

This is my Vocation Story

Jean Clumson-Eklu

Community:
Congregation of St John

Alma Mater:
University of Bridgeport

Phone:
(203) 520-4792

Email:
jean@rescuevocations.org

My name is Jean Clumson-Eklu. I am called to serve Christ and humanity as a member of the Brothers of Saint John. This is my story.

In the Beginning

Although I currently live in Stratford, Connecticut, I'm originally from Togo, a small French speaking country in West Africa. Growing up, my nine siblings and I were exposed to both the Catholic faith through my father, and the Protestant religion through my mother. Due to family complications, I spent much of my childhood in the homes of relatives, who took great care with me – something I viewed as a sign of God's loving providence.

My Faith

I was introduced to Christian fellowship while quite young as we participated in Protestant praise and worship gatherings. The biblical stories fascinated me and, as the oldest of my cousins, I soon took it upon myself to instruct them in the Christian faith using my book of illustrated bible stories and the little knowledge I'd gleaned from attending Catholic school.

Although I was attracted to the things of God in my early years, my faith diminished after confirmation and I rarely attended Mass. Four years later, a friend shared his experiences at summer camp with the Sisters of Saint John. He'd had so much fun I was determined to attend the following camp. With no financial means, the sisters allowed me to participate as a volunteer. While at camp, I acted in a play for the younger children entitled *The Little Prince of Saint Exupery*. Participating in this play helped me realize that Jesus was seeking my friendship and devotion rather than the stern, master/servant relationship I'd previously envisioned.

With my new understanding of Christian faith, I began helping the sisters prepare Catechism classes as well as summer camps, but more importantly my faith was growing deeper through praying the rosary and frequent Eucharistic adoration. At a subsequent camp I encountered the Brothers of Saint John, and was struck by their simplicity and sense of pure joy. It was about this time, during my senior year in high school, that I began reading the *Lives of the Saints* and desiring a closer union with Christ.

My Vocation

After a year and a half of praying the daily rosary for discernment, a moment of clarity came during Sunday Mass. As the priest raised the holy Eucharist, I said the words, "Jesus, I want to be completely Yours forever." At that moment, I realized the desire to belong to Jesus was not mine, but rather a proposal from Him to be His alone — He was merely waiting for my consent. When I answered yes, a feeling of peace and joy filled my heart.



“I immediately went to the campus chapel to pray and, while there, I met with divine providence.”

—Jean Clumson-Eklu

Some time later, while enrolled in medical school, I resolved to follow my calling to religious life. It seemed my spiritual struggles were finally over, but in fact they were only beginning. After announcing my decision to surrender my life to Christ as a Brother of Saint John, it quickly became apparent my family had different ideas. Many felt I should at least complete medical school before considering religious life, and their arguments eventually prevailed.

Once again immersed in my studies, and with little time for prayer and adoration, my spiritual life suffered. I drifted into apathy as I watched my vocation slipping away. One day, when I had hit an emotional rock bottom, a stranger walked up to me in the school cafeteria and said, “Jesus loves you.” Those were words I desperately needed to hear. I immediately went to the campus chapel to pray and, while there, I met with divine providence. A religious sister introduced herself and, after a brief conversation, arranged for me to take the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

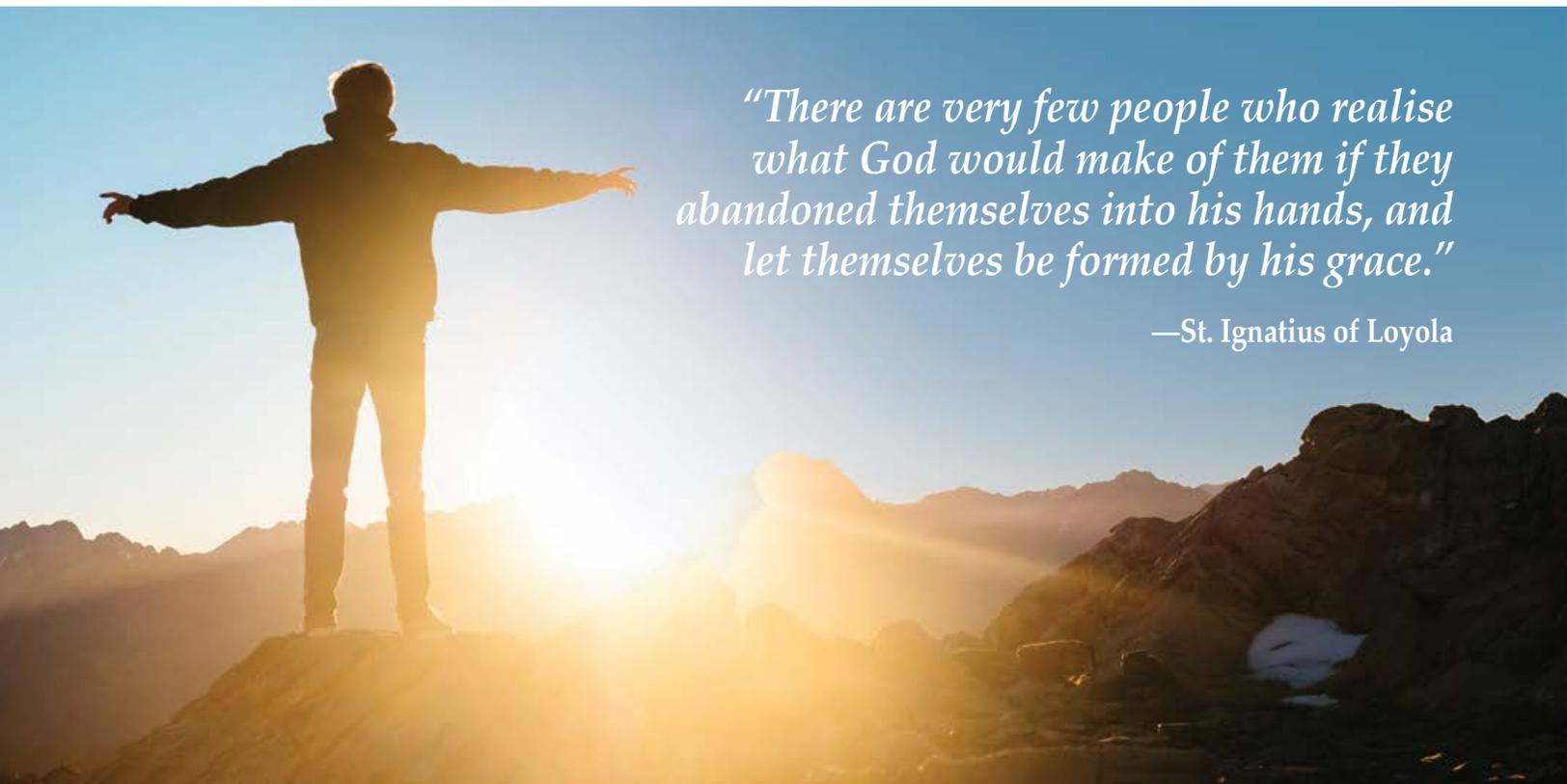
Called to Serve

The exercises were like a second conversion for me. They reinforced my understanding of Jesus’s words in John:15: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...” Experiencing Saint Loyola’s exercises was a turning point for me; I’ve since decided not to pursue a career in medicine, while deepening my relationship with the Brothers of Saint John. Visits to their priories have confirmed my belief that I am called to serve Christ as a religious brother. I have graciously been accepted to enter formation once I am free of education debt.

Prayer & Invitation

Please pray that my fellow Labouré classmates and I can resolve the student loan debt blocking our path to religious life. As you know, the Church desperately needs new 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: jean@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

Joseph Lynch
Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

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)

Erin Lyons
Sisters of the Holy Cross

Elizabeth Luna
Missionaries Guadalupanas of the Holy Spirit

Hector Ramirez
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Jean Clumson-Eklu
Congregation of Saint John

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?



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?

325+



Assisted into formation to the priesthood or religious life

\$8.6 MILLION



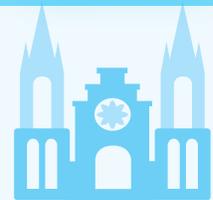
Raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003

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.