this experience in confession, helped soften my heart and lead me closer to the path God had set before me.

“During a time of confession, a priest, seemingly out of nowhere, asked me if I had ever thought about becoming a priest.”

–Bill Duffert

Called to Serve While actively discerning the will of the Father, I realized how much I not only desired the priesthood, but how I also desired to serve the people who generously gave me their time, love, and values: my family. With the importance for me to be close to my family, I left Arizona and moved back to Minnesota to serve the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. I have grown fond of the opportunities to serve the needs of the rural and urban communities as well as to collaborate with other parishes and faith communities.

Ideally, I would like to start the Theology Program as soon as possible; however, I have a difficult obstacle to overcome. This obstacle is my student loan that I am required to be free from before I enter the seminary.

Prayer & Invitation With great humility I pray that you will assist me and my fellow Labouré Society aspirants in our hope to live out our religious callings. Our communities are in need of more men to be priests and I want to answer that call! I also encourage you to pray for your own vocations, that Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, will guide you to the Father’s will.

To learn more, I invite you to contact me at bill@laboureaspirant.org.

–Bill Duffert

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 one out of two 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.

As a class of 16, we're working to raise \$960,000 before December 31 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 three-day training session 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

Summer 2016 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 vocation to the priesthood or religious life 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 240 assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life
- A network of thousands of praying bishops, priests, religious, families, and singles
- Over \$4.3 million awarded. 100% of gifts go toward aspirants; 90% goes to the current class for loan mitigation and 10% is a tithe to the next aspirant class to subsidize their training expenses

How do we do it?

Our Aspirants

- Discern a vocation and are accepted into a diocese or religious community
- Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
- Apply to Labouré and meet intake requirements
- Are trained in ethical fundraising – empowered with practical tools, personal mentoring, and 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 toward their education loans
- Receive final award payout after three years and enter freely into a lifetime of service as a priest, sister, or brother

The Labouré Society

- Works with each aspirant to ensure all personal means are utilized 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 multiple classes of aspirants annually
- Mentors each aspirant to build a unified team; each individual works toward the collective goal
- Provides ongoing accountability to ensure proper preparation and completion of personal fundraising plans
- Equips each aspirant with an online fundraising platform for real-time donation processing, reporting, assessment of goals and class interaction, marketing and communications
- Facilitates ongoing communication and updates between aspirants and donors after formation entrance
- Manages aspirant award payments while they are in formation
- Completes award payout after 3 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.