

This is my Vocation Story

Cecile Servais

Community:
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, PA

Alma Mater:
Slippery Rock University

Phone:
(724) 674-5790

Email:
Cecile@rescuevocations.org

My name is Cecile Servais and I believe the Lord has called me to evangelize, foster vocations, and engage in social work as a Bernardine Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis. This is my story.

In the Beginning

I was raised in Western Pennsylvania. With the exception of my paternal grandmother, who was a Secular Franciscan, we were a family of nonpracticing Catholics. At the age of eight, my grandmother began taking me to church, and through her initiative and loving support I received the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

I was confirmed at the age of 13 after enrolling myself in Confirmation class. My devotion was a source of friction in the family, so my relationship with our Savior became increasingly contemplative and personal.

My Faith

I developed an active prayer life while still very young and, noticing this, my parish priest surprised me with a key to the church. This enabled me to pray before the Blessed Sacrament as frequently as I liked. I was also fond of hiking into the woods to commune with God.

As a young adult I continued to attend Mass. I also participated in a prayer group and guided studies at a local Franciscan retreat center. Although I had a growing interest in religious life, I did not feel called at that time. I married at 22 and was blessed with two beautiful daughters, but sadly the marriage did not last (and was eventually annulled). It was heartbreaking, but I continued to trust in God's plan.

Later, while managing a small chain of Catholic bookstores, I became well versed in apologetics — so much so that I was invited to lecture at local churches. As mid-life approached, I enrolled in college, eventually receiving my bachelor's and master's degrees.

One day, while praying in the campus chapel, I distinctly heard our Lord speak to me. He said: "It is time."

"One day, while praying in the campus chapel, I distinctly heard our Lord speak to me. He said: 'It is time.'"

—Cecile Servais



My Vocation

Saying “yes” to a vocation was easy for me. Finding a community that would accept a woman over 50 with two grown children and student loan debt was a bit of a challenge.

I briefly discerned with the Carmelites as an extern sister, where it became clear I was not being called to monastic life. The following year, while looking into a fraternity of Secular Franciscans that met at the Bernardine Sisters’ Motherhouse near Philadelphia, I shared my vocation story. This prompted a Bernardine sister to ask very directly: “why don’t you join us?” I was a little taken aback, but pleased by the invitation. Soon, I began attending Mass regularly at the Bernardine chapel, and as time passed I gradually understood I was discerning a vocation with the Bernardine Sisters.

“For me, there has never been a question about God’s will regarding life’s ‘ultimate’ calling.”

—Cecile Servais

Called to Serve

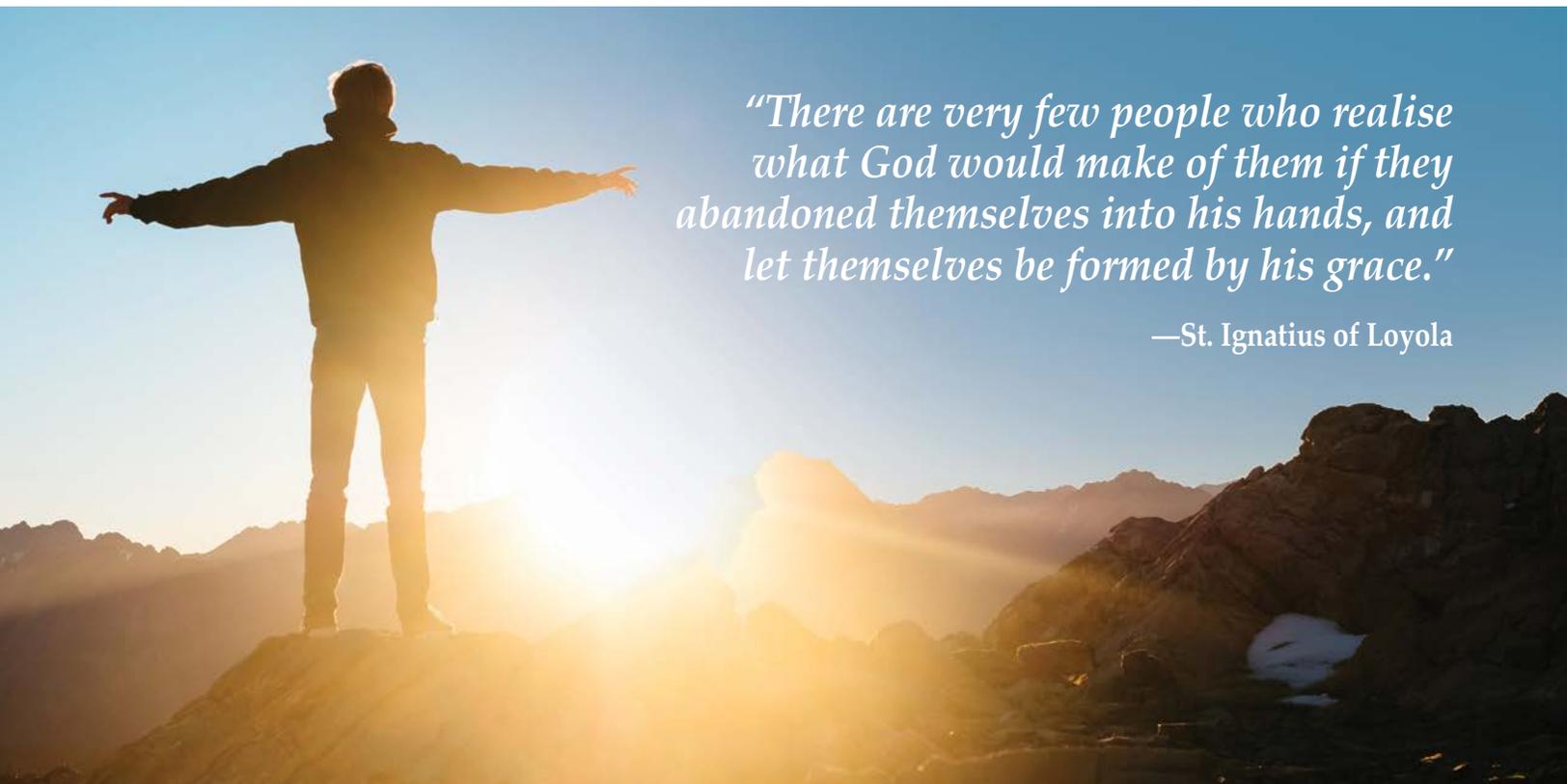
The Bernardines are an “evangelical,” active congregation, not defined by the type of apostolate, but by the need as it exists within the community. At this time, they minister in catechetics, education, social work, elder-care and outreach to the poor. If given a choice, however, I would very much like to work for the promotion of religious vocations — for which “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Mt. 9: 27). I would also like to work as a counselor for my sisters or other religious, to “serve as one to my own.”

For me, there has never been a question about God’s will regarding life’s “ultimate” calling. Jesus said: “I came so that [you] might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). I believe my vocation as a religious is how God desires for me to witness that love and abundant life.

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: Cecile@rescuevocations.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

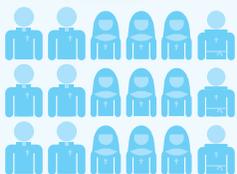
- Are discerning a vocation and have been accepted into a diocese or religious institute
- Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
- Are trained by Labouré in Catholic-based fundraising and are provided with practical tools, personal mentoring, and accountability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