



After roughly 10 years of formation, James Ackerman, Michael Christiana, Mark Luedtke, Thomas Neitzke, Paul O'Connor, and Richard Ross were ordained Jesuit priests on the evening of June 11, 2010. It was a hot and humid night on the campus of Marquette University in Milwaukee. Thankfully, the impressive walls of Gesu Church (and the equally impressive air conditioning) guarded a truly beautiful liturgy. Bishop Blase J. Cupich of the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota, presided with more than 200 concelebrants. Each ordinand stood before the altar and the ordinary representing a wealth of service experience, from gang ministry on the streets of Los Angeles to the first moments of life in the delivery room.



*Fr. Ackerman and XXXXXXXX,
Estrumquo tem di dolenet
quaspera ium volor maio dolo
magnihit officatur sunt
voluptam, quunt officipsam es*
"My mom inspires me. She raised
us three boys on her own."
8 Partners

Fr. James C. Ackerman, SJ

Born: May 10, 1963, in Cincinnati, Ohio

Parents: Charles (d.1971) and Margo Ackerman

Siblings: Theodore Ackerman and Charles Ackerman III

Assignment Following Ordination: Pastoral sacramental year at Gesu Church in University Heights, Ohio

I would say that my journey to the Jesuits was a gradual process. It wasn't like Paul's conversion experience, being thrown off a horse. It came from a growing desire to serve people on a deeper level. My vocation probably started in my early 30's or late 20's, when I was looking for a vehicle to serve God's people in a more heartfelt manner. I subsequently did a men's week spirituality and service project with the Glenmary Missioners to help build houses in Appalachia. It was there that I met a man who suggested that I attend a Tuesday night Mass and prayer

session led by a Jesuit priest for Catholic singles when I returned to Cincinnati. So I started attending that. It was a wonderful experience and the Jesuit happened to be the assistant vocation director.

I also got involved in a parish in an African American section of Cincinnati. Later, as a Jesuit, I had the privilege of working at Cristo Rey in Chicago during the Regency stage of my formation. That experience increased my respect and admiration for the Society and its commitment to education. I love the fact that Ignatius initially worked with the disenfranchised such as women on the street and with the sick. He realized, however, that the way to change social structures was through education. So, he shifted into that realm. I've seen the difference that education makes, both at Cristo Rey and elsewhere. Empowering people is something that makes me proud to be a Jesuit.



"What sets my heart on fire is working with the poor."

Born: May 15, 1966, in San Francisco, California (raised primarily in Rochester, Minnesota)

Parents: Nola and Richard Christiana

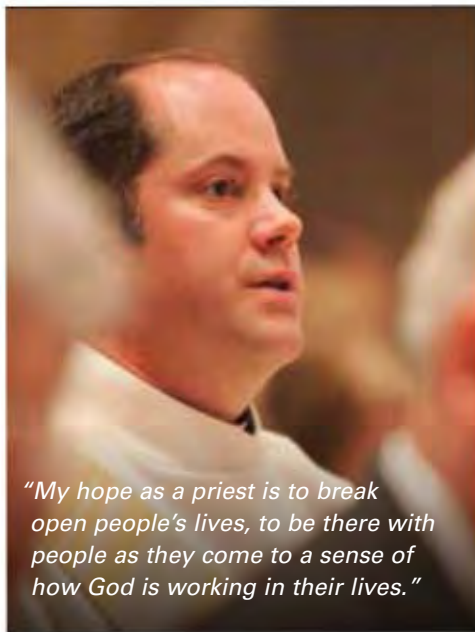
Siblings: Leigh Ann Stock

Assignment Following Ordination: Vice President for Mission and Identity at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis, Indiana

Fr. Michael S. Christiana, SJ

I first heard my call to the priesthood a year or so after I graduated from college. I was living in Minneapolis, and at the time I was still Episcopalian. I started doing volunteer work with homeless youth. We had a program where every Monday night we'd cook dinner for the kids and sit with them family style and get to know them. After a few months I got to know this one young woman fairly well. She was supporting herself through prostitution in one of the neighboring parks. One evening we were having a very deep conversation, when she asked me if I was a priest. I said, "No, I'm not a priest." Then she said, "Well if you were a priest, I would become a Christian."

I feel I have a calling to go after the lost; to reach people that other people aren't able to reach, people who are not churchgoing Christians. I want to go out and bring the church to them. I did that in my gang ministry, when I would be out on the streets late at night at gang meetings and gang parties, reaching out to people who would never come to the programs that we were trying to setup at the church. I went out to bring them in. God gave me the grace to be able to do that.



"My hope as a priest is to break open people's lives, to be there with people as they come to a sense of how God is working in their lives."

Born: May 12, 1968, in Rochester, Minnesota (raised in Hinsdale, Illinois)

Parents: Sallie and Jack Luedtke

Siblings: Sara Luedtke Moloney and John Luedtke Jr.

Assignment Following Ordination: Returning to California to mentor under Jesuit high school presidents for two years

Fr. Mark W. Luedtke, SJ

In my 11 years of formation, I feel I have come to more of a sense of who Christ is. He came into the world and broke open people's lives so that they could meet God. My hope is that when the six of us walk forth as newly ordained priests in the Catholic Church, we will find ways to do that.

One Scripture passage that comes to mind in light of this is the great banquet story in Luke. Jesus tells about a host who invites several people to a celebration at his house. For one reason or another, these people decline this gift, this meal, this experience at table. But the host still wants to share the meal with others. So, he instructs his servants to go forth and find people in the hedge rows and outlying areas. He brings them into the banquet so that they may know the goodness of the celebration. That passage for me has really meant a call to be open and available to many different people that I might not ordinarily encounter in my life. The developmentally disabled, especially, mean a lot to me. They are easily forgotten or neglected at table because of who they are and because of their differences. They, like all of God's people, deserve a place at the table.



Bishop Blase J. Cupich of the Diocese of Rapid City, South Dakota, presided over this year's ordination.



"When I was in kindergarten, I told my mom I wanted to be either the milkman or the pope."

Fr. Thomas W. Neitzke, SJ

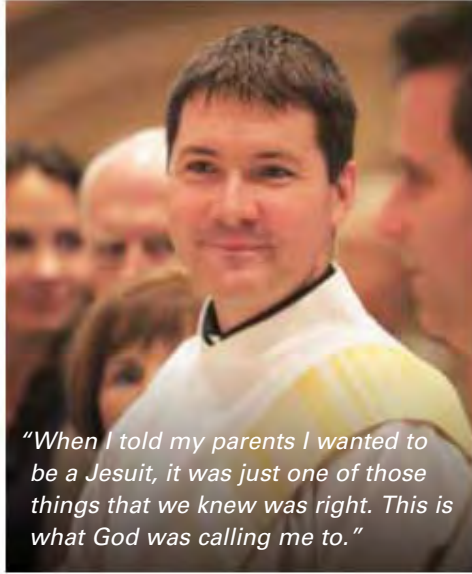
Born: May 21, 1974, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Parents: Julie Ann and Theodore Neitzke III

Siblings: Theodore Neitzke IV and Jonathan Neitzke

Assignment Following Ordination: Principal of Jesuit Middle School of Omaha

In Spanish the "Society of Jesus" is translated as "Company of Jesus" and in all my years of formation I never felt more like a companion than at my ordination. We were blessed to be in the company of so many of our Jesuit brothers from all three provinces, so many of whom encouraged, challenged, and taught us what it means to be a Jesuit during our formation. As each priest placed his hands upon my head, I was overwhelmed praying about the extraordinary lives of ministry and service that these men have given and are still giving for the Church. I am humbled to be part of the mission of the Jesuits to go to the frontiers to help reconcile the world to Christ and especially to those who struggle the most in our fragmented world. The fire that has been enkindled in me through my experiences of the ordination and first weeks of priesthood have formed me, more deeply, into a man committed to the unique call of Jesuit priesthood.



"When I told my parents I wanted to be a Jesuit, it was just one of those things that we knew was right. This is what God was calling me to."

Fr. Paul C. O'Connor, SJ

Born: April 5, 1973, in Cleveland, Ohio

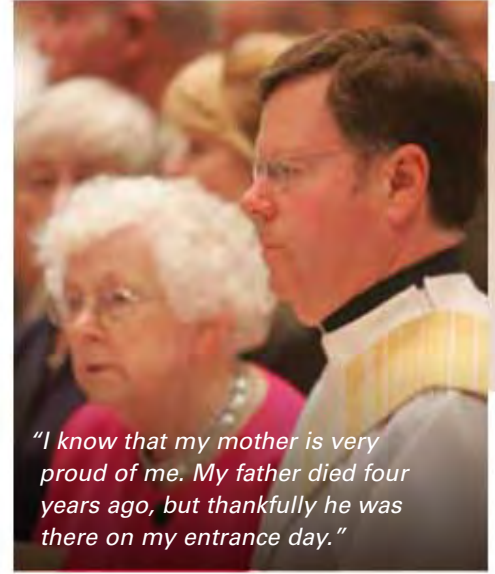
Parents: Ann and Frank O'Connor

Siblings: John O'Connor and Mary Ann O'Connor

Assignment Following Ordination: Associate Pastor at Old St. Pat's Church in Chicago

When I was a candidate, I remember asking myself, "Can a hockey player become a priest?" Candidacy was a challenging time for me. There were two roads put in front of me, and I had to decide which way to go. I was lucky to have a lot of people in my life to help me with that decision. I always had a great deal of respect for the Jesuits. Even when I went to their door and said that I think I'm supposed to be a Jesuit, they were there to say, "Wait, let's slow down a bit. We want to journey with you. If you want to be a Jesuit—great! However, if you're called to be something else, that's good too." They focused on where it was that God was calling me.

Ignatius talks about setting the world on fire. That is what I am most excited about. I want to let other people know about this God who loves us so much and who so much wants to be a part of our lives in a unique way. It's a great gift for me to be able to know and to journey with this amazing God, and to be able to help others encounter this God along the way.



"I know that my mother is very proud of me. My father died four years ago, but thankfully he was there on my entrance day."

Fr. Richard E. Ross, SJ

Born: February 2, 1951, in Cass City, Michigan

Parents: Loretta and Bernard (d. 2005) Ross

Siblings: Gerald Ross, Robert Ross, Shirley Law, Sharon Delamarter, and Mary Thacker

Assignment Following Ordination: Completing STL degree at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

I was advancing in my nursing career when I felt a call to use my training to serve the poor. At the same time, I felt a desire to deepen my faith. At first, I didn't see any connection between these two movements in my life. But through God's grace, an acquaintance encouraged me to get into spiritual direction, which led me to a spiritual director at St. Mary's Parish in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Amazingly, it turned out that my director was also a nurse! After listening to my story, he suggested I go on a retreat at Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in Detroit. Though I'd never been on a retreat or met a Jesuit, I experienced the grace of conversion. I fell in love with God. And at the same time, I fell in love with the world.

In the first week of his Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius asks us to look at reality as it really is and to know that, no matter what, God loves us. As a Jesuit, my mission is to help people realize that God loves them for who and what they are. I live out this mission as a nurse. Other Jesuits and lay people live out this mission in many different ways. What unites us is that we face life with the trust and hope that God is with us always.