



This is my Vocation Story



Billy Neal

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Diocese of Memphis

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My name is Billy Neal. I am called to serve Christ and His Church as a priest with the Diocese of Memphis. This is my story.

In the Beginning

I was born and raised in a devout Catholic family in Memphis, Tennessee. I received the majority of my faith formation and catechesis from my father, who was a convert. We attended Mass regularly, and prayed together at least once a day. Several times throughout my life, various people had asked me if I'd ever thought of being a priest, but I never seriously considered it before becoming an altar server as an adult. I had thought about the possibility of altar serving for several years before volunteering to do so, as it seemed a great way to both become more involved at church and practice my faith in a new and concrete way.

My Vocation

To say that altar serving was transformative in my life would be an understatement. Whenever I entered the sacristy and began to vest for Mass, I felt a profound contentment. The closer I was to the altar, the more at peace I felt. I entered into the liturgy much more deeply than I had when I simply attended Mass. Previously, attending Mass had been like looking at a beautiful painting; when serving, it was like viewing the same painting through 3-D glasses. I noticed things that I never had before, and the entire experience was much more vivid and moving.

When a seminarian was tasked with training altar servers in some changes our new pastor wanted to implement, I was intrigued. We conversed a lot, and he asked if I wanted to learn how to be Master of Ceremonies (a role that helps prepare for the Mass and assists the priest in ensuring the proper flow of the liturgy). I accepted, eager to learn more. Eventually, this same seminarian also asked if I'd ever thought about the priesthood, noting how seriously I took the liturgy and how eager I was to participate in it.

In the past, the people who had mentioned the priesthood to me didn't really know me. This time, it was

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—Billy Neal



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different. This seminarian knew me well – we had served Mass together, he had taught me a lot about the liturgy, and I admired him for his reverence and knowledge. He arranged for me to talk to the diocesan vocations director, who pointed out several areas in my life that indicated a potential calling and asked me to consider them. For the first time, I started to think seriously about being a priest. It was such a big and unexpected change that it took several months for me to truly process.

Called to Serve

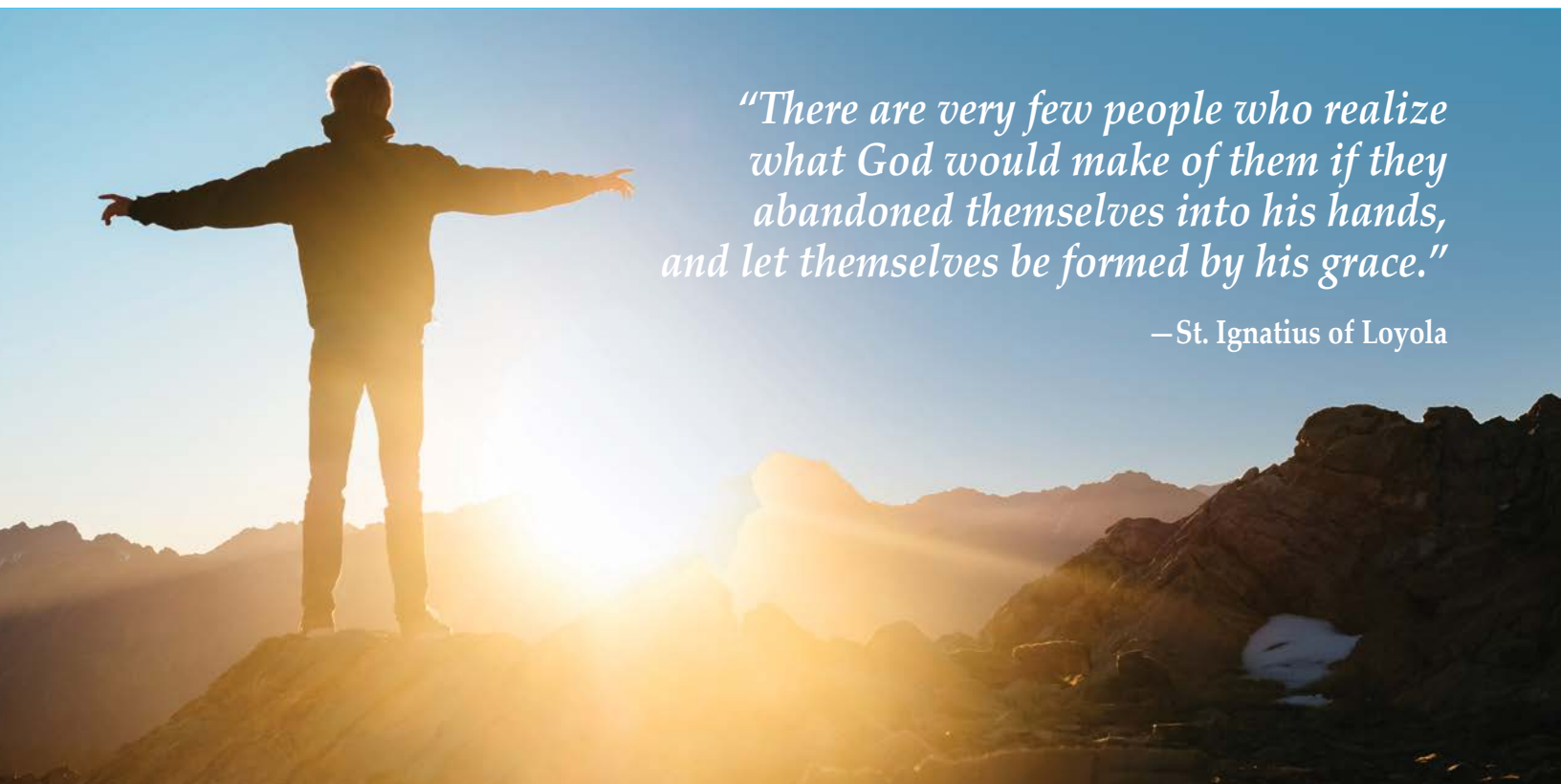
My mind was full of uncertainty, so my prayer became a simple one: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." I asked God what he wanted me to do, and He quieted my doubts. The profound silence was loud and clear. I applied to the seminary, and have not looked back since.

I look forward to serving as a priest of the Diocese of Memphis—to training the next generation to serve the Mass, to helping lead youth ministry, and most of all, to serving at the altar daily, bringing the True Presence of Christ's Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity to His people in the celebration of the Eucharist.

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:
BillyNeal@rescuevocations.org

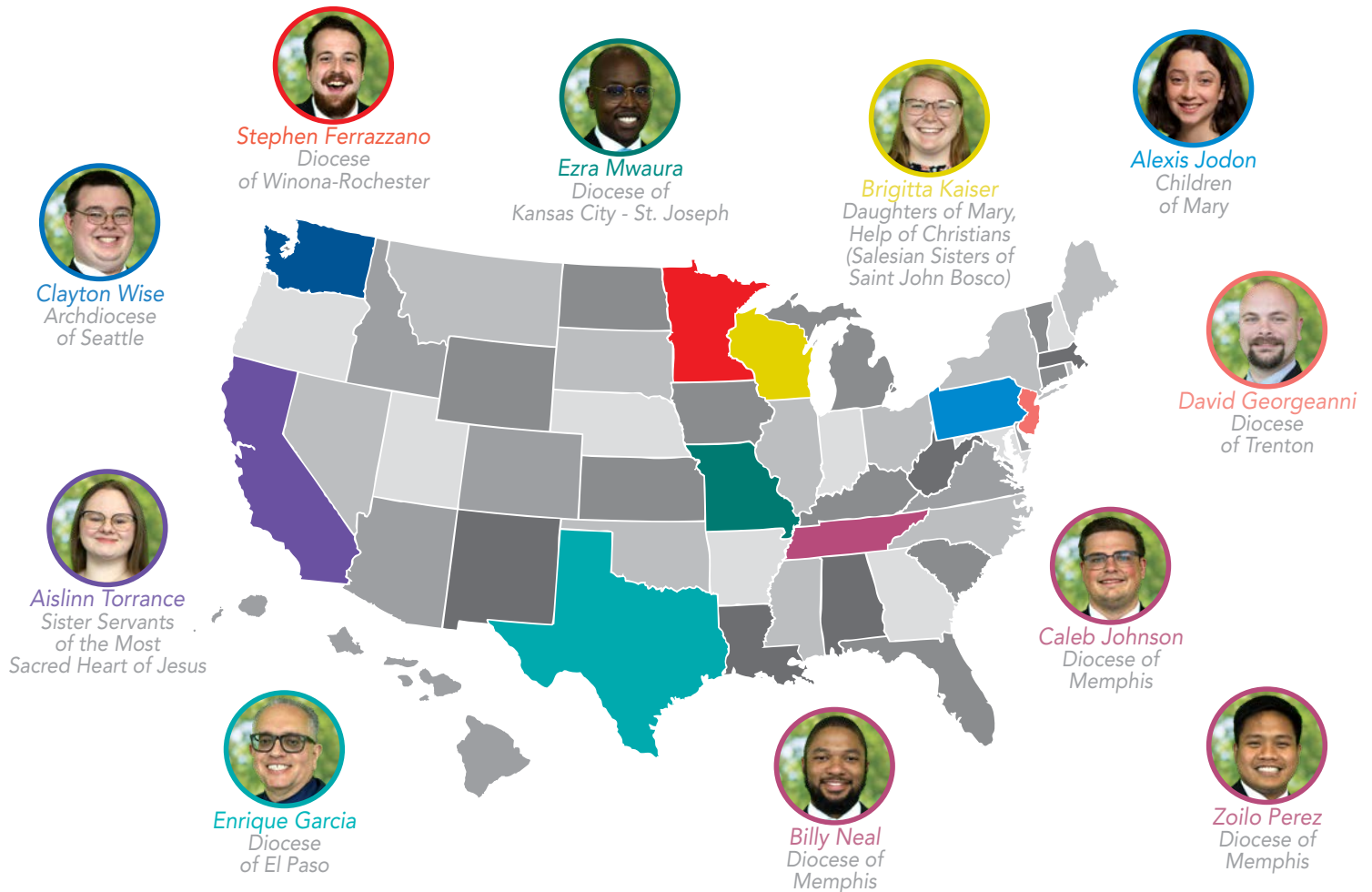


*"There are very few people who realize
what God would make of them if they
abandoned themselves into his hands,
and let themselves be formed by his grace."*

— 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. Many discerners are blocked from pursuing seminary / religious formation due to student loan debt - and that's not the only obstacle. Many of our religious institutions struggle to pay for candidates' seminary / formation. My classmates are discerning all over the nation.



With your help, we will rebuild the Church!

My goal is to raise \$60,000 during this current class of 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 / eparchy 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 education debt.

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. **LABOURÉ®** HELP RESCUE VOCATIONS®

Why is Labouré Needed?



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



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



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



Rising formation costs often limit missionary activities and care of aging priests and religious.

How does the Mission Work?



Are discerning a vocation and have been selected into a diocese / eparchy or religious institute

Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans and/or formation expenses

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 educational debt



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?

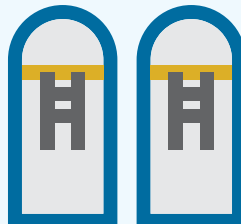
350+ INSTITUTIONS



Supported by 350+ religious institutions & 80+ bishops to help deliver their aspirants debt-free

SEPARATE FUNDING SOURCES

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



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

Labouré Staff raise separate funding for overhead and general operation expenses

\$14+ MILLION



Raised by 430 Labouré aspirants assisted into formation for the priesthood or religious life 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 \$80k-100k. 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 program needs.