



Roman Catholic Diocese of
Fall River
Southeastern MA • Cape Cod • The Islands

**The Stronger Priests,
Stronger Parishes,
Stronger Church Initiative
2025-2027**



A Time for Fortitude



A three-year Diocesan initiative to strengthen our priests so as to foster vibrant and holy parishes and ministries.

A Time for Fortitude: Stronger Priests, Stronger Parishes, Stronger Church is Bishop da Cunha's Pastoral Letter to the Diocese, released on December 8, 2024. In the Pastoral Letter, the Bishop details his vision for the future of our Diocese, which is centered on strengthening our priests. He introduced a three-year plan (2025-2027) to focus our local Church on moving forward in our relationship with Christ by actively working towards **bringing to our priests more stability, hope, holiness, and wellness**. As flourishing priests lead to flourishing parishes and ministries, strengthening our priests will, in turn, strengthen all parishes and ministries in holiness and vitality. **This initiative includes six strategic priorities that will be implemented between 2025 and 2027:**

Diocesan-Centric Priorities

- 1. Pastoral Planning:** We will commit to accelerating pastoral planning efforts to bring relief to our priests who are overextended by too many assignments. This will include the closure of some churches based on a substantial review of information, including Mass attendance, Sacraments, church utilization, population growth/decline, and more.
- 2. Parish Ministry:** Parish Ministry will be invigorated by new projects to allow our priests to focus on what they love to do most and what is at the heart of priestly ministry – Sacramental ministry, evangelization, spiritual life, pastoral care, and teaching the faith.
- 3. Presbyteral Culture:** Knowing the importance of positive culture in any organization, our Priests' culture will be strengthened to promote fraternity and stability.

Priest-Centric Priorities

- 4. Priestly Well-being & Holiness:** Human wellness and spiritual holiness are the single most important factors in priestly thriving and pastoral effectiveness. Consequently, our priests have committed to taking the time to deepen these realities in their lives.
- 5. Personal & Ministerial Training and Standards:** We will focus on enhanced training of our priests to help them thrive and successfully minister in an increasingly challenging world.
- 6. Vocations & Seminarian Formation:** We must beseech God for an increase in vocations to our Diocesan Priesthood. We'll also enact improvements to the current Seminarian Formation, ensuring that our young priests are confidently prepared to thrive on day one of priestly ministry.

What can you do?

- 1. Embrace Fortitude:** This time in our Diocese, our Church, and our world requires fortitude. Each of us – clergy and laity alike – must focus on this virtue and pray for the strength and courage to face our challenges with perseverance and resilience, and live our faith boldly in everyday life.
- 2. Increase Prayer:** This is primarily a spiritual endeavor that requires a foundation of faith in God, fervent prayer, and ongoing attentiveness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Visit www.fallriverdiocese.org to participate in the Spiritual Banquet for this initiative.
- 3. Take Action:** Visit www.fallriverdiocese.org to learn more about this initiative and the practical ways you can get involved.

