

Introduction

The Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Ph.D.



On the day he was ordained to the priesthood, Father Stu Long stood before the congregation and delivered a deeply moving message.

“Today I stand before you as a broken man, but I trust that Jesus Christ knows what he is doing, and this gives me the strength to continue.”

Only months before this ordination day, I received a sobering letter from the seminary officials recommending against Stu’s priestly ordination. Their reasons were clear, correct, and compelling.

Priesthood is a demanding vocation, they reasoned, taxing even the most able-bodied man.

Stu’s rapidly advancing and ultimately fatal disease was ravaging Stu’s strength and stamina before our very eyes.

After receiving the seminary’s negative recommendation, I begged the Lord for guidance night and day. In prayer, the words of Saint Paul echoed loudly in my heart, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

Stuart Long embodied those powerful words of St. Paul.

“Indeed,” I reasoned, “there is power in suffering.” And so I chose to call Stuart Long to Holy Orders against the seminary’s sage advice and medical odds.

Stu Long was given two years to live. He lived for six—six grace-filled years that blessed the people of the Helena Diocese with immeasurable, unmerited, unexpected blessings.

In the homily I delivered at Stu Long’s funeral, I quoted words from a sermon Stu delivered in the twilight of his life; “Death no longer looms as a frightening specter, but rather as the embrace of Christ as he leads me from this world to purgatory, where,” he added in his inimitable way, “I will likely reside for a very long time!”

May God bless and reward you, dear Stuart, for a life well-lived. Rest in peace, until we meet again.



Father Stu: Reborn is the real-life story of Stuart Long, an amateur boxer from Helena, Montana, who gives up boxing to try to make it as an actor in Hollywood. After a horrific motorcycle accident, he examines his life and realizes he is being called to the Catholic priesthood. In the seminary, he learns he has an incurable fatal disease. Despite his illness, the bishop of Helena ordains him. Father Stu died at age 50 on June 9, 2014.


Mark Wahlberg plays the title role, and Mel Gibson plays his father.

To purchase and download the movie:

<https://www.sonypictures.com/movies/fatherstu>

 <https://www.instagram.com/fatherstumovie/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/FatherStuMovie>

 [@FatherStuMovie](https://twitter.com/FatherStuMovie)

Leader's Guide

Suggestion for Discussion

This Guide contains a series of questions based on the movie *Father Stu: Reborn*, some of which require more introspection than others. Feel free to adapt this Guide according to your group's needs and age of students by skipping and rearranging suggested discussion questions.

Encourage all participants to share to the degree to which they feel comfortable participating. Allow time to reflect on the more probing issues. For larger groups, you might want to break into smaller sections and then have a general discussion of a few key questions at the end.

The last section of this Guide is a FAQ with additional information and advanced discussion questions.

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For Discussion

1. **One of the major issues in the movie is how to deal with anger.**

As a college student, Stu was disruptive and obstreperous in class. A wise and seasoned priest-professor noted both Stu's intellectual potential and his unresolved anger. Father Jeremiah Sullivan, himself a boxer and cousin to Evil Knievel, introduced Stu to boxing.

One of the ways Father Stu addressed his anger was in the ring. Even near the end of the movie, he still thinks about boxing Jacob's ears. Stu's father expresses his anger by drinking and threatening suicide. Carmen feels angry when Stu tells her they won't get married and she runs away in tears. Jacob, until he confesses it to Father Stu, deals with his anger through denial. How did each of these people learn to manage their anger issues? (Or did they?) How do you deal with your anger? How would you like to deal with anger?

2. **You cannot see your own reflection in boiling water, nor can you see the truth until the water is calm.** Why was Stu so angry with his father? How did he deal with this unresolved anger? What helped the waters to calm? Are there people in your own life with whom you are angry or resentful? Are you seeking the help of others to resolve your anger? Have you ever turned to Jesus, the Divine Physician, for help?
3. **One of the first things we hear Stu say is, "I love this, man. It's what I do," as he was boxing.** In real-life, after living too long in his parents' basement, Stu's mother suggested he move to Hollywood and try out for a part in



The Official Study Guide
to *Father Stu: Reborn*

**PARTICIPANT
GUIDE**

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In real-life, after living too long in his parents' basement, Stu's mother suggested he move to Hollywood and try out for a part in the movies. In the end, neither boxing nor acting gave him peace. What do you think Stu was actually searching for? Did he find it in becoming a priest?
