

This is my Vocation Story



Anthony Cruz Pantojas

In the Beginning: Hi, my name is Anthony Cruz. I was born and raised in Caguas, Puerto Rico and now live in Chicago, Illinois. My family has both Catholic and Protestant roots leading me to grow up in both worlds. As a baby, I was baptized Roman Catholic yet mainly grew up Protestant. Faith was, however, central to my life and worldview.

My Faith: Since my teen years, I felt an attraction to faith, religion, and culture. As my family moved around I would walk to the closest church to attend worship service. Once we moved back to Puerto Rico, I began to discover the Church in a new way. A devotion to the Holy Spirit began to develop and my community there helped me to discover and renew a love for the faith which extended through my high school years and halfway through college.

Community: Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretians)
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My Vocation: My past religious experiences led me to apply to Andover Newton Theological School. It was there that I learned about interreligious dialogue and, without knowing it, began to develop the vocabulary I needed to express my deepest longings. During my studies, I learned to explore and find out who or rather whose I was while discovering my theological voice as a budding theologian.

My first year I attended a course sponsored by The Hispanic Summer program. That program changed the trajectory of my whole life. A priest who taught a class on Latino Religious Expressions helped me see how my Catholic and cultural identity were intertwined. As a result, I ended up returning to school with a desire to re-ignite my faith as a baptized Catholic and was confirmed the following Easter. My confirmation process was amazing, and my godmother played a great role in this. She helped me navigate through and nurture the faith of my baptism. Ultimately this led me to my current studies at the Jesuit Theologate in California.

Called to Serve: During a summer of service with the Society of Jesus I felt the motion of the Holy Spirit in a new way. This started a process of exploration of the possibility of religious life in Puerto Rico. While there, I attended a local Mass and encountered the Claretians. These men lived close by and, to my great surprise were the foundational rock to the local community. I quickly noticed how the community admired the Claretians as did I while developing a relationship with them. Many times the Claretians accompany those who live and work



in the fields. They walk with them and provide pastoral accompaniment and the sacraments. During the rest of the year, there are different events to care for their needs and well-being. I quickly realized that the charism of this community, which can be summed up as Servants of the Word and Companions in Hope, was the kind of ministry that I wanted to embody and live out as a religious. I believe that the Holy Spirit has loving and creative ways to attract us to our vocations in ways that are fruitful and beneficial for those to whom we are called to serve.

Prayer & Invitation: I ask for your prayers as our aspirant class enters the Labouré program. Pray for us as we develop relationships with generous benefactors nation wide. I also pray that you can learn more about St. Anthony Mary Claret and our charism," As Sons of the Heart of Mary, we are called to be real men open to the Spirit, led by God and always docile to the Holy Spirit's directions, men on fire with love."

Lastly, know that a cloud of witnesses and Saints are praying for us (yes, including you!) as we discern our particular call to live out holiness in our religious calling. If you would like to learn more about my vocation story and how to support our class of aspirants, please contact me at anthony@rescueevocations.org.

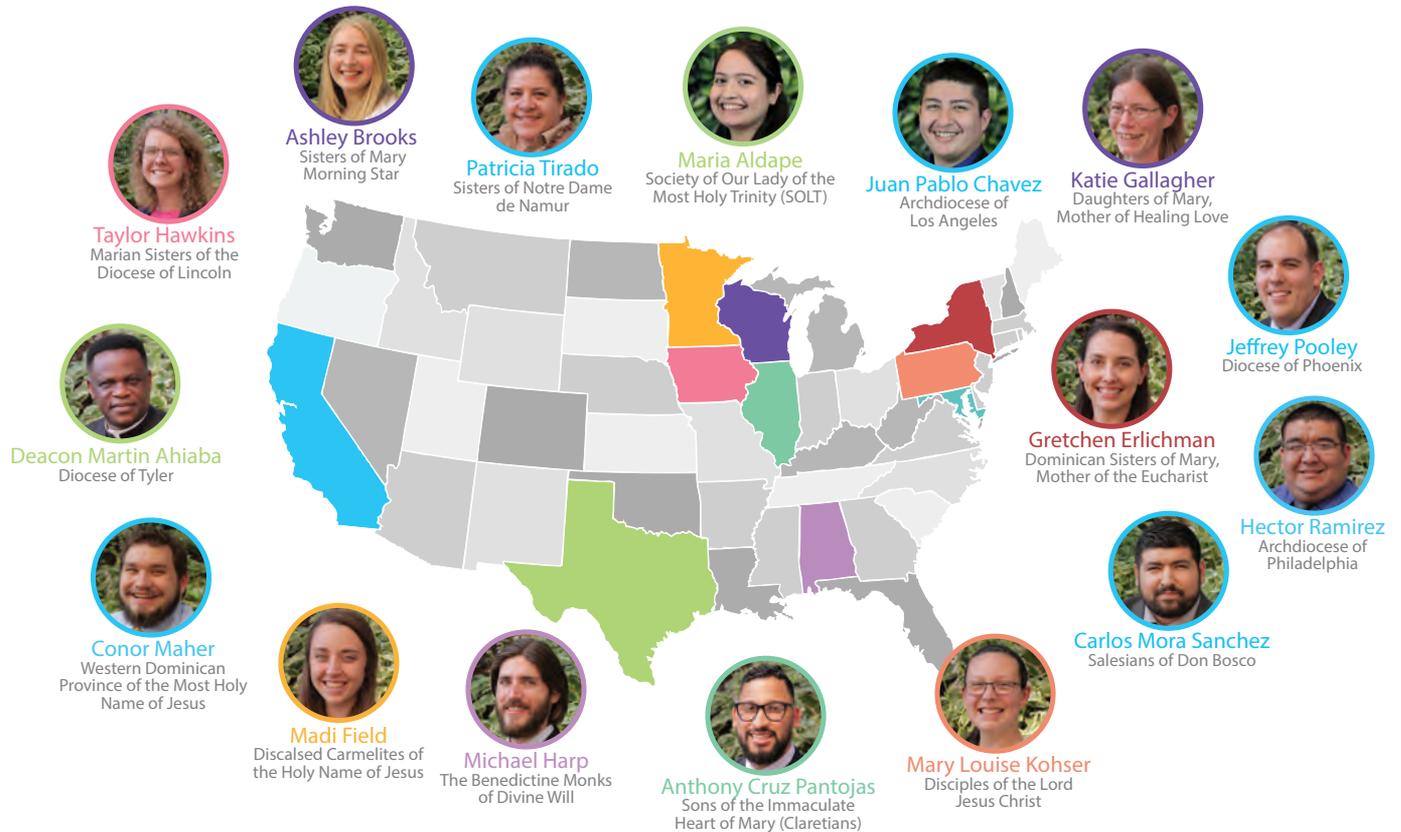
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The Summer, 2019 Class of Labouré Aspirants

I am an aspirant of Labouré

I am also a fundraiser for a class of aspirants pursuing the priesthood or religious life. A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 of every 2 aspirants are blocked from entering their seminaries and religious communities because of student loan debt. It is the only thing that prevents many – including me – from entering formation to become a priest, sister or brother. My classmates are discerning all over the country.



With your help, we will rebuild the Church!

My goal is to raise \$60,000 (the average student loan amount) before December 31st of this year for The Labouré Society, a Catholic non-profit that helps aspirants like me to answer God's call.

Every aspirant has been accepted by a diocese or community and is required to work to liquidate their assets in order 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.

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!

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

LABOURÉ
HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS

Why is Labouré Needed?



10,000
Individuals discerning a priestly or religious vocation in the US annually*



42%
Are blocked from pursuing this call due to education loans*



\$60,000
The average amount our vocational aspirants in Labouré owe in educational loans

How does the Mission Work?



Are discerning a vocation and have been accepted into a diocese or religious institute

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

Are trained by Labouré in Catholic-based fundraising and are provided with practical tools, personal mentoring, and 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 raise funds collectively and receive awards from those funds to be applied to their debt



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 and 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

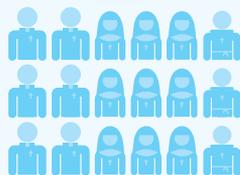
What Has Labouré Accomplished?

\$8 MILLION



Raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003

300+



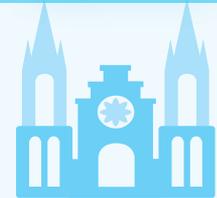
Assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life

PROVEN



In operation since 2003

TRUSTED



Listed in the Official Catholic Directory

* NRVC, Vision Study, 2010

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.