

Catholic schools march into tournament

Brian Roewe | Mar. 15, 2012 NCR Today

The madness has begun!

The NCAA men's basketball tournament, otherwise known as March Madness, tipped off this morning — unless you include the four play-in games that started Tuesday — unleashing a flurry of bracket sheets shuffling through offices, passing among friends and updating instantly online.

With 11 Catholic schools — eight of them Jesuit — making this year's cut, the NCR staff has decided to join in the madness.

In our bracket, we've hitched our wagon to each of the Catholic school's teams, riding them as far as we can, until they ultimately run into one another.

This required us to make tough decisions early on, as Xavier and Notre Dame face each other Friday evening, and #15 seed the University of Detroit-Mercy faces #2 seed and perennial basketball powerhouse the University of Kansas that night, as well.

Later match-ups force us to choose between Saint Louis University and Marquette University in a bout between Midwest Jesuit schools, and between Gonzaga and St. Bonaventure in a coast-to-coast game.

Ultimately, our bracket leads us to an all-Catholic Final Four showdown, with Notre Dame, Marquette, Gonzaga and Georgetown our picks to make the trip south to New Orleans.

In the national championship game, we project Georgetown taking the title in a close game over Marquette.

Is our bracket in need of some prayers? Does it stand a chance?

We'll keep you updated on its success (or lack thereof) as the tournament progresses.

In the meantime, we'll watch with eagerness and pull for our teams, like everyone else.

[Update: In our count, we only included the schools making it to the pool of 64, and those listed on the bracket. That excluded Iona College, who made the tournament but lost narrowly in their first round, play-in game to Brigham Young University. We applaud Iona for bringing the total representation of Catholic schools in this year's tournament to a full dozen, and apologize for any perceived slight.]