

# This is my Vocation Story

**In the Beginning:** Hi I am David Castillo, I was born in Guadalajara Mexico. My family had the opportunity to come to America when I was two and we made Kentucky our new home. Growing up in a traditional Mexican household, my 2 other siblings and I grew up Catholic. I was eager to learn English, and I enjoyed living in country where playing Frisbee was an everyday sport, food options were endless, and small town community made everyone one family.

**My Faith:** Ever since I was a young child, I have struggled with my faith. Although I had grown up in a Catholic family, I wasn't aware, like many, of the gift God had given to me. My parents both had a strong internal spiritual life, but the faith wasn't something that was shared beyond basic Morning Prayer, and sporadically attending mass. I was so unaware of my faith that up until I underwent preparation for first communion, when I prayed the 'Our Father,' I confused the word "mal," Spanish for evil, for "mar," the word for sea. For years I was praying for liberation from the sea, instead of from evil!

As I got older, I gradually walked away from the faith altogether. Eventually, I would hunger for some of the questions that the lack of God left in me. I turned to philosophy, rather than admit that there was something wrong with my way of living or thinking. I fervently attempted to supplement my life with everything I thought was ethically correct. I began trying hard in school, while working hard on the weekends. I had an internship that serviced kids in poverty and provided food after school. I was an active member of the Kentucky student environmental coalition, advocating for renewable energy legislation to be passed, and became heavily invested with organizing students state-wide to support these programs. I ate healthy food and exercised, but alas, I felt empty. By all other standards of success, I should have been happy. I didn't understand how I could be living my 'ideal life,' yet I feel so unfulfilled.



*"...The Lord created a deep desire in me to become Catholic."  
-David Castillo*

I began searching for answers again. I realized that my perspective on what "good" meant, was lacking the framework of an objective reality. I kept having odd and subtle experiences that were slowly pointing me towards God. One experience occurred after I awoke from a nightmare. I started to watch Netflix since I didn't have class until 8am. The show I was watching kept showing uncomfortable imagery of angels, even though it was supposedly a high school drama. I felt weirded out so I turned it off and decided to read instead. I had a large research paper approaching, so I wanted to start reading for it. I picked up my giant anthology of Hispanic literature, and randomly opened up to page about three quarters of the way in. The title of this short story was called "Y no se lo trigo la tierra," or "And the earth did not devour him." I was intrigued by the title so I read the story. To summarize, it details a man who curses God. While on a journey through a hot valley, carrying his sick brother, the earth fissures open to swallow him whole. Then miraculously, with the next step it spits him back out. He realizes that God has full and utter control of his fate. He comes to realize how wrong he was about his perception of God, and how he would eventually be swallowed by the earth one day for what he had believed.

This story utterly floored me. I couldn't believe that out of all the stories in this anthology, out of all the hundreds of pages, out all of the things I could have done in that moment, this one was the one I found. I wanted to cry, because I knew this was my story. I was visibly shaken throughout the day, and I eventually talked to a trusted friend about



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**Degree:** Education  
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what had happened to me that morning. She told me that even though I didn't believe, I should pray, so I did. I decided that if I was actually concerned with living a good life, I should consider what Christ taught.

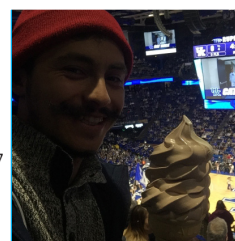
I began to read the Gospels reluctantly as a philosophical text on morals. Reading through the words of Christ, I realized that what he had to say was true and irrefutable. The only reason why I had never accepted Christ's teachings was because of my pride. I was humbled to the core of my being. I didn't know what to do or where to turn to. So I continued to pray and eventually went back to mass. Once there, all the graces of God slowly lead me back to Him. I would regularly go to confession and attend Mass as often as possible. Lent came and I followed an austere penance and spiritual meditation with scripture. I was also meeting regularly with a Priest, and reaching out for God's mercy. I had realized that my sins had caused those around me to suffer, and many of the pains I caused, could have been prevented had I only been living the life Christ desired for me from the beginning. I decided to change my ways and become the man Christ intended me to be. My heart was full of sorrow, and repentance. I steadily distanced myself from the things of my past that had grown to define me. I decided to move to Mexico in an attempt to start fresh, and begin a new chapter in my life. I planned to spend a couple of years working on a master's program, and teach English.

*"I no longer fear the call or reject it, but receive it humbly and joyfully."*

*- David Castillo*



*My Vocation:* God had other plans for me. I moved to Mexico after college in hopes of seeking a way to fully integrate my faith into my daily life. Throughout my time there, I participated in a 90 day novena for America, attended mass as frequently as possible, and read spiritual works of literature, yet I felt as if my spirituality was confined to a "holy hour." The rest of my day felt separated from what I experienced in prayer. I yearned to find a way to blend both.



I was trying hard to be a good teacher for my students, and preserve my newfound Catholic identity, but I kept getting signs that this wasn't what I should be and that I wasn't doing what God wanted for me. God did have something else in store for me. This restlessness to "know" God's plan for me inspired the desire to dive deeper through prayer. Through much prayer and counsel, I moved back to America to pursue a different career.

As I spent time back in KY, I began seeing several "have you thought about the Priesthood" signs at a local parish. Oddly enough, I felt a strong desire to pursue this thought. Through months of discernment, I encountered a monastery whose charism was everything I desired. And during my 9 day "come and see" I recalled a childhood memory. That filled me with an overwhelming amount of love and peace. The verse came to mind "my yoke is easy and my burden is light". I felt the Lord inviting me to my new home.

*Called to Serve:* Through the Norbertine's I will be able to carry on the ministry of Christ, to a new generation. I will have the ability to teach in their schools, and work with the Hispanic community in southern California. I will also integrate my desire for a life centered around prayer with the monastic tradition, and foster new and robust Catholics. All my heart desired was finally found in their order. It simply took faith, love, and trust to see it.

*Prayer & Invitation:* I ask for your prayers for my Labouré classmates and me throughout this journey, as well as all aspirants who have financial obstacles preventing them from fulfilling their desire to enter religious life. Know that you will be in my prayers. If you'd like to learn more about my story, please email me at [david@laboureaspirant.org](mailto:david@laboureaspirant.org). Thank you and God Bless!

## 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 June 30th 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!

Meet my classmates

## Winter Aspirant Class 2019



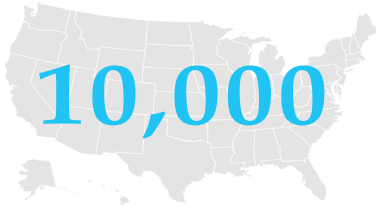
Our vocations story videos are online at [www.RescueVocations.org/aspirants](http://www.RescueVocations.org/aspirants)

**LABOURÉ**

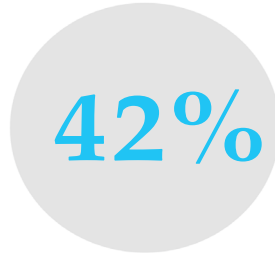
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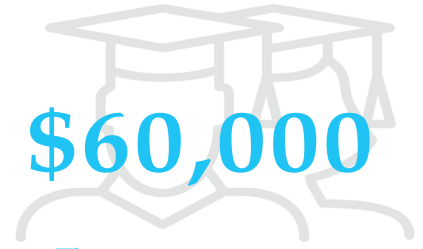
## Why is Labouré needed?



Individuals discerning a priestly or religious vocation in the US annually<sup>1</sup>



Are blocked from pursuing this call due to education loans<sup>1</sup>



\$60,000

The average amount our vocational 'aspirants' in Labouré owe in educational loans

Most religious communities cannot assume this debt.

Some dioceses will allow some debt but have a limited debt threshold for acceptance.

## How does our mission work?



Are discerning a vocation and have been accepted into a diocese or religious institute<sup>2</sup>

Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans

Are trained by Labouré in Catholic based fundraising and provided practical tools, personal mentoring, & accountability

Share their vocation stories with thousands of Catholic donors thereby building a culture of vocations and evangelization

As a class of 20-25 aspirants they raise funds collectively and receive awards from those funds to be applied to their debt

## THE LABOURÉ SOCIETY



Works with aspirants to utilize all personal means to mitigate their loan amount prior to acceptance into the program

Trains each aspirant in Catholic based philanthropy

Mentors each aspirant to build a unified team; each individual works toward the collective goal

Provides ongoing accountability and personal guidance to ensure proper preparation & completion of the individual fundraising plans of each aspirant

Equips each aspirant with an online fundraising platform and multi media fundraising tools

Facilitates ongoing aspirant/donor communication and updates after aspirant enters formation

## What has Labouré accomplished?

\$7.5 MILLION

raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003



Listed in the Official Catholic Directory



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. All gifts made to Labouré are non-refundable. 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.

<sup>1</sup>NRVC, Vision Study 2010, <sup>2</sup>The Institute must be listed in the Official Catholic Directory