

**CANDIDACY:** One who is seriously considering becoming a Jesuit contacts a province vocation director to enter the candidacy program. Candidacy is not strictly part of the formation process, but it does allow a candidate to get a better idea of Jesuit life. A candidate might attend retreats or get-togethers with other candidates or take part in “Six Weeks a Jesuit” programs, living and working with Jesuits to experience community life and different Jesuit ministries.

The process allows a vocation director to assess a candidate’s fitness and readiness for life as a Jesuit and to encourage an applicant to apply officially. The application process involves being interviewed by Jesuits, rounding up transcripts and personal references, and other steps that lead to acceptance into a novitiate, the “formal” start of formation.

**NOVICESHIP:** A Jesuit spends his first two years in the Society of Jesus at a novitiate. Most novices enter with the idea of becoming priests (they’re called “scholastics”) or brothers. The others are, in Jesuit parlance, “indifferent,” but far from being indifferent, they simply haven’t decided the priest/brother question at that point.

A novice lives with fellow novices and staff, studying Jesuit history and spirituality and making the Spiritual Exercises. He also works, perhaps in a hospital, a retirement home, or a grade school, for short and long stints, called “experiments.” These are apostolic experiences designed to aid the discernment process.

At the end of two years, novices take First Vows—poverty, chastity, and obedience—and go on to First Studies.

**FIRST STUDIES:** This is usually a three-year period when a Jesuit works on an MA in philosophy, but exceptions abound. Someone who enters with such a degree



## FORMATION

*There are definite steps in a Jesuit’s training, or formation, but they are anything but lock step. Here we offer readers a short glossary of the process.*

might pursue a degree in another field; someone without a bachelor’s degree would work on that as well as study philosophy.

During First Studies, Jesuits also work part-time in ministries, perhaps in campus ministry or a homeless shelter. Some also study theology in anticipation of the further work they will be doing in that subject (see below) and to enhance their ministerial effectiveness.

Saint Louis University, Loyola University Chicago, and Fordham University in the Bronx are hosts for the First Study programs in the United States.

**REGENCY:** A two- or three-year period after First Studies when a Jesuit lives in community while working in a ministry. Traditionally, regents are assigned to teach in Jesuit high schools, but one with a PhD in botany, for instance, might teach that subject at a Jesuit university, while another

er might be assigned to a parish or retreat house. Remember the “exception” rule; the desires of the regent and the needs of the province both come into play.

**THEOLOGY STUDIES:** A time when a Jesuit pursues a master’s in theology, usually at the Jesuit theologates in Berkeley, California, or Cambridge, Massachusetts. Some theologians study in, say, Italy, Germany, or Canada, just as Jesuits from outside the United States might study at Berkeley or Weston Jesuit. They typically study for three years in preparation for ordination to the priesthood.

Jesuit brothers might spend these years studying theology as well or pursuing other subjects in preparation for ministry.

After ordination, one Jesuit will begin work in a parish, another will start or continue teaching at a high school or college, while another will head back to school for a master’s or a doctorate in anything from astronomy to zoology.

**TERTIANSHIP:** About three or so years after a priest is ordained or a brother has completed studies, he will spend nine months to a year in a tertianship program.

A tertian traditionally moves to a different location in the country or abroad and gets involved in a ministry other than what he was doing before. A high school administrator might work in a parish; a physics professor might give retreats. Tertians also make the 30-day Spiritual Exercises again.

The idea is for a Jesuit to spend time, often with a spiritual director, reflecting on his vocation as a Jesuit. He’ll think about not only the last decade-plus of formation but also discern what’s in store for the rest of his career in the Society of Jesus. It’s a cross between a retreat and a working sabbatical that leads to Final Vows, the “official” end of formation. **G**