

This is my Vocation Story



NICHOLAS MARTELL

How it Began I am the fourth oldest of eight children, and my parents were and are devoted Catholics, always giving amazing witness and example to all of their children. I can remember, from an early age, my mother attending daily Mass, and my family praying the Rosary together, daily. I attended Catholic school from kindergarten to eighth grade, and my mom worked as a before and after school day care provider at the school. This allowed my sisters and me to attend daily Mass at a chapel in the nearby hospital, where I met one of my spiritual directors.

Age: 29
Home: California
Community: Diocese of San Bernardino
Degree: History
Alma Mater: University of California
Graduate Degree: Law
Graduate Alma Mater: Western State University College of Law, CA
Occupation: Founder/CEO/Attorney

My Faith The wonderful example of my parents laid a beautiful foundation for me to develop in my spiritual life. My mother took her duties as our first educator very seriously. I remember spending many hours with her, making sure that I was truly prepared to receive my first Holy Communion. My father was always the leader of our daily Rosary, and united the family for Sunday Mass. Their Catholic faith was very important to them, to the point of scheduling our family vacations around Sunday Mass, and making pilgrimages to shrines during these vacations. I was truly blessed by our Lord to be raised by such devout parents.

"The wonderful example of my parents laid a beautiful foundation for me to develop in my spiritual life.."

—Nicholas Martell

Although I had this example and foundation, I let life, and my faith, get away from me. While I continued to attend Sunday Mass throughout college and law school, I didn't do much else beyond this, besides prayers of petition when I felt that I really needed help from our Lord. I had become lukewarm in my faith.

But my reluctance to truly embrace the beauty of my faith was no match for the Holy Spirit's persistence. In my third and final year of law school, I experienced a personal tragedy in my life that really put me at a crossroads in my faith. I immediately spoke with my spiritual director, who was instrumental in setting me on the right path, so that I would not allow my loss to interfere with my faith in our Lord. Through much prayer, shortly thereafter, I turned my life over to the Lord, and asked him to guide me, to know what my purpose would now be in life. At this point, my faith was revitalized, and I started to participate in the devotions that I allowed to lay dormant in my life. Through these devotions, I was able to accept the will of the Lord, and find some meaning in my loss.

My Vocation In my youth, I remember feeling a call to the priesthood, however, I let high school, college, and law school, life really, get in the way of my calling. I realized our Lord was continuing to call me to the priesthood shortly after I graduated from law school and passed the bar exam.

Called to serve

The Summer Class of 2016



The specific moment that I remember realizing that our Lord was calling me, was during the Papal Conclave in which Pope Francis was elected pope. While I was watching the coverage of the Papal Conclave, specifically during the procession of the cardinals, while the Litany of the Saints was being chanted, all of the memories of my religious formation, and my love for the Catholic Faith, Church, and especially our Lord, filled my heart, soul, and mind, and I could not help but think I had been ignoring our Lord for all of these years. At that moment, I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that God was telling me that he expected more out of me. He wanted me to give myself entirely to Him, to the service of His Church, and to others.

After this moment, I made a promise to the Lord, that I would do everything in my power to become more involved in the Church, to discern where it is that he wanted me to serve. I started working as a lawyer, and was traveling a lot for the first year of my employment, so I was not really able to assist in a parish as much as I would have liked. However, I attended daily Mass when my schedule would permit, and adoration weekly. Almost every priest that I would come in contact with asked if I had considered the priesthood. This made me feel encouraged this was the path God wanted me to pursue.

After about a year of working for a law firm, I decided to return home to Hesperia, CA, to work in the community I was raised in. At this time, I became a member of my current parish and became very involved in several ministries. What caused me to actively pursue my vocation to the priesthood were the words of two priests, independently. Firstly, I will be forever grateful to the pastor of my parish, and the words that he spoke, when I told him about my student loan debt. He stated plainly: "Money should not be an obstacle to a vocation to the priesthood." Shortly thereafter, when I was visiting my aunt and uncle at their parish, the pastor of their parish said almost the exact same words to me. At that point, I listened to the Lord, through these priests, and actively pursued my vocation to diocesan priesthood.

Called to Serve While pursuing my vocation to diocesan priesthood, I attended a retreat that took place at a parish in the Diocese of San Bernardino, where Mass is only celebrated once or twice per month due to the shortage of priests. In attending Holy Mass with the community of this parish, and actively participating in this retreat, I realized the true need for priests serving in parish communities, and truly believe that our Lord is calling me to the diocesan priesthood to assist in the pastoral care of souls.

While I am ready to answer this call, and would start formation immediately if I could, I have a very difficult obstacle to overcome: my student loan debt. Unfortunately, it will likely be awhile before I can enter formation because of this obstacle. But I believe and trust that if it is our Lord's will that I become a priest, this obstacle can be overcome.

Prayer and Invitation I invite you, and encourage you, firstly, to pray for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. Our Lord's Church is in need of men and women who will hear and answer his call. I also humbly ask and pray that you will be able to assist myself and all of my fellow aspirants in answering the call of the Lord, so that we can serve faithfully in our callings. I pledge to pray daily for you and for all of your intentions, that the Lord will guide you and answer according to what is of most benefit for your soul. To learn more, I invite you to contact me at nicholasm@laboureaspirant.org.

–Nicholas Martell

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



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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.