



While in first studies, Joe Hoover, SJ, engages others in discussion of philosophy and ministry.

Jesuit Candidacy

by Patrick A. Fairbanks, SJ

On Christmas Day 1987, at age 33, I was at home in Cincinnati visiting my family for the holidays. That afternoon, before dinner, I climbed the attic stairs to our third floor where our family had a pool table. My dad was there alone practicing a game of eight-ball. It was the perfect time for me to announce to him, “Dad, I have some news. I am now an official ‘candidate’ for the Society of Jesus.” I told him that I had formally started a period of candidacy to join the Jesuits. He was overjoyed and told me that it was “an answer to a prayer.” Wow! And instead of continuing to practice his billiards, he decided to walk me downstairs and announce this great news to the whole family. I guess I had expected that, but I wanted him to be the first to know, and I wanted it to be on Christmas Day. Only two weeks earlier, I had met for an initial interview with Fr. Bill Verbryke, SJ, the vocation director at that time. Fr. Verbryke had assigned me to a spiritual director (Fr. Ed Pigott, SJ), and my responsibilities as a “candidate” were underway.

What came before that moment? What came after that moment? What is a candidate and how long does it take before one enters the

Jesuits? These are only a few of the questions that a young man may have as he quietly and prayerfully ponders whether Jesuit life is for him. After that Christmas Day announcement, I eventually entered the Jesuits on September 1, 1989—so my candidacy lasted about 20 months. Although the time for candidacy varies between one to three years, this period of discernment does have standard expectations and stages, which are outlined below.

What is candidacy?

Candidacy is a period of time (1 to 3 years) during which a man discerns whether he is called to enter the Jesuits. It is also a time when the Society of Jesus comes to know the man as well. No official, legal, or binding requirements are in place. The man lives and works on his own—with the intention of joining the Society.

Who can be a Jesuit candidate?

An unmarried Roman Catholic man, generally between the ages of 18–35, who has a desire to serve the Church as a brother or a priest can become a Jesuit.

Upcoming Vocations Events

How does a man become a Candidate?

The most popular way is to contact the vocations director. I can be reached at vocations@jesuits-chi.org. I receive inquiries every week from men with all sorts of questions and interests. Some potential candidates call the Province office in Chicago at 773-975-6363, while others simply approach a Jesuit, and ask how to inquire about a vocation.

Where does the candidacy program take place?

It takes place wherever the man is. A Jesuit candidate remains where he is living (work, school, home, etc.) and participates in events, reading, and activities while he carries on his normal life. A candidate may be asked to travel to various events, from time to time, in order to meet other Jesuits and learn of our way of life.

What is the major component of the Jesuit Candidacy?

Prayer and monthly spiritual direction are vital. The spiritual director gradually helps the candidate to clarify his personal strengths and weaknesses, his aspirations and motivations, his experience of the Lord, and the possible Jesuit character to his vocation. The vocation director will assign a spiritual director to the candidate.

What else does a Jesuit candidate need to do?

In addition to regular prayer and sacraments, as well as spiritual direction, the candidate:

- Attends candidate meetings at Jesuit communities
- Makes an individually directed retreat of four to eight days
- Makes at least one visit to the Jesuit novitiate

Ten months before Entrance Day, a candidate may move into the formal application process, which involves writing an autobiography, completing the application, five interviews, medical and psychological exams, and preparation of academic and ecclesial documents. The Vocation Director gives approval for the application process to begin, and the final decision to accept a man is made by the Provincial.

If the Candidate is accepted, the Jesuits welcome this man into community, and he becomes a Jesuit on Entrance Day (usually a Saturday in August of a given year). He then begins the process of formation and incorporation into the body of the Society of Jesus.

For more Q & A information about the Jesuit Candidacy program, follow this link:

www.thinkjesuit.org/meetus/candidate.php

What are the top five books a candidate ought to be reading?

The Fifth Week
The Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola
What Is Ignatian Spirituality?
Contemplatives in Action
Hearts on Fire

These and others can be found at

www.thinkjesuit.org/sjcafe/bookshelf.php

Men who are interested in a Jesuit vocation are invited to attend upcoming events to better acquaint themselves with the Jesuit tradition. To reserve a spot for any of these events, please contact Fr. Patrick A. Fairbanks, SJ, at vocations@jesuits-chi.org or 773-975-6363.

The Jesuits: Come and See Weekend

October 30–November 1

Chicago

This is a weekend for men 18–35 years of age who are interested in learning more about the life, spirituality, and work of Jesuit priests and brothers. Come and see the possibility of a religious vocation.

Candidate Meetings

September 17, 5:30PM–8:00PM

Chicago, IL

October 3, 10:00AM–1:00PM

November 12, 5:30PM–8:30PM

Cincinnati, OH

November 14, 10:00AM–1:00PM

Lexington, KY

National Jesuit Vocation Promotion Day

November 5

On the Feast of All Saints and Blessed of the Society of Jesus, various

promotional events will be available throughout the province.

For more information about the Jesuits, please contact



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Fr. Pat Fairbanks, SJ, talks about Jesuit formation with a candidate.

Jesuits look for men who feel called by God and who also possess ...

- a deep personal love for Jesus Christ
- a habit of prayer which develops into action
- sufficient self-knowledge
- good religious practice
- an intellectual capability
- a sense of sociability and availability
- some familiarity with Jesuits
- good physical health
- a history of service and concern for the poor
- the joy to live a life of poverty, chastity, obedience
- a strong desire—zeal for being a Jesuit!