

## Who are the Jesuits?

The Jesuits, more formally known as the Society of Jesus, is a Roman Catholic order of priests, founded in northern Spain in 1534 by a one-time Basque nobleman and mystic, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Jesuits are not a monastic order, meaning its priests and brothers do not live in monasteries. The order grew out of Ignatius' conversion experience during a rigorously painful recovery from severe wounds he sustained in battle.

There are approximately 16,000 Jesuits worldwide — the largest male religious order in the world. As members of a religious order, they embrace the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And, since their founding, at Ignatius' insistence, Jesuits also observe a fourth vow: to always be prepared and ready to respond to whatever mission the pope may require of them.



Since its beginnings Jesuit *spirituality*— or way of living in relationship with God — has emphasized “finding God in all things” and serving a world in need “to the greater glory of God.” Part of their work is to train men and women as “contemplatives in action,” for service in the world. They do this through programs called retreats of varying length based on the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* at parishes and at 24 retreat centers in the US.

Today Jesuits serve as pastors, teachers, doctors, lawyers, astronomers, and journalists among scores of other professions that enable them to carry out their mission of service especially to those who are victims of social injustice. Probably the most well-known Jesuit today is Pope Francis. The international headquarters of the Jesuits is in Rome.

You are eagerly invited to join the Jesuits in this mission in service “to the greater glory of God.”

