

This is my Vocation Story



THERESE MILLER

In the Beginning I am the oldest of three girls in my family. Growing up I was raised in a Catholic family and surrounded by people who really loved the Lord and sought to follow Him. Yet in spite of being surrounded by so many witnesses, faith was still a struggle for me. Externally I practiced my faith but internally I struggled with doubt and fear. Yet something would not let me give up on my faith so I kept seeking.

Age: 30
Home: Minnesota
Community: Emmanuel Community
Degree: Biology
Alma Mater: Augsburg College
Occupation: Laboratory Technician

My Faith From an early age, I wanted to live for something bigger than what the world could offer me. Growing up I was very quiet and shy and I struggled a great deal in school academically. While this was very painful for me, it was also a great blessing because it made me take time to reflect on the meaning and purpose of my life. I knew that I would probably never be rich, wildly successful or famous. Therefore, there had to be another reason for why life was worth living and I was determined to find it. As a child and teenager, I went to Sunday Mass with my parents and sisters every week. I tried praying and reading my Bible every day and went on various retreats and pilgrimages. I read about the saints and here were times when I felt God was near. Yet there were also times when I wondered if He existed at all. I started to wonder if maybe I just wasn't good enough for God.

*"...I would beg God to show me that He was real and that He cared for me."
—Therese Miller*

Despite my doubts I continued to go to Mass each Sunday and prayed every day but I felt nothing inside. My senior year of high school I fell into a deep depression that lasted into my sophomore year of college. I started my freshman year of college without hope. God seemed absent. I decided that if He did exist then it was obvious that He didn't care about an ordinary everyday person like me. Perhaps faith was just an illusion and truth a set of fantasies that I made up to comfort myself in my despair.

As I started that year I remember praying the Anima Christi prayer over and over again and crying. The only private place I found to cry was sitting in a room behind the campus chapel where the tabernacle was kept. So day after day I would go into that room and cry and I would beg God to show me that He was real and that He cared for me.

God didn't suddenly show up and appear to me in a vision to tell me everything was going to be okay. But as I sat there day after day in front of the tabernacle, I increasingly had the sense that someone was sitting there with me who loved me and that the God of the universe was real. He wasn't just a figment of my imagination. He was with me in the chapel, hidden but present both spiritually and physically under the appearance of bread and wine in the tabernacle before me out of love for me.

Called to serve

The Summer Class of 2016



My Vocation The experience in the chapel changed me. It was the first time that I realized that God loved me as I was and that He cared for me personally. After that experience I began to pray regularly and to actively ask the Lord what He wanted me to do with my life. As a child and teenager, I had been attracted to religious and consecrated life and had wondered if I might be called to it but I had never looked into it. A few years later, I thought about religious and consecrated life when I had to drop out of the laboratory certificate program I was in because of health problems. The shock of having to leave the program left me shaken and uncertain of where to go next. Yet it was exactly what the Lord needed to get my attention. I graduated with my degree, contacted the archdiocese, and joined a group for women discerning religious/consecrated life through the archdiocese while at the same time visiting and learning more about different religious orders.

Called to Serve I met the Emmanuel Community early in my discernment process. At the beginning I joined them so that I could receive support for my Catholic faith while I was discerning. Yet as I came to know the community better, I began to feel more and more the Lord calling me there. As a public association of the lay faithful within the Catholic Church, their charism is to proclaim Christ's presence in the world by being missionaries in the world.

*"As He showed me how much He loved me, I desired to offer love back to Him by giving Him my life through living in poverty, chastity and obedience."
—Therese Miller*

The consecrated sisters in the Emmanuel Community commit to live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience according to the Emmanuel charism. They usually live in a shared residence and devote themselves to adoration and praise for the Church, the community and the world. They may go on mission for the community or work a regular job. They are witnesses of Christ's love in the world in ordinary life with those they work and interact with on a daily basis. Over the months that I spent with Emmanuel, Jesus kept reminding me how He loved me in the ordinary things of life. As He showed me how much He loved me, I desired to offer love back to Him by giving Him my life through living in poverty, chastity and obedience. While I am grateful to the Lord for my vocation and where He has led me, there is still the obstacle of my education loans, which would prevent me from entering into formation and being available for mission. Yet when the Lord leads He can make a way where there is no way. A few months after I felt called to take the next step for discerning consecrated life within the Emmanuel Community, the Lord led me to a religious sister who told me about The Labouré Society and a local brother within the Emmanuel Community who encouraged me to apply to the program.

Prayer and Invitation I ask for you to please pray for me and for all those who are their discerning vocations to be docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and seek whole heartedly to follow the Lord wherever He might lead. I thank you for your prayers and I welcome you to contact me at my e-mail address therese@laboureaspirant.org, so you can learn more.

—Therese Miller

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.