



Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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Dear Friends in Christ,

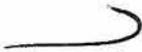
As Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, one of my most important pastoral priorities is promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. I know that this vital task for the life of our Church must be your priority as well. Unfortunately, in the United States today, thousands of vocations go unfulfilled because the men and women who are called to serve Christ are burdened with tens of thousands of dollars of student loans that they must pay off before they can begin their formation. Although their debt burdens may often appear to be unsurmountable, Divine Providence, through the workings of Saint Catherine Labouré and Our Lady's Miraculous Medal, has granted us a creative and highly effective solution: **The Labouré Society**, a non-profit tax-exempt organization established and run by devoted Catholic lay professional men and women.

Labouré trains prospective priests, sisters and brothers (Labouré calls them Aspirants) to work as a fundraising team for six months to raise funds to pay off their student loan debts, helped by Labouré mentor-coaches. The Aspirants share their vocation stories with potential donors, ask for their prayers, and offer them the opportunity to help ensure the future of the Church's sacramental and religious life. At the end of six months, Labouré assesses each Aspirant's efforts and needs and, based on the team's overall results, issues each Aspirant a financial award. Instead of taking ten to fifteen years to pay off their student loans, most Labouré Aspirants are awarded sufficient funds in twelve to eighteen *months* to be debt free and able to enter formation.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has already benefitted from the service Labouré provides, as have many other dioceses and religious orders. Labouré is assisting future St. John's seminarians. Our current Director of Religious Education is a member of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, where a Labouré alumna is a new Sister. In conjunction with St. John's Seminary, Labouré is exploring the development of a program that will help seminarians with their pastoral formation. Our Office for Vocations staff attended Labouré's Aspirant training program; they were profoundly impressed by the depth and strength of its spiritual and practical content.

In short, I am happy to give my full support to Labouré, and I hope that you will prayerfully consider being receptive to and supportive of its efforts, which are so crucial for the Church today. As Saint John Paul II said: "Those who are called to the consecrated life have a special experience of the light which shines forth from the Incarnate Word" (*Vita Consecrata* 15). The Labouré Society's work enables young people to respond freely to this extraordinary call from God, so that His light may shine in our world.

May Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, grant you peace and joy,


Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles