

This is my Vocation Story



Daniel Synoski

In the Beginning My name is Daniel Synoski, and I am from Hazleton, Pennsylvania. I am one of three children; my sister is 60 seconds older than me, so I suppose that technically makes me the youngest! I grew up in a Catholic family with parents who actively supported my involvement in our parish and youth ministry.

My Faith Growing up, my parish youth ministry was the place to be for my circle of closest friends. Thanks to a vibrant parish and diocese, I was always able to stay close to the Church whether it be through serving Mass on Sundays, attending youth group events, or going on weekend retreats. My faith became active around sixth grade and continued along that trajectory throughout high school. In high school I became a student leader on diocesan leadership retreats which awakened in me a passion for spreading the Gospel through speaking. I soon found myself living out this calling and taking on these opportunities to satisfy my own pride instead of seeking to glorify God. My activity did not cease, though internally I no longer felt in touch with its true purpose. I found that my faith became a routine set of activities which fostered no relationship with Jesus Christ.

This was the face of my faith for the better part of three years. When I started college, those external acts which wove the thread by which my faith was holding on began to be replaced by the usual external acts of college. I replaced retreats with parties and sharing the Gospel with sharing a drink. As my external activity began to mirror what I was feeling internally, I came face to face with my emptiness and could finally hear my heart yearning for more. Encouraged by my campus minister, I began to go to the chapel alone; no music, no audience, just Jesus and me. I began to invite Him

“I began to invite Him into my emptiness, and He began to invite me into His heart.”

–Daniel Synoski

into my emptiness and He began to invite me into His heart. The feeling that followed was one of meeting Jesus for the first time all over again and He was not holding back. One day, while alone in the chapel, this simple realization came forth: Jesus is everything and that must change my life.

Since then I have tried to take full advantage of this opportunity from the Lord to start over. My faith journey has taught me many things, but above all else is the meaning of St. Paul’s words, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

My Vocation One night I attended a praise and fellowship event where hundreds of Catholics gathered to worship our Lord in Adoration. The Church was packed. I ended up with a small corner on the floor, but found myself unsettled by my inability to see the monstrance from where I was. Sure, I was still in His Presence even if my line of sight was blocked, but in that moment, I just needed to see Him. The Church had a balcony, so I rushed up the stairs and made my way to the edge, where I could kneel by the rail and lean over to see the monstrance. In that moment, the gentle curiosities about religious life that the Lord had been placing on my heart for some time had seemed to disappear. Now I heard the Lord in a way that was not subtle, quiet, or gentle. On the contrary, it seemed to mute everything else and to call to me from below the same way that He called to Zacchaeus: “Daniel, come down quickly, for I must stay at your house.” It was clear, it was simple, and it was love. My heart responded with the prayer that has come to shape the

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Called to serve The Summer Class of 2018



journey to my vocation, Psalm 27: "One thing I ask, this I seek, to dwell in the Lord's house all the days of my life."

I came down from the upper level of the Church. However, unlike Zacchaeus who "received Him with joy," my immediate reaction was quite the opposite - I ran. Literally. I went outside of the church and stood on the sidewalk for a few minutes, knowing with fear and excitement what had to happen next. If the Lord was to stay at my house, it was time for me to make room for Him.

Called to Serve I first encountered a desire to serve the poor through a ministry of my college Newman center. On Friday nights I joined with other college students to travel into areas of the city populated by the homeless and spend the evening encountering them. Our aim was not to feed their corporal needs but to feed the spiritual need for human connection of which they are all too often deprived. Building relationships with the homeless often meant some of the most unpredictable conversations, life stories, stories about yesterday, or small talk over sports. Conversations about faith were often a rare commodity, and newcomers were told not to expect them. Having been told this when I first got involved, I often found myself caught off guard by how often my homeless friends were asking me questions about Jesus and sharing their faith journeys and struggles with me. I found myself comfortable sharing with them the role Jesus has played in my life and excited about opportunities to pray with them on the street. After taking these experiences to prayer, I have come to thank God every time for showing me the work that He is calling me to, and continually shaping me through my friends on the streets.

*"...This simple realization came forth: Jesus is everything and that must change my life."
-Daniel Synoski*

My prayer has come to focus on asking the Lord to continue preparing me for living out this life and work as a vocation with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. I am excited for this journey to continue. To prepare me for this new life, the Lord invites me to cooperate with Him in overcoming the difficult obstacle of my student loans which are delaying my journey. But working with The Labouré Society will enable me to accelerate the elimination of my student loan debt. I know that God is greater than my debt, but it is a step of faith and

growth that He asks me to take in overcoming this obstacle by the generous assistance of His Universal Church and the resources He has blessed it with.

Prayer & Invitation Overcoming this obstacle is not possible without the power of intercessory prayer; God has given us a direct line of contact with Him that we may ask Him to provide for our needs! I am grateful for the prayers that you can offer for me and my vocation. If you would like to know more about my story, I am available via email at daniels@laboureaspirant.org. Peace be with you!

-Daniel Synoski

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
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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.