



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

A Time for Fortitude



2025 Year One in Review And the Road Ahead



Building a Stronger Church—Starting with Our Priests

Across our Diocese, priests are carrying more than ever: fewer priests, more parishes, rising health concerns, and complex responsibilities—while trying to lead our people to a deeper encounter with Christ.

In response, in 2025 Bishop da Cunha launched a three-year path of renewal because when priests are strong in Christ, parishes are alive, and the whole Church flourishes.

The Three-Year Vision

Think of the initiative as three concentric circles:

2025 – The Priest Himself (Foundations)

Helping priests grow in prayer, health, fraternity, and support.

2026 – The Priest with His Closest Collaborators (Strengthening)

Equipping parish staff, key leaders, and brother priests—and strengthening unity with the Bishop—so every priest is surrounded by the support he needs to live his mission with joy.

2027 – The Priest in the Local Church (Flourishing)

Renewing parish life, priestly unity, and our shared mission as a diocesan family.



Year One Snapshot 2025: Strengthening the Priest in Health & Holiness

Year One focused on strengthening the priest himself—his prayer, health, fraternity, and the support he needs to thrive in ministry. Some of the successes include:

Setting Spiritual Foundations – The Hidden Powerhouse of All that We Do

- Priests consecrated to St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests.
- A growing “hidden army” of prayer: religious communities, spiritual mothers, nursing homes, and parishioners offering prayers and sacrifices for our priests.
- A Traveling Relic of St. John Vianney visiting parishes to invite deeper holiness for priests and people.

Caring for Priests in Mind, Body, and Spirit

- Annual wellness checks for priests’ physical and mental health.
- The Shepherd’s Hub App to connect priests with resources and support.
- The Inner Shepherd Course giving a shared language for emotional and pastoral health.
- Fraternity Teams and Ten Priestly Commitments to strengthen brotherhood and healthy priestly life.

Strengthening Foundational Systems Around the Priest

- Task forces on rectory life and fraternity, seminarian formation, parish life and ministry, and church staff training.
- A clearer process for restoring priests to ministry.
- Growing interest and encouragement from other dioceses, Catholic media, and Church leaders.



The Shepherd's
Hub



The Inner
Shepherd





The Road Ahead and Your Role in the Renewal

Looking Ahead 2026: Surrounding the Priest with a Strong Team

In Year Two, the focus moves outward: the priest with his closest collaborators. Key priorities include:

- Training parish and diocesan staff so they can better support priests and serve parishioners.
- Building healthy leadership teams around pastors, so they are not carrying the mission alone.
- New opportunities for priestly spiritual renewal and fraternity.

Looking Ahead 2027: Uniting the Priest and People on Mission

In Year Three, attention turns to the whole diocesan family:

- Clarifying what it means to be a priest of the Diocese of Fall River.
- A Year of Parishioner Formation on the Priesthood, helping all of us better understand and support our priests.
- More mission-focused parish structures, ensuring our time and resources are being spent on the mission of the Church.
- A new bi-annual clergy retreat and a joyful diocesan celebration of the priesthood.

How Can I Help? ...Becoming a Priestly People

As baptized Christians, we are all called to live a "priestly" life—offering our daily sacrifices, work, and love to God according to our vocation. This renewal is not just for priests; it is a call for all of us to deepen that identity.

You can participate by:

- Welcoming the Traveling Relic of St. John Vianney when it arrives in your parish and consecrating yourself and your family to his intercession.
- Growing in your own holiness, which is what every priest most desires for his people.
- Getting more involved in parish life, offering your gifts to help your parish thrive.
- Praying daily for our priests and for new vocations, especially during this time of renewal.
- Seeing our priests not only as spiritual leaders but as human beings and encouraging them in their sacred role because when priests thrive, parishes thrive.

A Word of Hope

We are asking the Holy Spirit to do something beautiful in our Diocese:

Stronger priests. Stronger parishes. A stronger, holier Church.

Through the intercession of Our Lady, Mother of Priests, and Saint John Vianney, may the Lord bring to completion the good work He has begun in us.

Strength for Our Priests: Fall River's Consecration Draws National Attention

Parish priests today face significant challenges—fewer vocations, growing administrative burdens, parish consolidations, and a culture that often misunderstands their vocation. Yet this is not a cause for despair, but a call to action.

Most priests are good and holy men, striving faithfully to serve the Church. What they need most is support—from one another and from the lay faithful they serve.

A powerful example came from the Diocese of Fall River, where Bishop Edgar da Cunha led his priests and seminarians in a communal consecration to St. John Vianney. Such moments remind us that priests are men, not machines—and that lifting them up in prayer strengthens their mission at this challenging time.

— National Catholic Register

Read the full article:



A Tangible Sign of Hope

This past year, **five new seminarians** entered formation for our Diocese—a beautiful reminder that the Holy Spirit is at work. Special thanks to our Vocations Office, whose dedication helps these vocations grow and take root.



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Translations & More Information

Scan the QR code for access to Spanish & Portuguese translation and additional information or visit www.fallriverdiocese.org.

