

# This is my Vocation Story



EMILY SCHAFER

**In the Beginning** I am one of four kids and grew up in a Catholic home. We attended Mass on Sundays and I attended Catholic schools my whole life. This education allowed me to have a good foundation of learning about God, about the Catholic faith and begin participating in the sacraments. Growing up, my faith was always something that I considered important, and was heavily involved in faith-related activities at church and school.

**My Faith Journey** It was not until college that I encountered our Lord in a personal way through a Catholic campus outreach. This community of college students lived out their faith radically and radiated a love and joy I had not yet known. I learned how to have a personal prayer life and began to engage it. During a powerful time of prayer as a freshman, I encountered our Lord in such a way that I knew without a doubt that I was known and loved. My life was forever changed. This encounter led me to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus and gave me the zeal to share this newfound love and joy. Through my involvement in this group, I was able to live in several Christian households that shared a common life of faith and mission and was consistently called to holiness by those around me. I had an increasing desire to receive the sacraments and spend time with our Lord in Eucharistic Adoration. The Lord used this community to help me grow in my relationships with others and to learn the beauty and blessing of Christ-centered friendships. Our Lord captured and consumed my heart with the fire of His love in such a way that I wanted to follow Him without reserve. During this time in college I began discerning my vocation.

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*–Emily Schafer*

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**My Vocation** During my freshman year in college, I met some religious sisters on campus. I had never met a sister who wore a habit and I was struck by the beauty of these sisters. I did not think about the possibility of the Lord calling me to be a sister, but I was glad to meet them. Then Christmas break of my sophomore year, a friend encouraged me to be open to a religious vocation and it was confirmed through my prayer. He then quickly directed me to a community where I would spend the next few years discerning. I experienced the unique aspects of their charisms. Through my visits with this community and my times of prayer, I experienced the Lord inviting me to follow Him on the path of religious life and to offer my life back to Him as a response of love and gratitude. I was filled with a deep peace, conviction and joy. I understood that this would not be without its share of difficulty and suffering. However, it would be worth it and possible because of the grace that comes with the Lord’s call for my life.

# Called to serve The Summer Class of 2016



The Lord led me on this path to religious life with this particular community and I believed He was calling me to enter there, but He had other plans. The Lord gave the order clarity that I was not called there. At first this was very difficult and confusing, but the Lord used this for my good and His glory. He drew me so much closer to Him so that I could trust Him more deeply and be healed more deeply.

During this season of difficulty and confusion, Jesus very clearly called me to staff a summer service program in Detroit with which I had worked as a freshman in college. He led me there to bring to light areas of woundedness and brokenness. He transformed my heart by His love, mercy, healing, and freedom. He wanted to bring me to a place where I would be able to offer myself more fully to Him. During this past year of healing and freedom, He has also led and called me to a new religious community with which He is asking me to pursue my vocation.

**Called to Serve** The community with whom He is calling me to pursue my vocation is the Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus. They were founded in Madrid, Spain, and have a novitiate in Steubenville, Ohio. They are a contemplative and missionary order whose mission is, "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere." I first learned about this community through my spiritual director and visited them on a retreat this past

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November. I was able to enter this retreat openly and their life and charism resonated with me. Much of who they are resonated with how I am able to connect to our Lord and with some of my deepest desires. Their deep union with Our Lord in the Eucharist and His Sacred Heart through Mary, mission to bring Christ's love to the entire world through the formation of young people and strong communal life struck me. He has used even small things to charm my heart such as their community game being my favorite sport.

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I have been accepted for entrance and the community and I are both very excited, but the obstacle that stands in my way of entering formal formation is my student loans. Due to educational expenses, I have accrued significant student loans. This obstacle prevents me from fully responding and following the call the Lord has for my life. I heard about The Labouré Society through the Vocations Directress of my community who heard about it at a vocation fair.

**Prayer and Invitation** I invite you to pray for religious vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Pray that young people would have the courage to respond generously to our Lord's call. Please pray for my vocation and that I will have the grace to follow Jesus in responding to, and living it out, faithfully. Please contact me if you would like to learn more about my own journey, The Labouré Society, and how you can support vocations. My email address is [emily@laboureaspirant.org](mailto:emily@laboureaspirant.org).

—Emily Schafer

## 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!

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# LABOURÉ

*Summer 2016 Class of Aspirants to the Priesthood and Religious Life*



▶ Our vocations story videos are online at: [www.LaboureSociety.org](http://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.*