

Society of Jesus / Jesuits

The Society of Jesus is an order of Roman Catholic priests and brothers founded nearly 500 years ago by St. Ignatius Loyola. With more than 15,000 priests, scholastics and brothers worldwide, it is the largest male religious order in the Catholic Church.

The Jesuits USA Central and Southern (UCS) Province is one administrative body within the international Society of Jesus. The UCS Province is comprised of approximately 325 men serving in 13 states, Puerto Rico and Belize. It is based in St. Louis.

Widely known for their colleges, universities and high schools, Jesuit ministries extend beyond the classroom, from retreat houses to parishes and refugee camps. Their distinctive spirituality attracts people who are searching for greater meaning and faith. St. Ignatius developed a way of praying that helps people find God in all things; that is the signature spirituality of the Jesuits.

Ignatius was a Spanish courtier who found his true calling after suffering nearly fatal wounds on a battlefield. He gathered a small group of companions and established the Society of Jesus with an aim of being “contemplatives in action.” Ignatian spirituality is grounded in the conviction that God is active in our world. The spiritual path laid out by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* is a way of discerning God’s presence in our everyday lives.

In response to the many needs and challenges in the world, today’s Jesuits seek to understand how God invites us to share in the work of reconciliation. They respond to the call of Christ through the Society’s Universal Apostolic Preferences, approved by Pope Francis:

1. show the way to God through the *Spiritual Exercises* and discernment,
2. walk with the poor and excluded in a mission of reconciliation and justice,
3. collaborate, with Gospel depth, for the protection and renewal of God’s creation,
4. accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future.

In all they do, they seek to serve the “Greater Glory of God.” They are blessed by the collaboration of many partners in mission.

Currently in the Archdiocese of St Louis, there are more than 130 Jesuits, including men in formation in degree programs at Saint Louis University and a large community of senior Jesuits in north St. Louis County.

Jesuits in St. Louis serve in education at Saint Louis University, St. Louis University High School, De Smet Jesuit High School and Loyola Academy, a middle school. They oversee two parishes, St. Francis Xavier College Church in midtown and St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in the Ville neighborhood of North St. Louis.

White House Jesuit Retreat offers a variety of retreats based in the *Spiritual Exercises* to men and women in a beautiful West County location overlooking the Mississippi River.

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps is made up of retired adults who use their expertise and time to serve in social ministry across the metropolitan area. College graduates gain experience, community and an opportunity to give back through the Alum Service Corps.