

This is my Vocation Story



Ron Cuenco

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Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land

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My name is Ronito Cuenco. I am called to serve Christ as a member of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. This is my story.

In the Beginning

For as long as I can remember, I always had a soft spot for those in service to the Lord — priests and religious alike.

I grew up in the Philippines, a mostly-Catholic country where it was also not unusual to see sisters and brothers out in public. Whenever I would notice one of these habited religious, I would bolt away from my parents to catch up with them, immediately taking their hands and placing them on my forehead — a Filipino gesture of blessing. They always reacted with pure smiles, which would make my day.

Strangely, my parents weren't very devout. We attended Sunday Masses out of obligation, but that was about it. We never stayed after Mass to pray, or even to socialize; in fact, it was our frequent practice to take off right after communion. My parents didn't want to get stuck in the traffic jam at the church exit, and my siblings and I were anxious for a Happy Meal — a weekly post-Mass treat.

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—Ron Cuenco

My Faith

I trace the greater portion of my faith to my grandmother. She was a woman of strong values and piety, and I would often find her praying in her prayer corner. The shrine was magnificent: it was filled with images of saints, but especially the Blessed Mother. Her statue of Our Lady of Fatima on a tall pedestal would lovingly gaze at me as I chucked my popcorn in the microwave just adjacent to the shrine. My grandmother taught me how to pray to her, and she even took the rosary from the Lady's folded hands and gave it to me.

My family moved to the U.S. when I was 11. I quickly learned it was “uncool” to speak about religion with my public school friends, so I became somewhat hushed about my faith. Even so, Sunday Masses still held a glimmer for me.

I was a French major at UCLA and while studying abroad in France, I had the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem. Visiting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, I met two Muslim missionaries who challenged my belief in the Holy Trinity. For them, the idea of Three Persons in One was blasphemous. Soon, several of their friends joined



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in and I quickly found myself surrounded by six agitated people shouting at me. Unsure I’d be able to escape the shaky situation, I conceded and denied the Holy Trinity. At that moment, I felt like St. Peter when the cock crowed. I abruptly left the conversation and, filled with anguish, ran in the direction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, mindlessly bumping into people along the way.

My Vocation

By the time I found the Holy Sepulchre, I was in a state of mild panic. I spotted a man in a brown habit in a sea of pilgrims and dragged him to one of the confessionals. I sobbed as I confessed, and was surprised afterwards when the Franciscan apologized for not being able to absolve me. Apparently, I had confessed to a seminarian! He smiled, then looked at me with compassion and said, “Your tears tell what your heart truly believes. Stand up and go!”

As I stood I truly felt warmed by God’s love. I had prayed that the Lord would allow me to truly get to know Him, and He answered that prayer by placing me in the care of this humble Franciscan. I didn’t realize it at the time, but this unlikely encounter set me on my journey to become a Franciscan friar.

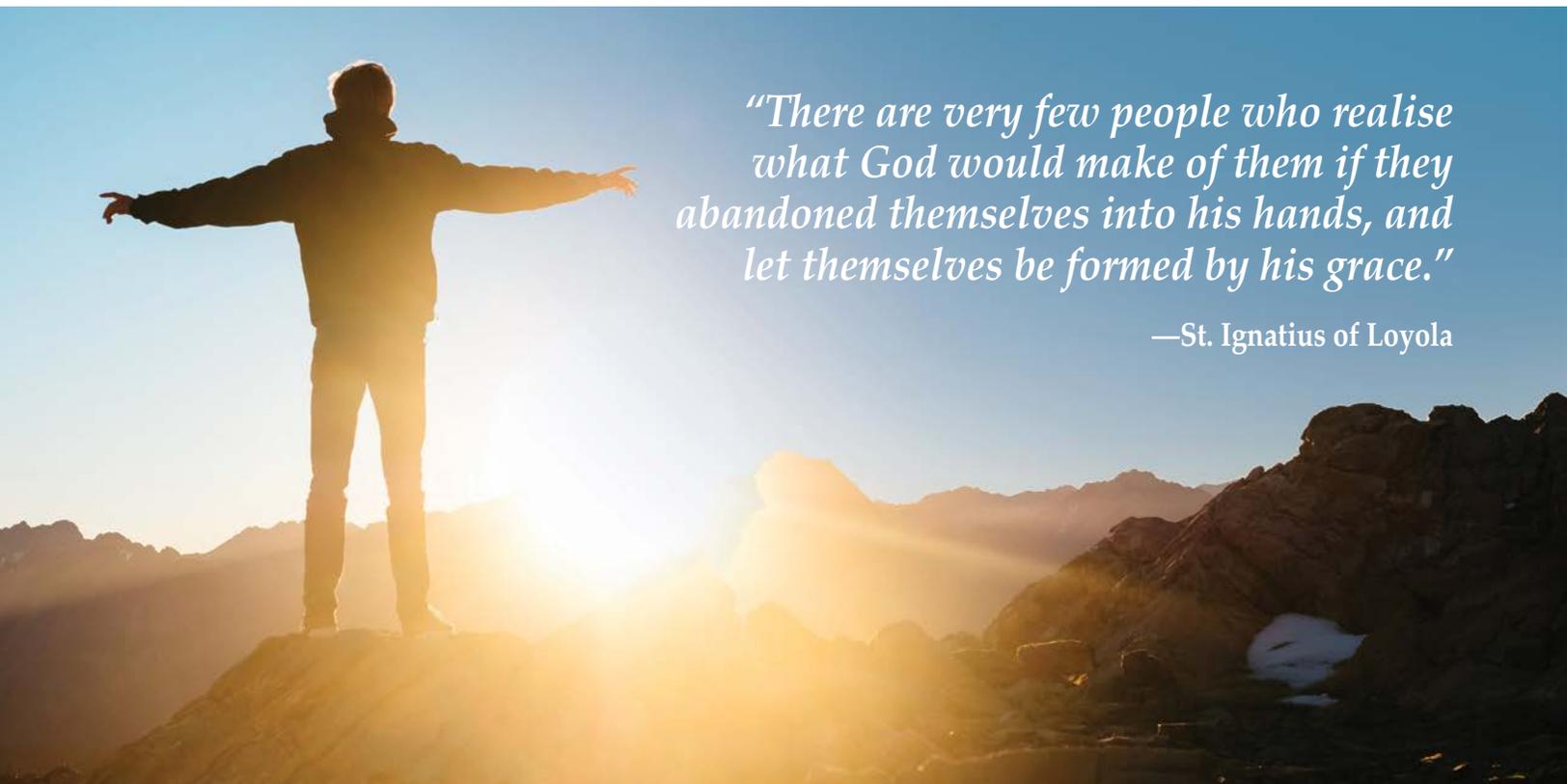
Called to Serve

After graduating from college I got in touch with the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. This began a period of discernment which involved a great deal of study, prayer, and reflection. I discovered I am very much attracted to the Franciscan Custody’s charism, and I believe God is calling me to join this community of selfless and joyful men. Above all, I look forward to serving God, and ministering to pilgrims in the Holy Land.

Prayer & Invitation

Please pray that my fellow classmates and I can resolve the student loan debt blocking our path to religious life. As you know, the Church desperately needs priests, sisters, and brothers. With your help, our class will soon reach its goal of serving Christ and humanity.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions you might have at: Ron@rescue vocations.org.



“There are very few people who realise what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves into his hands, and let themselves be formed by his grace.”

—St. Ignatius of Loyola

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 from entering formation to become a priest, sister or brother. My classmates are discerning all over the country.

Ron Cuenco
Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land

Hannah Houser
Sisters of Saint Francis, Oldenburg

Jim Musgrave
Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan

Peyton Kerkman
Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln, NE

Gretchen Erlichman
Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace

Richard McAlister
Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Patrick Kelly
Dominican Friars of the Province of Saint Joseph (Eastern Province)

Brittany Behrens
Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

Thomas Conroy
Dominican Friars of the Province of Saint Joseph (Eastern Province)

Joseph Lynch
Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

Jean Clumson-Eklu
Congregation of Saint John

Erin Lyons
Sisters of the Holy Cross

Elizabeth Luna
Missionaries Guadalupanas of the Holy Spirit

Hector Ramirez
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Fran Masawi
The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg

Emmanuelle Del Castillo
Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Sacred Hearts Community)

Joseph Silver
Benedictine Monks of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey

Sarah Huckins
Disalced Carmelite Nuns in San Diego

Victoria Clarizio
Passionist Nuns, Pittsburgh, PA

Tyler Wisniewski
Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

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

LABOURÉSM
HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS™

Why is Labouré Needed?



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



Are blocked from pursuing this call due to education loans*



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

How does the Mission Work?

OUR ASPIRANTS

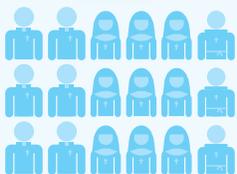
- Are discerning a vocation and have been accepted into a diocese or religious institute
- Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
- Are trained by Labouré in Catholic-based fundraising and are provided with practical tools, personal mentoring, and accountability
- 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?

325+



Assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life

\$8.6 MILLION



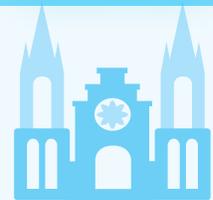
Raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003

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.