

St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco

www.stthomasmore-sf.org

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San Francisco, CA 94108
Telephone: (415) 433-1940
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rzaletel@littler.com

Chaplain Msgr. Labib Kobti

October 31, 2012

Dear Members and Friends of the Society:

Thursday, November 15, 2012 Pastor's Lunch – Bishop Ignatius Wang New Location – Palio d' Asti Restaurant, 640 Sacramento Street

On noon on November 15th, at our Pastor's luncheon, San Francisco Bishop Ignatius Wang will speak to us about the status of the Church in mainland China. Be sure to invite your pastors. The luncheon will be held at the Palio d' Asti Restaurant, 640 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, in the financial district. There is no charge for the pastors. Parking is conveniently located nearby at St. Mary's Garage on California Street between Kearny and Grant or at the Portsmouth Square Garage on Kearny.

A **Luncheon Reservation Form** is attached to this letter to make your reservation with our Treasurer. We ask that reservations be made in advance with payment, if possible, as this greatly assists your Executive Committee and Palio staff to better serve you. *You do not have to be a member of the Society to attend our events.* If you do RSVP but cannot attend, please let us know in advance, as we are charged by Palio based on our number of RSVPs, and we will have to charge you for the lunch.

ANNUAL DUES

Some of you still have not paid your dues. The **2012 Membership Form** (also attached to this letter) may be used to pay your 2012 Dues and to update your membership records. Be sure to let us know if your e-mail address changes. If you are not sure if you paid your dues, please contact Tim Crudo.

The 2012 Membership Form may also be used by new members to join the Society – feel free to copy it, email it, and pass it around! We are actively looking for new members.

NOVEMBER 7
ROUND TABLE – COMPARATIVE RELIGION 101, 5:30 P.M.

Please join us for a roundtable discussion called “Comparative Religion 101” after work at 5:30 p.m. on November 7, at Littler Mendelson, 650 California Street, 20th Floor. We will have a Catholic Priest, Jewish Rabbi, Islam Imam, and Buddhist Priest who will speak about their religion and answer questions from the audience. There is no charge for this event, but you must RSVP to sbecerra@littler.com.

DECEMBER IS THE CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AT THE FAMILY CLUB

On December 13, 2012, we will have our annual Christmas luncheon at noon at the **Family Club**, 545 Powell Street, San Francisco (corner of Bush and Powell). Our essay contest winner will speak.

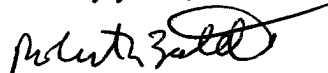
Please join us for this annual event.

Tara Clemens

As described in our last Newsletter, Tara Clemens, a young lawyer who has discerned a religious vocation with the cloistered Dominican nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park is still soliciting contributions to the Laboure Society, a nonprofit organization that fosters vocations to the priesthood and religious life by resolving education loans. Tara’s goal is to raise \$45,000 for the Laboure Society. The STMS Board has authorized a \$250.00 contribution by the STMS in Tara’s name. An anonymous donor will match donations of STMS members up to a maximum of \$500.00. We encourage those who have not done so to donate to this worthy cause. A brochure from Tara and information on the Laboure Society is enclosed, along with several letters from Tara. The tax deductible contributions should be made to the Laboure Society at the address in Eagan Minnesota shown on the attached brochure. Be sure to mention Tara Clemens with your donation. In order to take advantage of the matching gift offer, please let me know if you do make a donation.

For the Executive Committee:

Sincerely yours,



Robert L. Zaletel
President

Enclosures:

2012 Membership Form

November 15 Luncheon Reservation Form

Tara Clemens and Laboure Society Brochure, Thank you note

ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY NOVEMBER 15, 2012 PASTORS LUNCHEON
RESERVATION

NEW LOCATION – PALIO D’ASTI RESTAURANT
640 SACRAMENTO STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

_____ I plan to attend the St. Thomas More Society Luncheon at **12:00 noon** on
Thursday, November 15, at Palio d’Asti Restaurant, 640 Sacramento Street, S.F.

Please reserve ____ places at \$49 per person (over 10 years in practice).

Please reserve ____ places at \$42 per person (10 years or less in practice).

Please reserve ____ places at \$24 per person (law students).

No charge for pastors.

Member Name: _____

Member e-mail: _____

Names of other attendees for whom payment is submitted:

_____ I am bringing the following potential member as a Guest of the Society

_____ I would like to sponsor one or more law students or members of the clergy at \$24 per person and include \$ _____ in my check for such purpose.

The total amount of my enclosed check is \$ _____.

Please make checks payable to the “St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco.” If you RSVP and cannot attend, please let us know in advance.

Please RSVP and send checks to Treasurer:

Timothy Crudo
Latham & Watkins
505 Montgomery Street, 20th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel: (415) 395-8084
Fax: (415) 395-8095
Timothy.crudo@lw.com

**ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO
2012 MEMBERSHIP FORM**

*Use this form to pay your annual Dues and update your Membership Record.
New members may use this form to join the Society.*

Date: _____

Name: _____

Firm, Company or Court: _____

Street Address or P.O. Box: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Home Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Parish: _____

Preferred Address for Society Mailings: **Business** _____ **Home** _____

Law Student? _____

Year Admitted to Bar: _____ **Retired from Practice?** _____

Please accompany this application with current dues. Annual dues are \$100 for attorneys over five (5) years in practice; \$50 for attorneys retired from practice and attorneys with five (5) years or less in practice; and \$25 for law students. Please make checks payable to **St. Thomas More Society**. Thank you!

Return application and check to:
Timothy P. Crudo
Latham & Watkins
505 Montgomery Street, 20th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel: (415) 395-8084
Fax: (415) 395-8095
timothy.crudo@lw.com



Tara Clemens

The Beginning

Born in Alaska, I spent most of my childhood in Washington and Oregon. I grew up in a loving home with a younger sister and brother where my parents passed on to us the Christian faith and the value of family and sacrifice. I loved to study and spend time with those close to me and it was always understood that I would go to college and be the first to complete a Bachelor's degree.

After graduation, I moved out of my parents' home and worked before deciding to also pursue a law degree. Fortunately, the closest law school had a program that allowed me to keep my employment. Upon graduating, I faced a decision – accept a job offer where I was or accept my parents' invitation to return home and resolve my law school loans faster. Taking a leap of faith, I accepted my parents' invitation and returned to Alaska. I have loved being here close to family and friends, working, and volunteering at our parish.



Tara Clemens

My Faith

My first memory of my faith was praying with my mom and giving my heart to Jesus when I was about three years old. I was raised as an Evangelical Protestant, but growing up, I tended to do "just enough". Possessing a stubborn, selfish streak, my faith was often neglected. Then, in high school, I had an "Aha!" moment – I found myself alone. Starting my senior year, I was at a new school and no longer the top of my class and my best friend had moved to a new town. Crumbling, I poured my heart out to God and rededicated my life to Him. Eventually, I was baptized and became very involved in our church.

When I started law school I moved and left my church home. Realizing I was far from Jesus, I began to pray He would show me His church – where He wanted me. Over the next few months, through the invitation of a friend, I attended Mass and spent many hours in personal study and prayer. God answered my prayer by leading me to the Catholic faith. That was five years ago and I haven't looked back, though there are stumbles along the way. I have experienced life apart from God and it is a mere shadow of my worst day with Him.

I have experienced life apart from God and it is a mere shadow of my worst day with Him."

- Tara

The Call

When I moved to Alaska, I felt God had something wonderful in store for me; I intended to find a good man, get married and raise a family. But that summer, I was asked whether I'd thought about becoming a nun. I was shocked – the thought hadn't crossed my mind, but neither could I say I would never consider it. Something, or Someone, prompted me to look a little deeper. I took my time – my vocation discernment was like a slow-blooming flower. Over the

next year, as I prayed, "Lord, your will be done" and I researched communities and talked to wise priests, the petals began to unfurl. Finally, I went on my first discernment retreat and visited the Dominican nuns at Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park, California. From the moment I walked in the door, my soul felt at deep peace, as if I were home. Each subsequent visit only confirmed that initial sense.

Called to Serve



When I started discerning my vocation, I quickly became drawn to the Order of Preachers, otherwise called "Dominicans." The four pillars of Dominican life are prayer, study, community, and preaching. While my introvert nature shied away from "preaching" per se, it was drawn to its purpose – the salvation of souls. I was drawn too by the fact St. Dominic started his order with women who had converted to the Catholic faith! The Dominican nuns were established by St. Dominic about 11 years prior to the founding of his preaching friars.

I spent one month inside the cloister. During that time, I experienced a small taste of life as a Dominican nun. Living a contemplative life of prayer and penance, a woman enters the heart of the Church. Her prayers and sacrifices support the work of the friars and other active members of the Order in a particular way. At the same time, you cannot help but come face to

face with your own sins and faults in the silence.

Some may say cloistered life is a waste, that a life separated from the world is ridiculous and useless. But as one nun expressed, "we have not closed off or run away from the world, but rather, we gladly give our lives to the God of Love and to all our brothers and sisters without exception."

Prayer

Please pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. And in a particular way, please pray for me, that I would persevere in God's will for my life.

Why I'm Writing

I am not only an Aspirant to religious life, but I am also a fundraiser for these vocations. A recent study confirmed that nearly 1 out of 2 Aspirants have student loans and thus most communities and dioceses cannot accept them. It is the only thing that prevents many -including me- from entering formation to become a priest, brother, or sister.

I am seeking to raise the average student loan amount of \$45,000 before December 31, 2012 for a non-profit that helps Aspirants like me -The Labouré Society. It will be difficult, but if 450 individuals donate \$100 or 45 donate \$1,000, I will meet

my goal. I am blessed to have this opportunity to share my love for God, my vocation story, and to ask hundreds of individuals to support vocations like mine by making a donation and remembering us in prayer.

At the end of my class, The Labouré Society will issue grants based on individual effort and the funds available to The Society at large. They will administer the grant while I am in formation and make a final payoff at vows (You can learn more about the program on the back of this letter). If I leave formation for any reason, I will resume my own payments. Every Aspirant in The Society, like me, has been accepted by their diocese or community and is required to work full-time and liquidate their assets to make their own maximum payments.

*"This is the life I greatly desire
-to continue, by God's grace, to be
made holy and to give my life as
a Dominican nun for the love of
God and the salvation of souls."*

-Tara

At the beginning of our class, I met and participated in a weekend training with my classmates on the ethics and biblical basis of fundraising. We are learning practical skills that will help us now and in our future vocations. We've also developed as a team to learn from and support each other. You can see our picture above.

Being part of a team is a great blessing!

Will you join our vocation journeys? Partner with us and be part of my vocation team so we can answer God's call!

The Winter Class of 2013



We Believe in the Value of Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life! Will You Join Us?

The Aspirant

A Publication of The Labouré Society

Fostering Priestly and Religious Vocations Through Student Loan Resolution

Spring 2012, Volume 7, Issue 1

In This Issue

What's Within a Society?
P2 by St. Aspirant Life
P4: A Friend's Viewpoint
Why Join The Society?
What Does it Mean to
Be a Friend?



Our Aspirants to priesthood and religious life are bringing all of themselves to the service of God's Church and his people.

Why a Society?

From the Founder

When I began thinking about our organization almost a decade ago, I realized that there was a variety of names we could choose. We reflected on what we were and who we would be: a foundation, a fund, a collective, a party? It became clear to me that what we wanted to be was something more—the word 'society' seemed to fit just right.

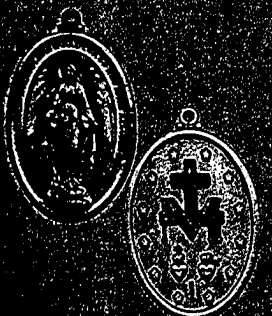
The greatest asset in any society is found in its people: their faith, ingenuity, generosity, care, commitment, ethics, and work. Our 'Aspirants' and our 'Friends' share these values along with their own particular areas of interest, experience, and expertise (see inside).

Together, as part of The Labouré Society, we create and maintain relationships across the nation with individuals, families, parishes, and partner organizations that share our value of the priesthood and religious vocations. In this newsletter, we desire for you to get to know our current Aspirants and help build the culture of vocations. I believe each of these vocations is a miracle and an answer to our prayer. From the variety of their responses to the serious and sometimes silly questions we've proposed, I hope you can see the true beauty of their gifts. God has chosen from among us, people just like us, people with their own experiences and eccentricities that are called to serve all in the body of Christ.

Our Aspirants to priesthood and religious life are bringing all of themselves to the service of God's Church and his people. So, go ahead, get to know them and strengthen The Society. May we all work to build a culture of vocations, live generously, and pray fervently.

Lastly, your insight as a part of The Labouré Society is a great gift to us. Please mail, email, or call with what you like, what we can do better, and what we could start to do. We are committed to growing our Society through quarterly newsletters, support opportunities, social media, personal calls and letters, and most foundationally daily prayer. We all know of someone who should know of The Labouré Society. Please share our newsletter with them.

- Cy Laurent, Founder and Executive Director



About The Labouré Society

Why Are We needed?

- There are an estimated 10,000 individuals discerning a priestly or religious vocation in the US each year*
- 42% are blocked from pursuing this call due to educational loans*
- The average vocational 'Aspirant' in The Labouré Society owes \$40,000 in educational loans + interest
- Most religious communities cannot assume this debt
- Most dioceses will allow some debt but have a limited threshold for acceptance

* (NRVC, Vision Study, 2010)

What Have We Accomplished?

- Operating since 2003
- Over 220 assisted into formation
- Over \$2 million in grants disbursed, over 90% of funds received
- Network of thousands of praying singles, families, religious, priests, & bishops
- Efficient service: A modest staff of 3 employees in a donated office

How Do We Do It?

Our Aspirants:

- Discern a vocation and are accepted into a diocese or approved religious community
- Are blocked from entering or continuing vocational formation due to student loans
- Apply to The Labouré Society and meet intake requirements
- Are trained in ethical fundraising - empowered with practical tools, personal mentoring, and accountability
- Share their vocation stories and participate in vocation culture building and evangelization
- Raise funds for The Labouré Society to benefit many vocations
- Are granted quarterly loan payments covering their educational loans until vows or ordination
- Receive final loan payoff and enter freely into a lifetime of priestly or religious service

The Labouré Society:

- Works with each Aspirant to ensure all personal means are utilized to mitigate the loan amount (loan consolidation, asset review, financial counseling, full time employment etc.) prior to acceptance into the program
- Trains each Aspirant in Biblically based philanthropy
- Forms a semi-annual 'Class' of Aspirants
- Mentors each Aspirant building a unified team; each individual works toward the collective goal
- Provides ongoing accountability to ensure proper preparation and completion of personal fundraising plans
- Equips each Aspirant with an online fundraising platform for real time donation processing, reporting, assessment of goals and class interaction
- Facilitates ongoing communication and updates between Aspirants and donors after formation entrance
- Manages Aspirant quarterly loan payments while they are in formation
- Completes loan payoff at ordination or vows

The Labouré Society
651.452.1160 • 1365 Corporate Center Circle, Suite 104, Eagan, MN 55121 • www.laboure-society.org

The Labouré Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible. Gifts offered by our supporters are used to fund the Society's mission and to provide financial assistance to our members. The Labouré Society is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. Gifts offered by our supporters are used to fund the Society's mission and to provide financial assistance to our members.



*The Labouré Society Has Assisted Hundreds of Individuals
Into Priestly and Religious Formation Since 2003.*

We Invite You to Partner with Us in Prayer and Financial Support!

I am Making this Gift in Honor of the Aspirant or Individual who Contacted Me about The Labouré Society:

Name: Tara Comens City/State: _____

Contacted By: Letter ☒ E-mail ☒ Phone ☒ Visit ☒ Other ☒ _____

Prayer is Intrinsic to Our Mission. The Labouré Society is an Association of Individuals Dedicated to Praying for Vocations, with Vocations, and for the Needs of All Members. Please Send us Your Prayer Requests. They will be Remembered at the Society's Holy Masses and by Our Aspirants and Their Communities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/St/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Parish: _____

Diocese: _____

My Gift Amount: \$ _____

- ☒ My check is enclosed and payable to the Labouré Society
- ☒ I am paying by credit card, via secure website: www.labouresociety.org
- ☒ I prefer not to use the website. Please charge my card:
Cardholder Name: _____
Card #: _____ Exp: ____ / ____
- ☒ Signature: _____
- ☒ I may be eligible for a matching gift from my employer
- ☒ I have included The Labouré Society in my estate plans
- ☒ I would like info about including the Labouré Society in my estate plans

Thank You For Your Generosity!

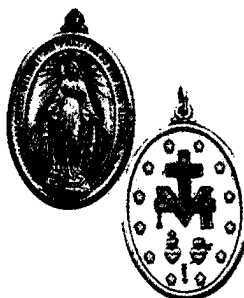
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For
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The Labouré Society

1365 Corporate Center Curve, Suite 104
Eagan, Minnesota 55121

www.LaboureSociety.org



The Labouré Society

Fostering Priestly and Religious Vocations Through Student Loan Resolution

October 8, 2012

St. Thomas More Society
3930 Glen Park Rd
Oakland, CA 94602

Dear Friends,

Thank you for delivering another vocation to the priesthood and religious life through your generous gift of \$250.00.

Your ongoing friendship and support ensures future generations will have all the gifts offered by those in full time religious service in churches, hospitals, schools, prisons, shelters, food kitchens, retreat centers, and everywhere priests and religious bring God's love. This is the legacy of your partnership and the return on your investment in The Labouré Society.

Please share The Labouré Society mission with your family and friends while keeping the Aspirants in your prayers, as they remember you.

*"I trust the Lord with all my heart and know that all things will work for good (Romans 8).
You and The Labouré Society are a blessing to me and I remember you in my daily offering!
Thank you so much for your prayers and constant support!"*

~ Aspirant Jessica

Together, we deliver these vocations, everyone a miracle, to the church we love!

Blessings,

Cy Laurent
Founder & Executive Director
The Labouré Society

Tax Receipt	<u>Gift Date:</u>	<u>Gift Amount:</u>	<u>Pay Method</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Receipt Amount</u>
	10/1/2012	\$250.00	Business	check # 1589	\$250.00
			Check	check date: 9/25/2012	

NOTE: The Labouré Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Gifts are made with the understanding that The Labouré Society maintains complete discretion over funds received. Monthly and multiple time contributors will receive a year end statement in January 2013.

Saint Catherine Labouré, Pray for Us! Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Intercede for Us!

The Labouré Society, Inc. 501c3
1365 Corporate Center Curve, Suite 104 • Eagan, Minnesota 55121
651.452.1160 www.laboursociety.org

TARA L. CLEMENS

2540 Stern Circle
Anchorage, AK 99515

Phone: 907.301.1668

E-mail: amataveritas@gmail.com

Blog: www.supporttarasvocation.wordpress.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SupportTaraandLaboureSociety

Laboure Society Aspirant Class of 2013 website: <http://bit.ly/Kk5TYr>

+JMJD

October 22, 2012
Memorial of Bl. John Paul II, Pope

Mr. Robert Zaletel
3930 Glen Park Road
Oakland, CA 94602

Dear Robert:

Time is flying! We are now two-thirds of the way through this time of fundraising—my class and I have only 10 weeks left to meet our goals. As of today, thanks to your prayers and financial support, my class has raised over \$100,000 for vocations! To date, \$21,595 has been donated on my behalf and another \$500 pledged toward my goal of \$45,000, which leaves \$22,905 to raise before December 31st.

Earlier this month, I returned once again to the Bay area and was privileged to spend time with the Palo Alto/Menlo Park Serra Club. Cy Laurent, the executive director of the Laboure Society, was also present as the guest speaker. What a beautiful group! If you are not familiar with the Serra organization, it is named for Bl. Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary to California, and its purpose is to support and foster vocations. The organization started with a small group of people meeting regularly and has spread across the globe.

There are no Serra clubs in Alaska. However, my first introduction to Serra came when the Serra International convention was held in Anchorage. I “fell into” volunteering with odds and ends the weekend of the convention and met some wonderful people who are excited about vocations in the Church! Naturally, the welcome extended by the Serra club in Menlo Park was no different. The warmth and generosity of the Club and its members will long be remembered.

Last month, I was interviewed by George Raine, a reporter from Catholic San Francisco, and Effie Caldarola, a reporter from Catholic Anchor. This month, both papers ran follow-up stories on my vocation to Corpus Christi Monastery, the problem of educational loans for young men and women and the work of The Laboure Society. Both articles are also available online at www.catholic-sf.org and www.catholicanchor.org, respectively. I was privileged to be able to share my story and hope it helps those who may feel called to discern a vocation by have educational loans and also to let people know how they can support vocations like mine.

Also this month, CARA published a study on vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the U.S. Not surprisingly, educational loans was cited as a significant reason for not discerning a priestly or religious vocation by roughly 3-5% of young men and women. The study may be found at the USCCB website; I've also written a short blog post, with links to the study and other articles on this issue at my blog, "Truth in Love".

On a more personal note, my family and I are saddened by the passing of my grandpa last week. He was a quiet but strong man who gave a wonderful example of what it means to be a person of good character. He was always ready to lend a hand and sacrificed routinely for family and friends. He was a man of his word and expected others to be the same way. Born during the Great Depression and raised on a farm in Oklahoma, he experienced going without and pulling together as a family to survive. He entered the Navy toward the end of World War II and served in the South Pacific. After returning home, he went to work as a tool man on the oil fields, met my grandma and had two daughters—my mom and my aunt.

I remember when I told him and my grandma about my desire to be a nun, about three years ago. He asked me a few questions about how I'd arrived at my decision and what my life would be like. Then he paused for a few moments, and in his slow, Southern drawl, he thoughtfully, but firmly said, "Well, I can't say I understand it, but I respect it. You should do what you feel God is calling you to do and don't let anyone tell you otherwise." That meant so much to me; I greatly miss my grandpa, but I joyfully entrust him to the mercy and love of Jesus.

Thank you again for your continued prayers and support—we are nearing the home stretch! I also humbly ask, if you have any family, friends, fellow parishioners, or colleagues who might be interested in supporting vocations with the prayers, contributions, or by helping spread the word about The Laboure Society, please let me know or pass on my contact information.

I continue to remember you in my daily prayers as well.

In Christ & His Church,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tara Clemens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

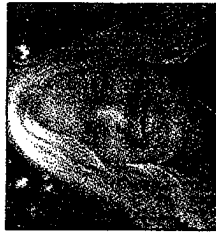
Tara Clemens

Anchorage attorney struggles to pay off student loan in order to enter cloistered monastery

By EFFIE CALDAROLA
CatholicAnchor.org

Like many young urban professionals, Anchorage attorney Tara Clemens is gradually chipping away at her burdensome student loans.

Unlike everybody else in town, though, Clemens' motive for paying off the debt has to do with a desire to become a cloistered Dominican nun.



Tara Clemens

Having already been accepted into the Dominican convent in Menlo Park, Calif., Clemens has been forced to put her religious vocation on hold until she pays off the debt.

Clemens, who has been profiled in two previous Catholic Anchor articles, is not alone in her situation of having to postpone a religious vocation because of large student debt. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, one third of people inquiring about potential study at Catholic training institutions already



Screen capture image from nunsinmenlo.org
A nun takes a walk on the grounds of Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park, Calif. Anchorage attorney Tara Clemens hopes to join the order.

had student debt averaging \$28,000. Although some dioceses and religious orders are willing to help with debt, it's a growing obstacle to religious vocations.

Clemens, however, speaks with optimism about her present situation and her desire to enter the cloister. Raised as an evangelical Christian, in college she found herself searching for the right church. She asked God to lead her.

When a classmate invited her to Mass she went, confident it would verify her conviction that the Catholic Church was the wrong church. Instead God began to pull her towards conversion, and she entered the Catholic Church in 2008.

"I've been discerning religious life ever since I entered," Clemens told the Catholic Anchor.

And she felt called to the Menlo Park Monastery, where she found a profound sense of peace in the monastic community, which she visited several times before making her decision to apply. She was accepted by the order for her aspiration, in which she spent a month living in the cloister.

But then it was back to work to get rid of the debt that's standing between her and the Dominican community. She's living with her parents to cut costs.

Although Clemens' parents are not Catholic, she says they're supportive.

"I love my family, and I know how much they love me," she said. "Ultimately they want me to be happy."

Keeping in touch with her new religious family is important to Clemens as

See Cloister call, page 20

Cloister call

Continued from page 14

well.

"I keep up with the nuns through correspondence and email," she said. "This year I've been down to visit twice, with another trip planned this fall."

A native of Wasilla, she grew up and did her post-high school education in Washington and Oregon. After college she worked for an Anchorage law firm, briefly founded her own firm, and now she works as a paralegal, all the while chipping away at a mountain of debt, which at one point topped \$114,000. She has reduced that to under \$100,000 and hopes her involvement with the Laboure Society will pave the way for what she feels is her true calling.

The very existence of the Laboure Society underscores the growing problem of pursuing a religious vocation while straining under oppressive student debt. Founded in 2003 by two Minnesota Catholic businessmen, the Laboure Society is a non-profit organization that has assisted over 230 people in paying off loans before entering religious life.

Clemens belongs to an "aspirant class" at Laboure. Stories about Clemens and the 10 other people in her Laboure group are on the organization's website. Members of her class met in Minnesota, and they continue to support each other through correspondence, calls and prayer.

"We all meet once a month via telephone. It's been a way to support each other, and build our relationship as the Body of Christ."

Each member of her Laboure class has a goal to raise \$45,000 this year. Clemens has about \$38,000 to go. Grant determinations will be made in January or February, and Clemens has her hopes set on a positive outcome.

With the crushing debt burden and the realization that she won't be practicing law, does she regret her law school education?

"Sometimes, because of the debt, I wonder," she said thoughtfully. "But I see how God used my law school education to bring me to the Catholic Church. Law school teaches you to think analytically, and it developed my logic and reasoning skills. This helped me in my search for the truth."

Donations may be made in Clemens' honor at LaboureSociety.org. Donations are tax deductible, because they do not go directly to Clemens but are meted out in a series of payments overtime, including the final grant which will be awarded when Clemens makes her final vows.