

# Delivering Vocations by Removing Student Loans

By Tom Panas

**D**id you know that most dioceses and religious communities require that individuals be free of student loans before entering formation? This can be a formidable if not overwhelming challenge, especially given the enormous cost of education today, currently much in the news

Indeed, of an estimated 10,000 individuals discerning a religious or priestly vocation in the United States each year, 42 percent are blocked from pursuing this calling because they are repaying educational loans. This is a sad situation, especially at a time when the Church is in such need of vocations.

The Labouré Society (TLS) offers guidance and a solution. One of the Catholic Daughter National Charities, TLS helps individuals resolve student loans so they can enter formation. Since it began in 2003, The Society has assisted hundreds seeking vocations, awarding over \$2.5 million in grants (disbursing \$2 million) and creating “a network of thousands of praying singles, families, religious, priests and bishops.” Founder and Executive Director Cy Laurent believes that “a ‘springtime’ of these vocations is at hand” and that “assisting them through The Society presents an eternal return-on-investment opportunity with full tax deductibility.”

An individual who receives help from TLS is accepted into The Labouré Society’s program and called an Aspirant. Each Aspirant participates in training and is matched with an “AP Volunteer.” These volunteers are successful Catholic professionals who are a source of weekly encouragement and accountability for Aspirants during their 6 month fundraising and evangelization program with TLS. There are currently 14 AP Volunteers from around the nation. *Share* magazine was fortunate to speak with AP Volunteer Frank Moore of Missouri, a Harvard MBA and Land O Lakes executive, to learn more about his participation.

## **Share: How long have you been an AP volunteer?**

As a board member, I was invited to become an Accountability Partner (AP) Volunteer. With my background in sales and leadership, TLS thought I would be a good accountability partner for Aspirants and I’ve been honored and moved by the experience of working with these young priests and religious to be.



Cy Laurent, founder and executive director.

## **Share: What motivated you to accept?**

I first learned about TLS on a radio broadcast and was moved to fly to Minnesota and meet with TLS staff in person to learn more. There, several compelling reasons were solidified: (1) The Labouré Society has a clear and important mission that is growing in demand with the great need for priests and religious; (2) Participation is a tangible way for the laity to help increase vocations (3) the courage and passion of Aspirants called to Catholic religious life today is inspiring, and (4) there is wisdom in helping individuals start their lifelong vocations, which will benefit countless others whom they serve in this life and eternally.



Summer 2013 class which just concluded in July. Many are now entering formation.

**Share: What was it about TLS that attracted you?**

By delivering vocations to priesthood and religious life, we are supplying the necessary individuals to serve in so many ways – parishes, schools, hospitals, the elderly, the poor, prisons, the hungry and so on. It’s one charity that is helping so many more, including, primarily, our Catholic Church. Can you imagine losing all these vocations and their good work as we close parishes and schools simply because of student loans?

**Share: What differentiates the Labouré Society from other organizations that might help?**

TLS focuses on women and men with student loans that other Catholic organizations cannot typically tackle. For example, if someone has \$5,000 or less in loans, they might receive assistance at their local parish or diocese. However, men and women with \$5,000 to \$100,000 or more, often come to us with literally nowhere else to turn if they hope to become a priest or religious. As a donor, volunteer and parent of daughters in Catholic universities, I also like the fact that TLS only works with Aspirants who have been accepted by their dioceses or communities.

**Share: Can you explain the process by which you work with Aspirants and how you help them?**

TLS supports Aspirants in a six-month program or ‘class’ consisting of three parts: training preparation (book reading, vocation story writing), an intensive three-day training weekend (prayer, photo and video recording , learning), and weekly accountability coaching and monthly class calls – that’s where we AP Volunteers really play a role. We teach them how to share their story, spread a culture of vocation discernment to priesthood and religious life, and become involved in fund-raising for vocations like theirs in the process. They each speak with hundreds of people. It is a form of ministry with a lot of

personal and spiritual growth – and many opportunities for evangelization. The Aspirants need financial assistance and our Church needs more vocations so TLS steps in to assist both.

**Share: Does the program ever extend beyond six months?**

If an Aspirant has a large need (e.g. more than \$40,000), they may participate in more than one six month class until they receive enough grant dollars to resolve their educational loans. I may continue to work with them or they may have a different AP Volunteer.

**Share: What happens if an Aspirant begins working with The Labouré Society and then leaves formation?**

TLS makes quarterly pre-payments while an individual is in formation. If they leave, they resume their own loan payments. That helps TLS be responsible with donor funds and the Aspirants can discern freely.

**Share: Are the majority of your Aspirants men or women?**

The split is approximately 60 percent women entering religious life and 40 percent men entering diocesan or religious priesthood or brotherhood. We love working with all.

**Share: Can you give a real-life example of your experience with an Aspirant?**

Yes, in our spring class this year, I was privileged to serve as the weekly accountability coach for a terrific young woman. At the start, she never questioned God’s calling to be a Sister but she wondered if she could find donors inspired by her calling enough to donate toward vocations, give referrals, and pray for her. She raised \$45,000 in less than six months, learned she has tremendous support for her vocation, and encouraged many.

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# She is ready to serve. Please be willing to help.

**Good news!** Thousands of devoted young people want to be our beloved priests and nuns...

And you can help them.

You can be an answer to prayer and support vocations to our Church.

With your help, individuals like Megan Spelic, can overcome the financial obstacles of entering religious life.



Meet Megan Spelic

Megan wants to serve our elders as a Little Sister of the Poor.

*"The Little Sisters have taught me that our dear Lord suffices and when you live for Him, there's nothing to lose."*

Go to [LaboureSociety.org](http://LaboureSociety.org) to learn more about all the ways to give; including our planned giving program.



**\_\_\_ YES! I will support those called and help to end the shortage of priests and religious.**

*The Labouré Society is a National Charity of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas.* Your donation of ANY amount can be received online at [LaboureSociety.org](http://LaboureSociety.org) OR by sending a check payable to The Labouré Society.

\_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$(as you wish) TAX DEDUCTIBLE

**Please mail to:** The Labouré Society • 1365 Corporate Center Curve, Suite 104, Eagan, MN 55121.  
For more information and to learn about leaving a legacy, call 651.452.1160 or visit [LaboureSociety.org](http://LaboureSociety.org).

**Share: That's a true success story.**

Yes. This summer, she received a \$35,000+ grant from TLS and she started religious formation shortly thereafter. She and her religious community are ecstatic. I have plans to visit her at the monastery this fall and be her first visitor. Her community serves in education, health, catechesis, evangelization and services to the poor.

**Share: What would you say is your favorite part about being an AP volunteer?**

Witnessing the fruit of God's work through this organization and when Aspirants are ordained and profess their vows. You see the Holy Spirit in action everywhere through the Aspirants and The Labouré Society. The journey with them includes so much emotional and spiritual encouragement during countless encounters with potential supporters and challenges to their calling to be a priest, religious sister or brother from those who question the vocation – oftentimes even from family members.

**Share: Are all donors Catholic?**

We have many non-Christians donate because they admire the Aspirants' calling to a lifetime of public service at a very modest income or as a free service.

**Share: This story will be read by 70,000 member reader Catholic Daughters of the Americas for whom The Labouré Society is a Catholic Daughter National Charity. Is there anything you'd like to say to them?**

Thank you! May God richly bless you personally and your organization for your prayers and financial partnership. Since the majority of our Aspirants are women, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas can uniquely appreciate the importance of these young women to the future of our Catholic Church in the United States and worldwide. Please see the ad we have taken out in this issue of Share. We want to support the Catholic Daughters as you support us. Also, please contact our headquarters for more information and to help deliver our new vocations to the Church ([www.LaboureSociety.org](http://www.LaboureSociety.org) or 651-452-1160).

*The Labouré Society is currently accepting applications for the next class of Aspirants: Winter 2014. ☺*

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