I Am With You
Thirty-Seven Ordained in Rome

The Old Testament book of the prophet Jeremiah begins with a conversation between Yahweh and the man appointed to speak for him. The Lord tells Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you came to birth, I consecrated you.”

When Jeremiah objects that he is not competent to be the Lord’s prophet, God tells him, “Go now to whom I send you and say whatever I command you; do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you.” (Jer 1:5)

With these comforting words, Archbishop José Rodrigues Carballo, O.F.M., secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, addressed 37 Legionary men before ordaining them at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. He also invited the ordinands never to forget that they are “called to serve. The Church needs servant priests, religious priests who always remain in the humble attitude of service.”

Concelebrating with Archbishop Carballo was Bishop Jorge Patrón Wong, Secretary of the Congregation of the Clergy, Auxiliary Bishop Robert Fisher of Detroit (a family member of one of the new priests), and Bishop Alejandro Castaño of Colombia. Another 240 priests, primarily Legionaries, also concelebrated the Eucharist. The May 4th
ceremony was attended by about 2,000 people, including family, friends, seminary classmates and professors.

Fr. Christopher Bracket, rector of the Legion of Christ’s International College in Rome, echoed the homily message about how poor human vessels are used for God’s glory, saying, “We feel that we are part of this mystery, of this gift— one might say of this miracle— because we have seen the great things that the Lord has done in those who are poor and weak. How great is the mercy of God!”

Fr. Samuel Tan, LC, one of the new American priests whose family is from Illinois, expressed the same thing this way, “The blessings that God gives through and to me are out of proportion to my poor efforts. Nevertheless, his love drives me to strive for holiness and constantly to get up when I fall. It is through his love that I am able to love as he loves.”

Of course, the dedication and sacrifices of the families of the new priests could not go unrecognized. Fr. Eduardo Robles-Gil, LC, general director of the Legionaries of Christ, commented, “Priestly ordinations are always very emotional, especially for the immediate family. The Legionaries of Christ are also a family and the birth of new priests is a great joy and a great hope. I congratulate them and their families and I ask that the graces of this day be extended throughout their priestly ministry.”

Go Get ‘Em Fr. Jared Loehr, LC

When I began nursing school at Kansas University School of Medicine, my goal was clear. Graduate, enter the army nurse anesthetist program and join the life-flight helicopter team. My days were filled with lectures, rotations, volunteering at the free health clinic, working in the hospital (especially in the burn unit), working out, daily Mass and Adoration, and being the team captain of a young men’s Regnum Christi team. We had weekly encounters, retreats, youth camps and an inner city Conquest boy’s club at the request of Archbishop Joseph Naumann to work with the Hispanic youth. That group of guys really sustained and built my relationship with God.

A deep moment for me happened during adoration. In front of a Greek icon of the Theotokos Mary, I asked her flat out, as I had never done before, if she wanted me to be her priest. When I placed my heart in her hands, I felt a warm nudge like, “Go get ’em.” I said that whatever days I have left, I will be your priest. I needed to decide between the diocese, the Apostles of the Interior Life and the Legion. I tried to imagine where I could be closest to God, and the answer was in the Legion of Christ.

I joined the day after I took the nursing license exam. I went to Cheshire, Connecticut, for the novitiate and humanities, and then to New York for philosophy. Next, I was sent to Houston for internship to serve at a pre-K, three through eighth grade school. I was a teacher, coach, mentor, disciplinarian, liturgy coordinator, Knights of the Altar supreme Knight director, development team member, Conquest camp and club director, and brother in the community! Finally, I got to live in the Eternal City, the heart of the Church and the home of the Vicar of Christ. Each day only gets more incredible and I realize how much God loves me through his son.

Legionary priests and brothers give me such a huge example and are a constant support in trying to be faithful to God and all he asks and entrusts to me. Each day seems like I give God a dollar and he gives me 100! Please keep praying for me and giving thanks to God for this great adventure!

Fr. Jared Loehr, LC, was born in Wichita, Kansas, the eldest of four children. He received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Kansas before his education and formation to become a priest. He is assigned to youth work in Houston, Texas.
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AN ANSWER TO PRAYER
Fr. Nathan Torrey, LC

When I was a sophomore at Louisiana State University, I went to pray at a perpetual adoration chapel not far from campus. I got on my knees and started praying a Rosary for the intention of learning what God wanted of my life, and of attending a Regnum Christi silent retreat. As soon as I made the sign of the cross to end the Rosary, a woman came up behind me, handed me a prayer card and said, “I’m praying for you.” As she walked away, I turned the prayer card over and noticed it was a Prayer for Vocations card with an image of Pope John Paul II on it. She had scribbled on the back, “Are you interested in a young men’s spiritual exercises retreat this weekend?” along with her phone number.

I attended that retreat and started receiving spiritual direction. About the same time, some of my friends began to suggest that I do the “candidacy” program in Cheshire, Connecticut, with the Legionaries of Christ. I had no idea what the candidacy program was. They explained that it was a summer discernment course at the Legionary seminary. I reasoned that one summer wasn’t all that much to “offer up” to God. Since I wanted to objectively put him in the first place in my life, the candidacy program was a concrete way to do that. It was a hard, beautiful, difficult and amazing summer that – quite literally – changed my life. The lifestyle change wasn’t easy, but nothing worthwhile is ever easy. In fact, the next couple of years were marked by difficulties and doubts, but the foundation of my spiritual life – God’s love for me and his desire for my happiness – kept me above water even when I felt like I was drowning.

Not only have I survived, but, as each year passes, life just keeps getting better! I never would have thought that I could actually look forward to the hour of prayer that we have every morning before Mass, but I do! I wouldn’t trade those moments of intimacy with God in prayer for anything. To have such a relationship with God is the one great happiness of the priest. And community life is great. To live alongside other amazing, talented and holy men who are also seeking to give their lives to Christ for the building-up of his kingdom is a constant source of inspiration for me.

Fr. Nathan Torrey, LC was born in Slidell, Louisiana. He is currently an assistant to the novices at the Legion of Christ Novitiate and College of Humanities in Cheshire, Connecticut.

ON THE FRONT LINES
Fr. Eric Gilhooly, LC

I was five when I decided I wanted to be a priest. One of the major influences in my desire was my great-uncle, a priest of the diocese of Buffalo, who always encouraged me in that direction. I am the oldest of seven kids…and the only boy. I remember growing up longing for a brother, and every time my Mom was pregnant, I was sure that it was my little brother finally on his way. Well, God sent me quite a few sisters, but no brother.

The summer before I entered seventh grade, my parents wanted me to go to a camp. Of the various possibilities, I chose to go to a minor seminary run by the Legion of Christ in Center Harbor, New Hampshire. I went with the idea of enjoying myself and heading home. For me, the priesthood lay in the far-off future. But, during the third week, one of the priests there gave us a talk on the Legionary priests as called to fight on the front lines of the Church. And in that moment I felt the “click” – the realization that God wanted me to give my life to him as a Legionary.

After novitiate and a bachelor’s degree in philosophy, Legionaries do about three years of pastoral work. I did four. For most of them, I was a teacher for the seminarians studying humanities in Connecticut. There I realized that God had given me many of the younger brothers I had wanted so much growing up – many more than in any natural family! I continued to accompany younger seminarians through the rest of my time in preparation for the priesthood. When I finished apostolic internship, I went back to Rome for a master’s in philosophy and then a bachelor’s in theology. It’s been a long haul, but so worth it!

Without doubt, one of my main anchors during these years has been the Eucharist: a place of refuge and strength. I’ve learned to look for those moments of quiet peace with our Lord and let him mold my heart according to his. Sure, lots of times I don’t feel like it. I tell Jesus that I’m tired, fed up or whatever, and that I’d rather be somewhere else but praying. And I also say, “You know everything, but bless me in spite of me.” And he has.

Eric Gilhooly, LC, was born in Syracuse New York. After his diaconate ordination, he was sent to Bogotá, Colombia, to begin his ministry working with EoYo.
Come, Learn, and Rest
An Invitation to Each of Us

Jesus says to each one of us personally: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” – Matthew 11:28-30

Let us consider three phrases from his personal invitation:

Come to Me: If you struggle daily to do what is morally right even when those around you take shortcuts, then come to Jesus. If the life of selfish pleasure and illicit gain seems exceedingly attractive, then come to Jesus. If you are burdened with your patterns of sin and weaknesses of character that affect your calling as a spouse, a parent, a friend, a consecrated soul, a Christian…, then come to Jesus. If life seems unfair and God seems distant at best, then come to Jesus. He calls us not to a set of principles and noble ideals, but to his very person. We do not follow rules for the sake of rules; we follow Jesus who brings us into his own relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Only when we have first come to him will we understand the need for the rules which simply help protect the dignity of this relationship.

Learn from Me: St. Paul admonishes the Galatians to live in the freedom of Christ: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). Yet in his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul invites us to be “slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (6:5). To be a slave means that I endure the will of another or am subordinated to one stronger than I in some way. One who is a slave of passion, vanity, selfishness or any other vice is subject to that vice as something more powerful than oneself. But Jesus calls us friends and not slaves (cf. John 15:14-15). So, to be a “slave” of Christ means to entrust my life to him freely with the intention of following where he leads. Experience shows that he always guides us down the path that leads to our happiness and fulfillment, even when it entails the cross.

Rest for Yourselves: “Rest,” not in the sense of cessation from work and struggle, but in the sense of peace of soul, substantial joy and profound happiness. This is the rest that we all long for, the rest that will one day be uninterrupted in the bliss of heaven. We have each met individuals who experience this peace and joy despite their challenging circumstances. Notice that Jesus does not promise to take away the burdens, trials, or sufferings. Yet, if we take his yoke upon ourselves, if we submit to his plan, to his will, to his love, he guarantees this rest which is inseparable from joy. If you have never experienced it, then begin today by saying “yes”; give him what you know in your heart he is asking of you. Although it may hurt at first, as does every yoke, over time this one brings the lightness of peace and the ease of joy.

Fr. Shawn Aaron, LC, entered the Legion of Christ in 1991, making his final profession in 1999. On December 24, 2002 he was ordained a priest in Rome, Italy. He resides in Cumming, Georgia, where he serves as the Territorial Vicar for the North American Territory.
With the exception of Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene is perhaps the most remarkable woman in the New Testament. After being healed of seven demons, she was a faithful disciple of Jesus’ ministry and supported it financially. She also witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, empty tomb and resurrected appearance. She is a role model for any Christian, but Lisa Cusmano, a Regnum Christi member from Ohio, believes Mary Magdalene can be an inspiration for modern women.

In 2015, Lisa felt that God was calling her to begin a retreat ministry for women based on the insights and example of this saint. After two years of intense study, she developed a retreat called “Mary of Magdala At His Feet,” in which up to eight women meet for a half-day each week for five weeks. Most of the participants are, according to Lisa, “women who do not have the opportunities for small groups and retreats to encounter Christ that Regnum Christi members do.”

The retreats are not Bible studies or prayer groups. They are modeled after the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius—a combination of meditations, contemplations, and prayers to help participants to personally encounter Jesus in their lives and realize their beauty and dignity as women. Retreats include formative talks about Mary Magdalene’s life, her virtues and her choices, with the intent that each participant will consider her own choices for redemption and love.

The Magdala House website provides a few questions for a woman to ask to determine if the retreat is right for her. The questions include: Do you ever struggle to believe you are good enough? Do you wonder if God could love you with all your failures and mistakes? Do you want to know Jesus better, but don’t know how? These common doubts and struggles are addressed in a peaceful atmosphere, including the use of beautiful music and art.

Lisa was introduced to Regnum Christi (RC) in 2002 through Familia, an apostolate of Cana Family Institute. It was here that she began to read papal documents and learn more about her faith. After joining RC, Lisa began meeting individually with the women’s section director, Melanie Wieck, for formation. Lisa says that Melanie was “charming, delightful, joyful, calm, serene, bold and courageous. She loved me no matter what, and what grace she had to hand over RC leadership to me. She’d say Jesus was counting on me and she knew I could do it.”

Melanie died from cancer in 2014. Today, Lisa is paying forward what her dear friend and spiritual mentor passed on to her. She wants participants of Magdala House to know they are loved unconditionally and that they have many gifts and blessings to share with others. In addition to the five-week retreat, there are one-day “Magdala Moment” retreats based on various themes of other holy women in sacred scripture. There are also plans for a Holy Land pilgrimage in September, beginning at the guesthouse at Magdala (on the Sea of Galilee) and ending in Jerusalem. To further her ministry of accompaniment, Lisa enrolled in the Spiritual Direction certificate course at Divine Mercy University.

Magdala House is an example of what can grow out of being a spiritual mentor and friend, of the courage that arises when you know you are loved unconditionally, and a reflection of the joy and sense of purpose that comes from sharing your gifts with those around you.
“Back to the Closeness”
Marriage Renewal at Retreat Center

Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center in Bethesda, Maryland, run by Regnum Christi, offers marriage renewal weekends based on Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). This combines faith and psychology to offer couples an opportunity for renewing their relationship. The center also offers retreats for spiritual reflection, marriage preparation and other faith-based programs.

Dr. Jonathan Marcotte, who has helped to facilitate the retreats, explained, “Couples get caught in a cycle, they get caught in a dance. There is something called the ‘demon dialogues’ where one – either the man or the woman – in the couple becomes ‘the pursuer,’ who’s always pursuing a relationship. The other one is ‘the withdrawer,’ who’s always trying to avoid conflict for the sake of improving the relationship.”

The goal of resolving relationships with EFT is to move the couple to see the cycle as the common enemy they can fight. For this, there is a lot of training in how to recognize an unhealthy cycle and help the couple get out of that cycle by creating a deeper connection with each other. The retreat includes a team of psychologists, creating a ratio of about one therapist per three or four couples. A Legionary priest serves as the chaplain and the entire Our Lady of Bethesda staff welcomes the couples.

One couple described the weekend as “the best marriage retreat we’ve ever been on. You just feel a little bit remiss … We’ve been married 20 years. Why have we never received some of these tools before now? I think everybody should do the retreat at some point. Now we are more unified and thankful for each other. We are back to the closeness we had at the beginning of our marriage.”

Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center is an apostolate of Regnum Christi at the service of the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, its parishes and neighboring dioceses. Find more information at www.ourladyofbethesda.org.
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

How will we make the world a better place for our children and our grandchildren? What will we pass on to others when we are called home to heaven? Like most people you probably think of these questions from time to time. Having a plan in place will help provide you with some answers and peace of mind.

You can create a legacy today that will help others whom we love to grow in the Church while strengthening the resources of the Legion. The beauty of this is that it costs you nothing today, but will provide for the future. The amount of your estate doesn’t matter, but what does matter is that each of us have a plan and not leave our legacy to chance.

Benefits of a Bequest:
• Allows you to make a gift that costs nothing today.
• Completely flexible and can be changed by you any time.
• The value of the gift is removed from you taxable estate.
• When established as a percentage, a bequest intention allows for change in the value of your assets.
• Your gift provides for the future of the Legionaries of Christ.

Identifying the right asset for your philanthropy to the Legion can make the benefits of charitable giving even better. For example, retirement plan assets make some of the best charitable gifts, because they may be highly taxed when left to a non-spouse, non-charitable beneficiary. Let us send you our new guide to Charitable Gift Planning for this and other ideas.

A bequest will help ensure the training for future leaders to serve the Church throughout our communities in the United States. Your bequest gift provides the assurance for the continuing excellence in the training and formation of our seminarians. A will provides for the disposition of your assets, but it is also an expression of your love and commitment to those people and groups that you most cherish.

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Missionaries in Action | Witnesses In a Secular World

“HERE I AM” AT WORLD YOUTH DAY
Professions and Confessions

Forty-nine pilgrims joined a Mission Youth pilgrimage to this year’s World Youth Day (WYD) in Panama. The trip was organized by Marial Corona, a Consecrated Woman of Regnum Christi (CRC), who was part of the leadership team with two other consecrated women and two Legionary priests. This was the first WYD to have a Marian theme, “Here I am, the Servant of the Lord,” which provided inspiration for a week of catechesis sessions with bishops as well as addresses by Pope Francis.

More than 300,000 youth from around the world were able to grow in faith, hope and love in a variety of ways. In addition to catechesis, there was joyful music, fellowship, an adoration chapel, vocation fair and opportunities for confession. After the Holy Father addressed the gathering one night, the RC group spent the following eight hours directing people to makeshift confessional, where Fr. Simon Devereux, LC, and Fr. Gregory Usselmann, LC, awaited.

“The lineup for confession was at times longer than the lineup for food,” said Helen Yalbir (CRC) “which showed where the true hunger in the human person was.”

One of the mothers who joined the pilgrimage, Kathleen Whitmer from California, remarked, “I felt in my heart the increased safety of my love for Jesus Christ, the love I felt amongst us all, and witnessing my daughter’s own transformation that night as she watched the long line of people eager to receive the sacrament. It was truly beautiful.”

Siobhan O’Connor (CRC) described the event as “an incredible moment to experience the joy of being Catholic once again, in a deeply hurting and divisive time in the Church and the world at large.”

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On Our Masthead

Newly ordained Fr. Jared Loehr, LC, celebrates his first Mass