



## Claretian Missionaries USA/Canada

May 1, 2017

Dear Laboure Donors,

I would like to share with you about our recent experience with the Laboure Society. My name is Fr Ray Smith, CMF and I am the vocation director with the Claretian Missionaries in the USA/Canada Province. Until we had learned of this program 2 years ago, we were unable to consider any young man who carried a student loan debt over a few thousand dollars. The cost for us to educate a young man until the point of ordination, which includes, housing, meals, classes, books, transportation, formators, and health insurance, is well over half a million dollars. Given we are committed to serving the most underserved populations in our country, this makes absorbing previous student debt impossible for us.

Hearing reports from other religious communities about their positive experience with the Laboure Society, our province decided to enroll a young man with their program. As we were equally committed to the success for our aspirant, both vocation directors participated in Laboure's Boot Camp to better understand their program and support our aspirant. With their help, our young man was able to alleviate his debt in less than a year and begin formation with us the following year. If he had tried to pay that debt off from his own salary, he would not have joined us for a minimum of 5 years, and in his case, he would have been too old to enter formation. Laboure truly saved a vocation.

There are so many things that I love about their program, but for the purpose of your consideration, I will name just a few. First, The training that Laboure offers for their aspirants to alleviate their debt is truly Catholic in the best sense; it is not a fundraising program with a spiritual facade, but rather a spirituality program meant to grow the body of Christ as it urges the faithful to become active partners in the vocations of our youth. At the same time, the aspirants grow deeper in their understanding they are one family in Christ, as the gifts they raise are applied to a class of aspirants, not just them individually; this is a taste of the communion theology many will study in seminary or formation.

Over the course of the year, I watched our aspirant grow in confidence and ownership of his vocation. Because of Laboure's training, he now has much-needed skills on how to fundraise, which is never taught in seminaries but always desperately needed in our parish settings. Finally, I would mention that the ongoing support of Laboure with its mentors and accountability partners can give you the confidence that aspirants are not just pushed out the door with a manual but rather they are accompanied through the whole process. This is undoubtedly the reason why Laboure has had a nearly perfect success rate with the aspirants who join its program.

I am deeply grateful to Laboure for their part in the person our seminarian has become. I am deeply grateful to Laboure for bringing much-needed assistance to vocation directors who often encounter youth who will not consider a call to ordination or religious life because of their debt. I am also deeply grateful to Laboure because of their commitment to make sure our Church has a future.

I believed in their mission from the start and was the first to contribute from my own, albeit limited, pocket. I would not ask you to do something I have not done myself. From this experience, I have experienced such graces to know I have had a part in helping our Church grow. I have also seen the Gospel come alive in this process, watching how God moves in the hearts of His faithful and provides for His children. You have a part in a great work, may you know that whatever you can do in supporting our young men and women with your prayers, financial gifts, and spreading the word, will be a 7-fold blessing for you.

In Mary's Heart,

Fr Ray Smith, CMF  
Vocation Director for the Claretian Missionaries.