

This is my Vocation Story



Conor Maher

In the Beginning Hello! My name is Conor Maher and I am from California. I am one of three children and grew up in a Catholic household. As with many vocations stories mine begins with my family. I got an interesting start with my Catholic faith. My family and I have what we call “Catholic freak outs” where giant looming spiritual coincidences occur that are almost too perfect to be just random. One of which was me being baptized at St. Joseph’s Church on the feast of St. Joseph without my parent’s knowledge. When I was about four years old, my mother had a rejuvenation of faith which propelled our family into immersing ourselves in the Church. From a very young age I remember going to things like co-ops, daily Mass, Sunday Mass, etc. During these years mom and dad made church priority number one and I must acknowledge their faithfulness as a part of my vocation story.

Home: California
Community: Dominican Friars
Province of the Most Holy
Name of Jesus
Degree: Biology
Alma Mater: St. Mary’s College of
California
Occupation: Substitute Teacher

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My Faith This environment of family and community was really where the seeds of faith and a possible priestly vocation were planted. If I had to pick a moment where my faith began to really take hold, it would be when I served my first Mass. In the Latin Rite, the instructions for how to serve the Mass are rigorous in comparison to the ordinary because the requirements include not just what to do but how to stand, how to look, and require very precise movements. This may seem a bit excessive to some, but I was genuinely inspired by seeing the older boys assist the priest in such a reverent manner and I wanted to be like them.

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–Conor Maher

A few months before my First Holy Communion, our family and few others were visiting a retired Slovenian priest at his house for a Saturday get-together. He had built and consecrated his own outdoor chapel and was going to say Mass for everyone gathered, but he needed a second altar server. I wasn’t supposed to serve until after I had received my First Holy Communion, but the priest lovingly allowed me to serve my first Mass with him. After Mass he proceeded to show us all his backyard which was like a Catholic Disneyland with homemade contraptions and shrines to the blessed Mother and the Sacred Heart. I was so inspired that I had made up my mind to stay there forever and be his helper. My parents obviously had to take me home and I cried the whole way back. I remember that day because I witnessed holiness and happiness in this older priest and knew it had something to do with the faith. From there I never had much difficulty with the faith because it was so wondrous to me and was fostered in the home. The only time I ever had a crisis of faith was when I visited that same priest a year before he died and asked him how to discern God’s will in my life because I felt very lost. He off-handedly told me that only a few people have ever asked him that question and all of them ended up becoming priests. After that meeting my faith was re-invigorated and a spark was struck in discerning a priestly vocation.

Called to serve

The Summer Class of 2018



to effectively discern.

My Vocation Being a priest had always been on the table as a practicing Catholic. I regularly considered it when I was young but put it on the back burner during my teenage years. My sophomore year at college, I attended a discernment retreat at a diocesan seminary. At that retreat I remember being very much at peace with the idea of being a priest. Thinking about the life of a priest; praying the office, hearing confessions, fostering a community, and confecting the Eucharist was all very attractive to me and this peace was so compelling that I realized I had to pursue it more seriously

After college I had more time available so I began to attend more come-and-see retreats with various orders and the local diocese. Each event was kind of like going on a blind date. You look for that magic fit, like a puzzle piece to your soul, but also look for where you can do the most good with the gifts or talents you've been given. I have an affinity for preaching. I really enjoy public speaking! I love talking to large groups about anything theological and a family friend recommended I check out the Dominican Order which is the order of preachers. Right away I felt at home; Dominican way of life has four pillars; prayer, study, community, and ministry. Each pillar plays a role in both the personal life of the religious and all those who interact with them. Dominican spirituality centers around "sharing the fruits of contemplation" which implies a balance of contemplative and active lifestyles. It was seeing these tenets in action that attracted me to the Dominican Order. In my vocation I desire to preach, minister to the

"In my vocation I desire to preach, minister to the sick and suffering, offer Mass, and hear confessions."

—Conor Maher

sick and suffering, offer the Mass, and hear confessions. However, that spiritual battery easily runs dry without study, prayer, and community. I know I'm going to need brothers during the challenges, knowledge to inform preaching, prayer to give time to God, and contemplation, and I think I may have found the balance I need with the Dominicans, God willing. I'm very excited and nervous, but I know that with any vocation where there is sacrifice there is also abundant grace!

Called to Serve I'm happy to say that I am an aspirant with the Dominican Order but I have a very difficult obstacle to overcome. At the current rate and ability, I would have to wait more than ten years before being debt free and able to enter the Order freely. Thankfully my vocation director was able to direct me to The Labouré Society and I have been incorporated into their 15th class! It is safe to say that I feel very blessed and I thank you for taking the time to learn more about the mission.

Prayer & Invitation I ask that you please continue to pray for vocations. I've witnessed first-hand that those prayers are working like you wouldn't believe! Many people are encouraged by God and the Church to consider ministering to His flock thanks to your prayers. If you would like to know more about my vocation story, I encourage you to reach out to me directly at conor@laboureaspirant.org. I love personal interaction and would love to get to know you more as I take this journey of faith.

-Conor Maher

Why I'm Writing

I am not only an aspirant to religious life; I am also a fundraiser for a class of aspirants pursuing the priesthood or religious life. A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 out of 2 aspirants have student loans debt which prevents them from entering their seminaries and religious communities. 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 aspirant student loan amount of \$60,000 before December 31st for The Labouré Society, a Catholic non-profit that helps aspirants like me. Every aspirant has been accepted by their diocese or community and is required to work and liquidate their assets as to be able to make their own maximum loan payments. Through Labouré, my fellow aspirants and I work together as a class raising donations which will be divided amongst the class and ultimately applied to our remaining student loans. 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 financially investing in our future and the future of the church.

At the beginning of our class, we met and participated in an intensive 3-day training on the ethics, practice, 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.

At the end of our class, Labouré will issue awards to each aspirant based on individual effort and the total funds raised. 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.

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 2018 Class of Aspirants to the Priesthood and Religious Life



Our vocations story videos are online at: www.RescueVocations.org

About The Labouré Society

Why is our Rescue Mission 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)

How does our Rescue Mission work?

Our Aspirants:

- Discern a vocation and are accepted into a diocese or religious institute*
 - Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
 - Apply to Labouré and meet intake requirements
 - Are trained in Catholic based fundraising and provided practical tools, personal mentoring, & accountability
 - Share their vocation stories with hundreds of donors thereby building a culture of vocations and evangelization
 - Raise funds for Labouré collectively as a class of multiple aspirants
 - Receive monetary awards from the funds raised by the class
 - Have minimum monthly award payments made to their student loan agencies over 36 months of active formation.
 - Receive final award payout after 3 years and 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 their loan amount (loan consolidation, asset review, financial counseling, employment, etc.) prior to acceptance into the program
- Trains each aspirant in Catholic based philanthropy
- Forms a semi-annual 'class' of aspirants that raises funds collectively for all members of the class
- 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

What has the Labouré Rescue Mission accomplished?

- Operating since 2003
- Listed in the Official Catholic Directory
- 280+ assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life
- A network of thousands of praying bishops, priests, religious, families, and singles
- Over \$6 million awarded to aspirants for loan mitigation
- Labouré program support from bishops, superiors, and vocation directors nationwide

LABOURÉ
HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS

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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 made available to other Labouré needs.