

## TOP 10 WAYS TO PROMOTE VOCATIONS IN YOUR PARISH

1. Foster a culture of respect and esteem for the priests and religious—speak well of them, have them to your homes, encourage young people to seek them out for advice.
2. Organize opportunities for prayer for vocations: General intercessions for Vocations; Holy Hours, Vocation Crucifix Program, Stations of the Cross for Vocations.
3. Vocations Bulletin Board – featuring holy and happy seminarians, priests and religious, and how they discerned their call -- so young people can see that God calls people just like them. (*Hint: Check the “Meet our Seminarians and Priests” webpages*)
4. Include websites with vocational information on the parish website.
5. Mention it to young people – attendance at daily Mass, participation in parish activities especially the liturgy, service projects, etc. are good indicators of a young person striving to grow closer to God – approach them, mention the qualities you see in them that could indicate God might be calling them to live a life devoted to Him.
6. Encourage parents to not be afraid should God call one of their children.
7. Celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week: form a committee from the parish and school to make the most of this week (speakers, posters, contests, testimonies, etc.)
8. Publicize quotes by the Holy Father and other Church teachings about vocations.
9. “Like” and “Share” items about vocations from the Arlington Diocese Facebook page relating to vocations.
10. Include Bulletin Blurbs for the weekly bulletin on vocational topics.

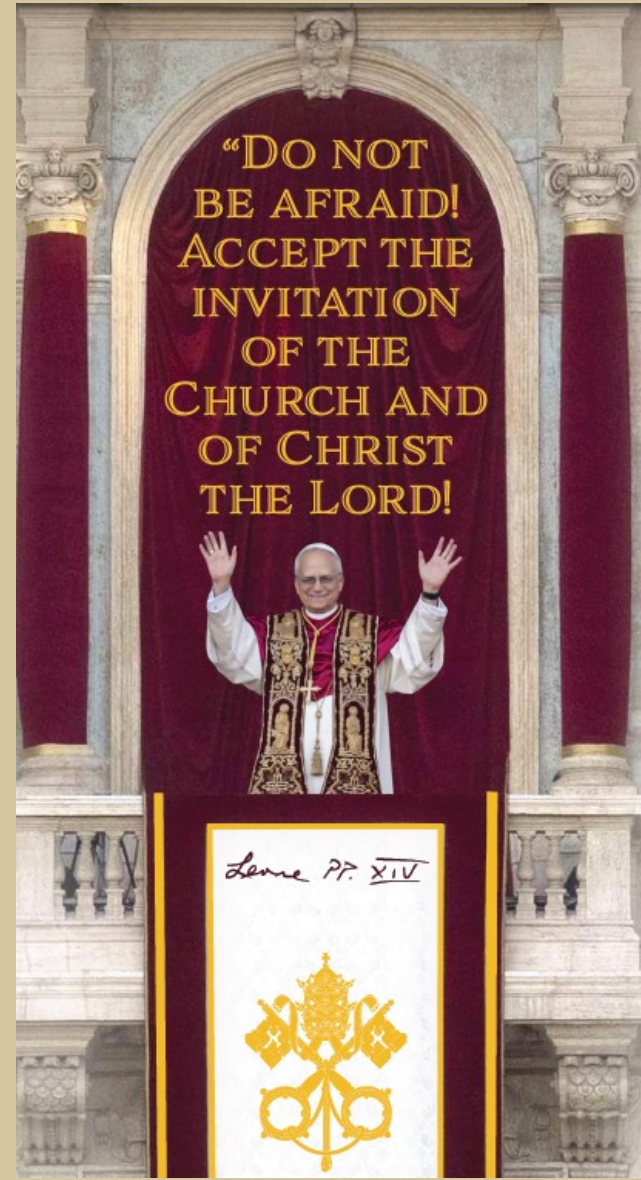
***And stay tuned for more coming to your inbox via the  
VOCATIONS MINUTE!***

**Thank you for all you do!**

The Office of Vocations is here to support your efforts:  
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CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
ARLINGTON



VOCATIONS RESOURCE BOOK 2025

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Here, I would also like to add a word about vocations. Despite the signs of a crisis in the life and mission of priests, God continues to call, and he remains faithful to his promises. Yet there need to be adequate spaces where his voice can be heard. There is a need for settings and forms of youth ministry centred on the Gospel, for this is where the call to total gift of self can emerge and mature. Do not be afraid to present young people with demanding and liberating possibilities for their future! As we look to the young men and women who even now are generously responding to the Lord's call, may all of us feel the desire to renew our "yes," and to rediscover the beauty of being missionary disciples of Christ the Good Shepherd..."

*(Address to participants for the Jubilee of Seminarians, June 24, 2025)*

"...Jesus, as you know, calls you, before all else, to have an experience of friendship with him and with your other companions on the journey (cf. *Mk 3:13*). An experience that will continue to grow, also after ordination, and affect every part of your life. Indeed, nothing of your personal uniqueness should be put aside; rather, everything should be taken up and transformed, like the grain of wheat in the Gospel. The goal is to become a joyful man and a joyful priest, a "bridge", not an obstacle for those who come to you in order to come to Christ. He must increase and we must decrease. In that way, we can be shepherds after his own Heart..."

## DIOCESAN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, Lord of the harvest,  
call forth vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life  
from our diocese and our families.  
Inspire men to imitate Christ the Eternal High Priest  
in sacrificial service to Your Church.  
Move the hearts of men and women  
to offer themselves wholly to You  
in poverty, chastity, and obedience.  
Send them as laborers for Your harvest.  
Inspire the faithful to support them with prayer and sacrifice.  
Raise up holy families who foster openness to Your call.  
We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Mary Immaculate, pray for us  
St. Thomas More, pray for us  
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, pray for us.  
St. John Vianney, pray for us.

## POPE LEO SPEAKS ON VOCATIONS



*(Angelus Address, World Day of Prayer for Vocations, May 1, 2025)*

...Today brothers and sisters, I therefore have the joy of praying with you and all the People of God for vocations, especially those to the priesthood and consecrated life. The Church has such a great need for them! It is important that young men and women on their vocational journey find *acceptance, listening* and *encouragement* in their communities, and that they can look up to credible models of generous dedication to God and to their brothers and sisters.

Let us take up the invitation that Pope Francis left us in his Message for today: the invitation to welcome and accompany young people. And let us ask our heavenly Father to assist us in living in service to one another, each according to his or her state of life, shepherds after his own heart (cf. Jer 3:15) capable of helping one another to walk in love and truth. And to young people, I say: “Do not be afraid! Accept the invitation of the Church and of Christ the Lord!”

May the Virgin Mary, whose entire life was a response to the Lord’s call, always accompany us in following Jesus...”

*(Address to participants in the meeting of priests, June 26, 2025)*

“...Jesus’ words, “I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15), are not just an expression of the affection he felt for his disciples, but a real key to the meaning of our priestly ministry. The priest is a friend of the Lord, called to a personal and trusting relationship with him, nourished by the word, the celebration of the sacraments, and daily prayer. Friendship with Christ is the spiritual foundation of the ordained ministry, the ultimate reason for our celibacy and the source of our daily commitment to the service of the ecclesial community. It sustains us in times of trial and enables us to renew each day the “yes” we said to the Lord at the beginning of our vocation...”

Priestly formation is about more than learning concepts alone; it is a journey of growth in intimacy with the Lord. It engages the entire person – heart, mind and freedom – in order to shape him in the image of the Good Shepherd...

## FROM THE DESK OF BISHOP BURBIDGE:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I thank you for volunteering to serve the Diocese of Arlington as Vocation Liaisons in our parishes.

Your efforts to promote vocations in your parishes through cooperation with the Office of Vocations and your pastors are vital to our reaching those who are called to serve the Church as priests and consecrated religious. By providing your parishes with vocational resources and publicizing the activities of the Office of Vocations, you invite young people to consider how God is calling them to serve Him with their lives. In addition, you also give parishioners the means and the opportunity to pray for vocations from your parish and encourage those that may be called to pursue further discernment.

Be assured of my prayers each of you, and I join you in praying for the men and women in our Diocese that God is calling to be priests and consecrated religious.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Michael F. Burbidge*



## THE ROLE OF THE PARISH VOCATION LIAISON

- Work with the pastor, priests, DRE, school principal, youth and young adult ministers in your parish to increase the awareness of the importance of vocation discernment. Develop a parish-wide plan especially for Vocation Awareness Week (first full week in November).
- **PRAY:** through intercessions at Mass; having prayer cards available at the parish; instituting vocational Holy Hours, Stations of the Cross, Vocations Crucifix Program, rosaries for vocation; promote the St. Theres Vocation Society.
- **PROMOTE:** Ensure the parish has sufficient vocations materials; spread the word about vocations events; keep message/bulletin boards updated; help promote the Race for Seminarians campaign.
- **INVITE:** love your faith, help others see the importance of religious vocations; ask them to consider it personally.



These statistics for our diocese capture the *WHY* of vocation promotion. See the number of parishioners per parish, the number of priests, and the incredibly rapid growth of the Catholic population here in Arlington (and imagine if everyone went to confession!!) . Our 40 seminarians can sound like a lot – until you look at the needs...

### DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON PARISH POPULATIONS 2023:

#### Largest parishes (priests):

All Saints (5)	19,308
Church of the Nativity (3)	16,841
Saint Timothy (5)	16,366
Saint Mary, Fredericksburg (5)	15,940
Holy Trinity (3)	15,879
Our Lady of Angels (3)	14,878
Saint Theresa (4)	14,693
Good Shepherd (2)	11,272
Christ the Redeemer (3)	10,716
Our Lady of Good Counsel (4)	10,420
<b>TOP 10 PARISHES (37)</b>	<b>146,313</b>

That is 3,954 parishioners per priest in those parishes!

#### Overall in the diocese we have:

Total number of registered parishioners: 432,700  
 Total population within diocesan boundaries: 3,381,214  
 Total number of priests active in diocese: 175

Priest per registered parishioner: 2,473  
 Priest per person in the diocese: over 19,000!

Even if a parish has 4 priests assigned, imagine how many confessions they'd be hearing every week, plus hospital calls, school ministry, baptisms, funerals...Not to mention those who *aren't* registered in the parish and might be in need of some catechizing and evangelizing!

## HOW?

(Pastoral Priorities from the Continental Congress on Vocations)

### I. PRAY — and get others to pray!

- That God will call workers, and that these workers will have the courage to SAY YES and CONTINUE SAYING YES.
- That parents will encourage vocations and to LET GO if God call one of their children.
- For holy priests and religious to persevere til the end in their vocations...
- Join the St. Therese Society to pray for vocations
- Organize a Parish Vocations Crucifix Program; Stations of the Cross for Vocations; distribute the “Daily Prayer to Know my Vocations” and the diocesan “Prayer for Vocations”

II. EVANGELIZE on the critical role of priests in our faith; of the witness that consecrated and religious give to our world. *If people don't value their faith, or live a Gospel life, why would they value people to help them live it?*

“So many Catholics are unaware of what the priesthood is all about: the wonder and making Christ present in our midst...It is the priest who shares so intimately in Jesus' ministry of reconciliation. What a joy to be able to announce the good news to a suffering person...” (Cardinal O'Malley, *ibid.*)

III. EXPERIENCE — Offer opportunities for young people to get involved in serving God – in the liturgy, service projects, and more in the parish.

IV. MENTOR — Holy marriages, lives of surrender, generosity to God's call however it comes; “should to shoulder” opportunities with holy and joyful seminarians, priests and religious.

V. INVITE – to experience; to the mentoring...No one can “give” someone a vocation, but we can all work to expose them to God, to prayer, and cultivate good soil so if the call comes it can take root and bear fruit. (see Office of Vocations Calendar of Events)



## ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONS

- **Men's/Women's Discernment Groups** – separate groups for men/women aged 18-35; the Vocations Office sponsors annual Days of Recollection and weekend retreats, and offers the opportunity to visit seminaries/convents. Those in the discernment group also receive emails about events sponsored by religious orders.
- **Quo Vadis/FIAT groups for high school boys and girls** – Participate in a vocational camp each summer, and have opportunities each semester to continue exploring their vocations. Quo Vadis events have seminarians and priests present, and FIAT events are run by religious sisters.
- **St. Therese Vocations Society** — sends out a bi-annual calendar listing men and women from our diocese in seminary or formation with religious orders. There is also an annual morning of reflection for members.
- **St. Andrew dinners** — priests personally invite young men to come learn more about the priesthood and discernment. A roundtable format with Q&A hosted by Bishop Burbidge.
- **Race for Seminarians**—raises money to support our future priests.
- **Ordination ceremonies** — opportunities to witness the act of surrender.
- **Serra Club of Arlington** – is dedicated to praying for vocations and supporting seminarians financially.



## BUILDING A CULTURE OF VOCATIONS

### WHAT?

Build a “culture of vocations” – a culture of seeking God’s plan for our lives and encouraging young people to do the same.

### WHO?

YOU, and me, and all baptized Catholics. “If you are Catholic, you have a huge stake in the priesthood and vocations. Christ has given us, the Church, the gift of the Priesthood to perpetuate the Eucharist, to preach the Gospel, and to forgive sins...” (Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, OFM Cap., Archbishop Emeritus of Boston, Pastoral Letter 1/21/05)

“As Catholics, we need to promote vocations in the Church. It is the responsibility of the entire community to pray for vocations and to invite our young people to consider the possibility that God might be calling them to a vocation as a priest of religious...” (Cardinal O’Malley, *ibid.*)

“Promoting conditions that are adapted toward a positive welcoming of a call to the priesthood becomes an urgent duty for all the People of God...” (Pope John Paul II, address to Third Continental Congress on Vocations to the Ordained Ministry and Consecrated Life in North America, 18-21 April 2002, Montreal, Quebec).

“Creating a vocation culture requires fidelity to a continuing process in the life of every individual and every faith community.” (Summary of the Final Document for the Third Continental Congress on Vocations, *ibid.*)



### WHY?

“The harvest is plentiful but laborers are few...” (Matt. 9:37)

“...Pastoral work for vocations needs, especially today, to be taken up with new vigor and more decisive commitment by all members of the Church, in the awareness that it is not a secondary or marginal matter, or the business of one group only, as if it were a ‘part’, no matter how important, of the entire pastoral work of the Church... Indeed, concern for vocations is a connatural and essential dimension of the Church’s pastoral work” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 34).

“The pastoral work of promoting vocations has as its active agents, as its protagonists, the ecclesial community as such, in its various expressions: from the universal church to the particular Church (or diocese) and, by analogy, from the particular Church to each of its

parishes and to every part of the people of God... There is an urgent need, especially nowadays, for a more widespread and deeply felt conviction that *all members of the Church, without exception, have the grace and responsibility to look after vocations...*” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41).



“The crisis is not a lack of vocations, but rather a lack of responses” (Cardinal O’Malley, *ibid.*)

“Of the 19,000 parishes in our country, more than 2,000 are without a resident priest. This means that 10 percent of the U.S. parishes have no resident priest. The reality of the current shortage of priests, coupled with the aging of our clergy, underscores the importance of promoting vocations. The vocations are there in the hearts of our young Catholics, vocations waiting to be nurtured and cultivated by our prayers and encouragement...” (Cardinal O’Malley, *ibid.*)

(For more “Why” of vocational promotion, see *Diocesan Statistics*.)

