

This is my Vocation Story

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My name is Gretchen Erlichman, and I believe I am called to serve Christ and humanity as a contemplative Dominican nun of the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace. This is my story.

In the Beginning

I grew up as the second-oldest of four girls in a loving Catholic family in Utica, New York. From attending daily Mass and saying the Rosary as a family, to singing in the church choir and playing the organ, to volunteering at our parish, our daily lives were filled with the fruits and joys of our Catholic faith.

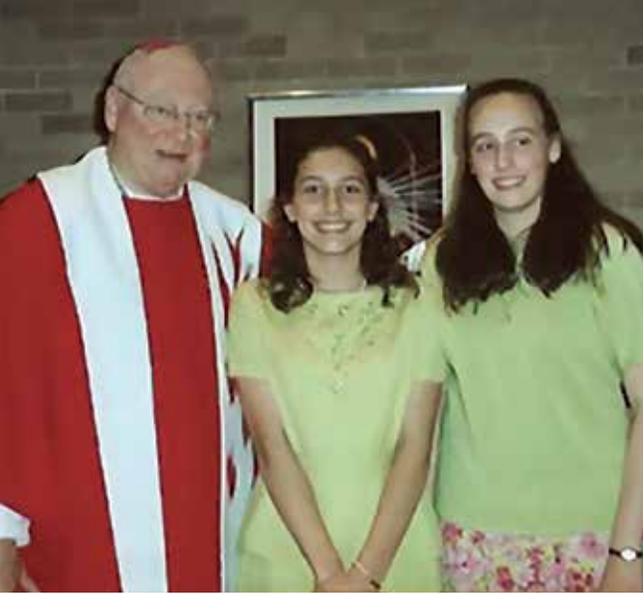
My Faith

Although the deep-rooted seeds of faith that were cultivated during childhood remained planted within my heart, there came a time when my own plans began to push my faith to the margins. I had everything all planned out – I was going to get a degree in music and perform on stages all over the world, then I would further my studies and get a PhD in musicology, which would eventually lead me to settle down and have a family while working as a college professor. Unfortunately, my days became filled with practicing, rehearsals, studying, and social events, and the amount of time I dedicated to my spiritual life began to diminish. Yet, despite getting my degrees, making great friends, singing internationally, and having incredible life experiences, something was missing. I was searching for the good, the true, and the beautiful, but little did I realize that it could only be found in God's plan, not *my* plan.

My Vocation

Slowly, I began to turn my voice, heart, lips, and life toward singing the praises of the Lord. I once again began to pray regularly and study my faith, and I became filled with the indescribable and overwhelming love and joy of Christ.

It was during prayer before the Blessed Sacrament one day that I realized I still wasn't sure what God wanted for my life. I decided to ask the Blessed Mother to make me like her; she was the perfect woman, the perfect wife, and the perfect mother, and that is what I believed God wanted me to be. Mary answered my prayers by helping me realize that Christ was indeed calling me to be a perfect woman, a perfect wife, and a perfect mother, but in a different way. Instead of being a wife to my own husband, I believe I am called to be a bride of Christ, and instead of being a mother to my own children, I believe I am called to shower motherly love on all of God's children by living out the virtue of charity and invigorating the Church through the fruits of contemplation.



*“I wish to follow
Christ with love and
abandon, and I desire
to serve others out of
love for Him.”*

—Gretchen Erlichman

Called to Serve

I believe that the Lord has blessed me with a Dominican heart and a Dominican mind. In embracing the charism of the Order of Preachers, Dominican nuns carry out the Dominican tradition of prayer, study, and preaching through contemplation and engagement with Holy Scripture. In this way, I wish to follow Christ with love and abandon, and I desire to serve others out of love for Him. Although there will be many sacrifices, challenges, blessings, and joys along the way, it is with this kind of unbounded love that I wish to give my life unconditionally to Christ as a contemplative Dominican nun.

Prayer & Invitation

Please join me in praying for all those discerning a religious vocation, and especially for me and my fellow aspirants with the Labouré Society, who must overcome the financial obstacles that lie between us and our call to pursue religious life. With trust in the goodness and grace of God, and through your prayers and support, we will all be able to fully live out our vocations. If you would like to learn more about my vocational journey or about how you can help, please contact me at gretchen@rescuevocations.org.

Know that you are in my prayers. Thank you and God bless!

Pictured below: The Winter, 2020 Class of Labouré Aspirants



I am an aspirant of Labouré

I am also a fundraiser for a class of aspiring priests, sisters and brothers. A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 of every 2 aspirants is blocked from entering seminaries and religious communities due to 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 June 30th 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!

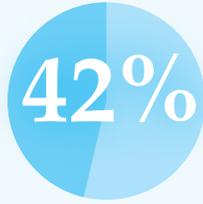
Our vocations story videos are online at: www.RescueVocations.org

LABOURÉSM
HELP RESCUE VOCATIONSSM

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?

OUR ASPIRANTS



- 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

THE LABOURE 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 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?

320+



Assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life

\$8.1 MILLION



Raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003

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.