



# DONATE

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# This is my Vocation Story

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*My name is Tony Ramirez. I am called to live a life of prayer and service to God's people with the Benedictines of Saint Joseph Abbey. This is my story.*

## In the Beginning

Growing up in Georgia and from a divorced household, my family was not very devout, only attending Mass at Christmas and Easter. I did however receive my First Holy Communion.

Things changed when I was 14. I was in California visiting my grandmother when I caught the swine flu. I was comatose and quarantined in the hospital, lost fifty pounds due to lack of nutrition, and my body was rejecting medications. Throughout it all, my grandmother never left my side, praying the rosary day and night. While I was unconscious, a priest anointed me. That night, my body went into shock; but the next morning, to the bewilderment of the doctors, I awoke perfectly healthy. My grandmother took me to church to give thanks. In front of a relic of Saint Anthony, I prayed for the first time. I began insisting on going to Mass weekly, and started thinking about the priesthood.

*"In seeking holiness,  
I find purpose and  
fulfillment. The  
priesthood is my path to  
deepen this commitment,  
dedicated to serving  
others and mirroring  
God's love in every  
action."*

—Tony Ramirez

## My Vocation

As I entered high school, I met a priest who became an important mentor to me. He listened to me, and invited me to be an altar server and to attend a discernment retreat. He taught me about priesthood and what it means to be a good and holy priest. On his advice, I attended Saint Joseph Abbey College, a seminary preparatory school, then entered Notre Dame Major Seminary in New Orleans.

That next summer was a difficult time for the Church with the release of two scandals that really rocked my world view. I left seminary and found myself in a period of disillusionment. What came next was truly miraculous for me.



*“Pursuing priesthood unveils a profound understanding of humanity’s brokenness. In witnessing suffering and embracing compassion, I am drawn to heal and bring God’s love into the world.”*

—Tony Ramirez

I began working at a nearby parish and one day, a woman and her mother came in to ask about some statues there. Learning that I had been in seminary, they invited me to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Medjugorje with them, even buying me a plane ticket!

That trip was pivotal to my faith journey. In Medjugorje, I was able to find healing, to regain a sense of my true self, and to surrender my worries and anxieties to Our Lady. I realized that the Lord fulfills His promise to provide even when others fail me, and that the Lord was not done with me yet. At the tomb of the Franciscan martyrs, my vocation returned. I entered the tomb spiritually dead; I came out of it risen to new life.

## Called to Serve

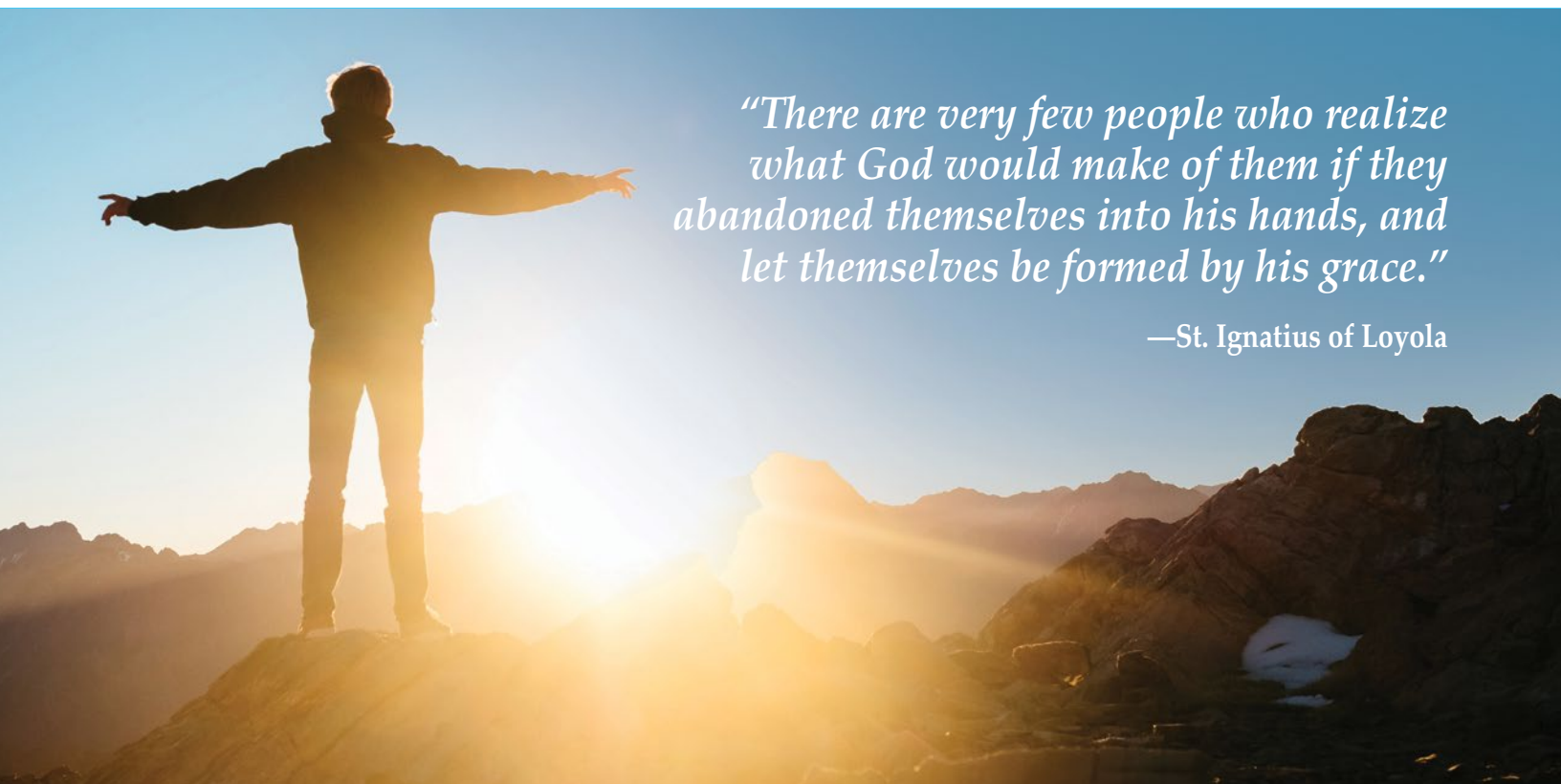
Upon my return home, I began to research religious orders. After much reflection, prayer and discussion with spiritual directors, I discerned that the Lord is leading me to explore a vocation with the Benedictine monks of the Swiss American Congregation at Saint Joseph Abbey. Saint Joseph’s has always felt like a second home to me, and I’ve held a deep love for its monastic and Benedictine spirituality since my freshman year of college.

To be a priest is to be there for people in their darkest and ugliest moments, and to be a beacon of light that helps them through the darkness, and leads them to healing and love. I want to be that beacon for others.

## Prayer & Invitation

Please pray for me and for my fellow Labouré classmates on our vocation journeys.

Feel free to reach out with any questions you might have at: [Tony@rescuevocations.org](mailto:Tony@rescuevocations.org).



*“There are very few people who realize 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

This means that I am a fundraiser for a class of aspiring priests, sisters and brothers. A recent study confirmed that nearly one out of every two 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 nation.

**Lizzie Kenkel**  
Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln

**John Solheid**  
Congregation of St. Basil

**Alexandra Buchlmayer**  
Passionist Nuns of St. Joseph Monastery

**Katie Power**  
Discalced Carmelites of St. Therese of Lisieux

**Michael Horka**  
Capuchin Franciscans of the Province of St. Joseph

**Amanda Tennyson**  
Discalced Carmelites of Our Mother of Mercy and St. Joseph

**Antonio La Barbera**  
Diocese of Lubbock

**Noah Marangoni**  
Diocese of Erie

**Kiana Nava**  
Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles

**David Georgeanni**  
Diocese of Trenton

**Brandon Yurcin**  
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

**Jake Smith**  
Archdiocese of Denver

**Latonja Taylor**  
Poor Clares of Clarisse Monastero S. Maria Del Paradiso in S. Leonardo

**Tony Ramirez**  
The Benedictines of Saint Joseph Abbey

**Dan Rochester**  
Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest

**Marie Arnold**  
Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará

## With your help, we will rebuild the Church!

*My goal is to raise \$60,000 (the average student loan amount) before June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year via The Labouré Society, a Catholic non-profit that helps aspirants like me to answer God's call.*

Every aspirant is in serious discernment with a diocese or community and is required to work to liquidate his/her assets in order to make his/her 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 that we can answer God's call together!

Our class video, once available, may be viewed online at [www.rescue vocations.org](http://www.rescue vocations.org). **LABOURÉ®** HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS®

# Why is Labouré Needed?



The average amount of educational loans blocking aspirants in Labouré from answering God's call\*



Many religious communities cannot afford to assume their aspirants' loan debts



Most dioceses will allow some debt but have a limited threshold for acceptance



Supported by 80+ bishops & 250+ religious institutions to help deliver their aspirants debt-free

# How does the Mission Work?

## OUR ASPIRANTS

Are discerning a vocation and have been selected 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, 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 upon joining the program

Trains each aspirant in Catholic-based philanthropy

Mentors each aspirant to build a unified class; each individual works toward the collective goal

Accompanies each aspirant through ongoing accountability and guidance to ensure successful completion of individual and class fundraising plans

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?

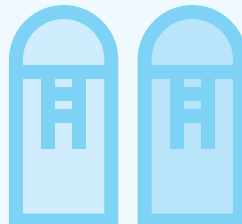
400+



Assisted into formation for the priesthood or religious life

## SEPARATE FUNDING SOURCES

100% of aspirant-raised funds go to the direct benefit of aspirants in the program



Labouré Staff raise separate funding for overhead and general operation expenses

One organization - two separate silos of funds. Labouré supports vocations at no cost to the aspirant or their institution.

\$12 MILLION



Raised by Labouré aspirants since 2003

\*According to 2022 Forbes Magazine, the national average education loan debt can be as high as \$40k. For aspirants in the Labouré program the average debt is \$60k-80k. 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.