

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catholic non-profit organization continues to combat the vocations crisis in the U.S.

Falls Church, VA
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The *Mater Ecclesiae* Fund for Vocations (the Fund) announced today the issuance of 10 new grants for Catholic men and women entering the priesthood and religious life under the Fund's St. Joseph Student Debt Relief Grant Program. These candidates will join over twenty other grantees serving in religious orders all over the country.

The Fund was created specifically to alleviate the serious obstacle that student loans can present to individuals who seek to answer God's call to consecrate their lives to service of the Catholic Church. Because of their eventual vow of poverty, people who enter the religious life must do so free of all debt. However, the high cost of a college education means that many young people take on student loans to obtain a college degree and the difficulty of paying down these loans - often tens of thousands of dollars - can delay or in some cases prevent many qualified individuals from responding to a call to religious life.

The Fund's St. Joseph grant program enables recipients to begin their formation immediately. A grant pays the minimum monthly payment required by their student loans as long as they remain in formation. On the fifth anniversary of taking final vows, the grant pays any remaining balance in full.

The efforts of the Fund are not going unnoticed. Catholic leaders, vocations directors, priests, and bishops from around the country are offering support for the Fund's crucial apostolate in present day America. Sr. Mary Gabriel of the Sisters of Life reflects, "*The Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations may well be the answer to the prayers of so many in our country for an increase in vocations. A generous response of the faithful to the very real problem of debt among those called to the priesthood and religious life will allow men and women to respond to God in a way otherwise impossible, enable their benefactors to share in the graces those vocations so abundantly produce, and will no doubt facilitate the generous response of future vocations.*"

In 2003, the founders of the *Mater Ecclesiae* Fund for Vocations, Mr. and Mrs. Corey F. Huber, first became aware of the problem student loan repayment posed for many who sought to enter religious life. They began a similar program funded through their private Fraser Family Foundation (the Foundation). In November 2006, when the Foundation's funds became fully committed, the Hubers founded the *Mater Ecclesiae* Fund for Vocations to continue the work with public support. This opened the door for the Catholic laity to join in this mission to aid the revival of religious vocations. The generosity of faithful Catholics, has enabled the Fund to issue these new grants to individuals seeking a life of consecration.

The Fund received 501(c)(3) status in February 2007. Additional information can be obtained by visiting the Fund's website at <http://fundforvocations.org/>.

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