

MUKULU,SJ

For Greater Love and Service



About Jesuits

The Society of Jesus: A Life of Service, Faith, and Mission

The Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1540, is an international Catholic order committed to serving God and humanity. Jesuits, also known as the “Companions of Jesus,” are inspired by the call to be “men for others” through a life dedicated to faith, justice, education, and service. The Jesuit path invites individuals to respond to God’s call with a generous and adventurous spirit, embracing the challenges and joys of living the Gospel fully.

The Jesuit Vocation: What Does It Mean?

To be a Jesuit is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as companions, seeking to transform the world in His name. Jesuits feel called to engage deeply in the world’s joys and struggles, answering God’s call through diverse roles and missions that promote peace, justice, and faith. Their work extends globally, from ^

academia and healthcare to social work, pastoral care, and scientific research, demonstrating the Jesuit commitment to use one's unique talents for the greater good.

Becoming a Jesuit is a lifelong commitment, marked by prayer, intellectual exploration, and spiritual discipline. At the core of Jesuit life are the values of selflessness, humility, and a relentless drive to serve others, inspired by the teachings of St. Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises. The Jesuit journey is rigorous and transformative, shaping individuals into leaders who embody compassion, integrity, and wisdom.



Stages of Jesuit Formation

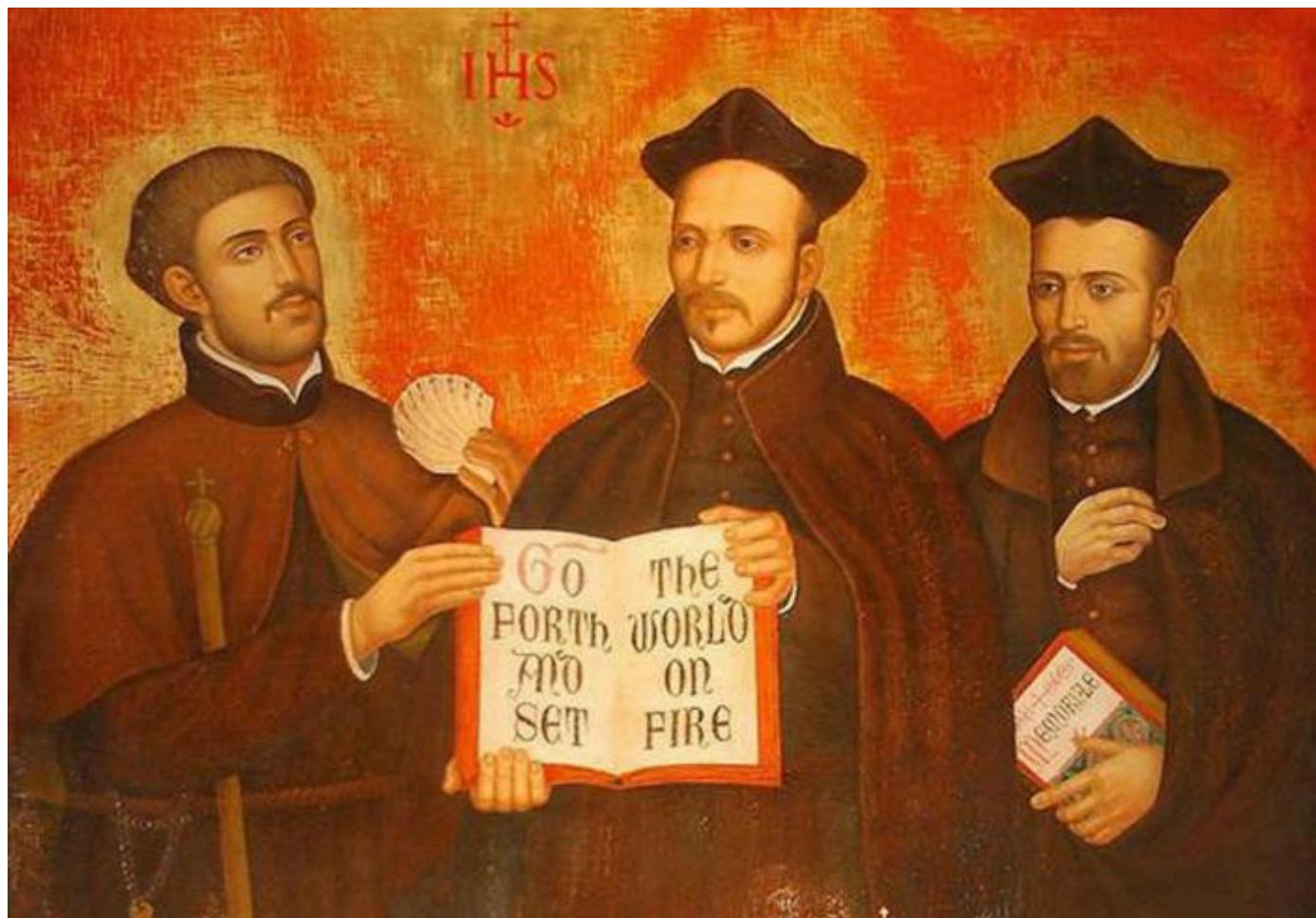
Jesuit formation is a structured, years-long process that encompasses both personal development and professional training. Each stage is designed to deepen the Jesuit's relationship with God, develop their intellectual and spiritual capacities, and prepare them for a lifetime of service. The formation process includes:

- 1. Candidacy:** Candidacy is an initial period where aspiring Jesuits explore the Jesuit vocation more closely, studying the Society of Jesus and discerning their call to this path. It's a time for personal

prayer, discussions with vocation directors, and deeper reflection on what it means to dedicate one's life to Jesuit ideals.

2. **Novitiate:** The novitiate stage immerses the novice in Jesuit life and spirituality. It includes the 30-day Spiritual Exercises retreat, where novices engage in intense prayer and reflection, growing in self-awareness and understanding of God's call. Novices participate in "experiments" – diverse service experiences, including work in hospitals, schools, and community ministries, that help deepen their compassion and dedication to others.
3. **First Studies:** First studies involve rigorous academic training in philosophy, humanities, and other foundational subjects. Jesuits in this stage begin to refine their analytical and critical thinking skills, which are essential for effectively engaging with complex social, theological, and ethical issues in their future ministries.
4. **Regency:** In regency, Jesuits apply their knowledge in a practical setting, working in a Jesuit ministry such as teaching, social work, or pastoral care. Regency provides hands-on experience, strengthening their ministry skills and preparing them to live and work in community. This stage allows Jesuits to fully immerse themselves in the challenges and rewards of Jesuit service, guided by community life.
5. **Theology Studies:** This stage focuses on theological studies, preparing Jesuits for ordination and deeper spiritual engagement. Jesuits study scripture, moral theology, pastoral counseling, and other areas that equip them to serve as priests, offering guidance, teaching, and administering sacraments to their communities.
6. **Tertianship:** Known as the "school of the heart," Tertianship is a year-long, deeply reflective stage similar to the novitiate, but undertaken with the wisdom and experience gained from prior stages. Jesuits undergo the 30-day retreat again, reassessing their commitment to the vocation and refining their relationship with God. It's a time for personal renewal before taking final vows.
7. **Final Vows:** The culmination of Jesuit formation, final vows represent a Jesuit's full commitment to the Society. This stage is marked by a formal vow ceremony, which includes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and, for some, a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope regarding mission assignments. Final vows symbolize a Jesuit's lifelong dedication to serving God and humanity as a fully incorporated member of the Society of Jesus.

Embracing the Mission: What Jesuits Do



The First Jesuits Sts. Francis Xavier; Ignatius of Loyola, Peter Faber. (Courtesy photo)

Jesuits are known for their diverse roles and talents, serving as teachers, doctors, artists, writers, scientists, counselors, and more. No matter their ministry, Jesuits are united by their commitment to use their skills to serve others and bring God's love to the world. Key areas of Jesuit ministry include:

- **Education:** Jesuits have founded schools and universities worldwide, offering quality education rooted in the Jesuit ideals of critical thinking, ethical awareness, and compassion.
- **Social Justice and Human Rights:** Working for social justice is a core part of the Jesuit mission. Jesuits advocate for the poor and marginalized, engaging in initiatives that address poverty, inequality, human rights, and peace building.
- **Pastoral Care:** Jesuits serve as spiritual guides, offering pastoral care, conducting retreats, and providing sacraments. They help people grow in faith through retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises, a key aspect of Jesuit spirituality.
- **Inter-religious Dialogue and Cultural Engagement:** Jesuits actively engage with people of other faiths and cultures, promoting understanding and collaboration.
- **Environmental Justice:** In recent years, Jesuits have increasingly focused on caring for creation, inspired by Pope Francis's call to address environmental degradation and climate change.

Discerning a Jesuit Vocation: Is the Society of Jesus Right for You?

The journey to becoming a Jesuit starts with a deep call within oneself, a desire to serve God and humanity wholeheartedly. Those discerning a Jesuit vocation are encouraged to reflect on their passions, skills, and spiritual aspirations, asking themselves questions such as:

- Where do my deepest desires lead me?
- What talents can I use to benefit others and serve God?
- Which aspects of the Gospel inspire me most in considering religious life?
- How might God be calling me to live as part of Christ's mission?

Resources for Further Exploration

For those interested in learning more about the Jesuit life and vocation, the Society of Jesus offers several resources and support systems to guide the discernment process:

1. Eastern Africa Province of the Society of Jesus

Jesuits in Eastern Africa can reach out to the Eastern Africa Province, which provides detailed information on the Jesuit vocation and formation process specific to the region. Visit Eastern Africa Jesuits (<https://easternafricajesuits.org/become-a-jesuit/>) for guidance.

2. Jesuits Global Website

Individuals from other parts of the world can contact the Jesuits' global website to be connected with a Jesuit community near them. Visit Jesuits Global (<https://www.jesuitseast.org/become/>) to begin your journey with a vocation director who can answer questions and provide support in discernment.

3. Local Jesuit Communities and Retreats

Speaking directly with a Jesuit priest or brother, or participating in Ignatian retreats, can offer valuable insight into the Jesuit way of life. Many Jesuit retreat centers around the world offer discernment retreats for those exploring religious life.

4. Prayer and Reflection

Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeking clarity on God's call. Reflection questions and spiritual exercises are excellent tools for deepening your discernment process.

The Jesuit vocation is a profound commitment to living as a "man for others" and dedicating oneself to faith, service, and growth. This journey, marked by joy, challenges, and transformation, invites those who feel called to respond to God's love by loving and serving others in return. If you are ready to begin this journey, know that Jesuits around the world are here to support you in your discernment and formation.