

# DIOCESAN VOCATIONS WORKSHOP

By Erwin D'Souza, Vocations Ministry Leader



On December 14th, Tanya and I attended a parish ministry workshop hosted by our Diocese at St. Paul Inside the Walls in Madison. It was a valuable opportunity to listen to Bishop Kevin Sweeney and speak with Vocations Director Rev. Ed Rama and people from various parishes. We exchanged ideas and learned from ongoing programs and initiatives fostering vocations in the Paterson Diocese.



During his talk, Bishop Kevin Sweeney reflected on Mark 1:17: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." He highlighted how unconventional it was for the disciples to leave their families and follow Jesus. It took a big leap of faith! Vocations come from families, he noted, reminding us that when God sent His Son as a Savior, He sent Him into a family.



The bishop also reflected on some of the challenges we face today. Catholic marriages and the vocations that arise from them have declined at alarming rates. Bishop Sweeney emphasized the importance of making time for God daily. He recommended the Hallow app, which offers beautiful meditations to introduce children and teens to the saints. He also referenced Blessed Carlo Acutis and his mission to bring others close to Jesus. Blessed Carlo's daily practices that guided his life were Mass, Adoration, Confession, spiritual guidance, befriending the Blessed Mother and the saints, and charity. These daily "appointments" led Carlo to live a life of intimacy with Jesus, making him the first millennial Blessed.



From a priesthood perspective, Bishop Sweeney shared a short clip from **Fishers of Men**, a film produced to renew priests' sense of fulfillment and encourage them to invite others to the priesthood.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVEzWuYlAxM&t=110s>



The bishop concluded his reflection by saying that the most important thing Jesus told us to do to promote vocations is to pray. Opportunities to do so as a parish include Adoration for Vocations, held every First Friday after the noon Mass, and prayers for vocations during weekend Masses.

**No Priests, No Sacraments!** Let us pray especially for our two homegrown seminarians: Seminarian Lucas Folan, who is in his third year of theology at the North American College in Rome and will be ordained Transitional Deacon in October of this year, and Seminarian Eric Hasenbein, who is in his propaedeutic year at St. Joseph's Seminary. Let us thank God for His Providence in calling these young men and keep them in our daily prayers.

There are many opportunities for young men to explore the priesthood, including Project Andrew, an evening of prayer and dinner with Bishop Sweeney (upcoming January 17 and February 21), and a three-day discernment retreat from March 7-9 led by Bishop Kevin Sweeney at Loyola Retreat House. For more information and inspiring vocation stories, please visit our [Vocations page](#).



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<https://files.ecatholic.com/10966/documents/2025/1/Parish%20Update%20January%202014%202025.pdf?t=1736983058000>