



BISHOPS' SYMPOSIUM

Building Healthy Presbyterates

Thursday–Friday, November 12–13, 2026
Saint Mary's Seminary & University • Baltimore, Maryland

Workshop Overview

Healthy presbyterates are intentional and shaped over time by the spiritual and human maturity of individual priests, the culture of the presbyterate, and the local Church's systems, expectations, relationships and leadership practices.

This two-day symposium invites bishops to prayerfully reflect upon the current state of priestly life and the opportunities for diocesan leadership to create the conditions in which priests can remain healthy, holy, effective, as well as deeply connected to one another and to the mission of the Church. The symposium will explore priestly flourishing as an essential dimension of institutional stewardship and a shared responsibility of Church leadership.

The Diocese of Fall River's *Stronger Priests, Stronger Parishes, Stronger Church (2025-2027)* initiative will serve as a practical case study throughout the gathering, offering an example of one diocese moving from reactive support to a more intentional, proactive and systemic approach to strengthening priestly life and ministry.

Through research, practical frameworks, episcopal reflection and candid peer conversation, participants will be invited to consider a central question: ***What can a bishop do to foster the conditions in which priests can flourish across a lifetime of ministry?***

Symposium Progression

- 1. Understand the Reality** — Examine what current research, experience and emerging patterns are revealing about priestly flourishing and struggle.
- 2. Examine Institutional Stewardship** — Consider the diocesan conditions, systems, leadership practices and cultural realities that either support or undermine healthy priestly life.
- 3. Learn from Episcopal Experience** — Hear a diocesan bishop reflect candidly on the pastoral rationale, decisions, challenges, resistance and lessons involved in attempting presbyteral renewal.
- 4. Translate Insight into Action** — Identify practical priorities that bishops can adapt to the realities, resources and culture of their own local Churches.

Program Schedule

All sessions are in the Center Conference Room

Thursday, November 12, 2026

<u>Time</u>	<u>Program</u>
10:00 A.M.	Arrival and Registration
11:30 A.M.	Mass in St. Charles Chapel
12:15 P.M.	Lunch in the Forum Café
1:30–2:30 P.M.	Session I — The State of the Priesthood: What Predicts Flourishing and What Predicts Struggle — Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M.
2:30–2:45 P.M.	Break
2:45–3:45 P.M.	Session II — The Institutional Stewardship of Priests: Building the Conditions for Priestly Flourishing — Matt Robinson
3:45–4:00 P.M.	Break
4:00–5:00 P.M.	Session III — Building a Healthy Presbyterate: Reflections from a Diocesan Bishop — Bishop Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
5:00–5:30 P.M.	Episcopal Dialogue / Q&A with Presenters
5:30 P.M.	Dinner in the Forum Café
7:00 P.M.	Social in the Center Sun Room

Friday, November 13, 2026

8:00 A.M.	Mass in St. Charles Chapel
8:30 A.M.	Breakfast in the Forum Café
9:30 A.M.	Session IV — From Insight to Action: Episcopal Priorities for Strengthening the Presbyterate Facilitated integration, peer exchange and practical next steps
10:30 A.M.	Departure

Session Descriptions

Session I: The State of the Priesthood: What Predicts Flourishing and What Predicts Struggle

Fr. Patrick McDevitt, CM, Ph.D., President & CEO of Saint Luke Institute

What is the lived experience of priests telling bishops about priestly life today? This session examines contemporary realities facing priests and the personal, relational, cultural and institutional factors associated with flourishing and struggle. The goal is to share the diversity of understanding of the priesthood that bishops are being asked to lead today.

Participants will explore:

- Current realities and emerging patterns in priestly life
- Factors associated with resilience, well-being and effectiveness
- Patterns that contribute to isolation, burnout, disengagement or struggle
- Implications for episcopal leadership and diocesan life

Session II: The Institutional Stewardship of Priests: Building the Conditions for Priestly Flourishing

Matt Robinson, MA, MS, MBA, Director of Clergy Support, Diocese of Fall River

Priestly flourishing requires focusing beyond the individual priest and adapting an approach that cares for the entire presbyterate. Bishops and diocesan institutions exercise stewardship over the environments in which priests live and minister. This session presents a practical framework for examining the systems, expectations, culture, supports and leadership practices that shape priestly life. The *Stronger Priests, Stronger Parishes, Stronger Church* initiative will be woven throughout as a concrete case study of systemic presbyteral renewal.

Participants will explore:

- Moving from reactive intervention to proactive stewardship
- The institutional conditions that influence priestly health, holiness, leadership and fraternity
- Aligning formation, personnel, wellness, presbyteral culture and pastoral planning
- Using data, structures, expectations and accountability without reducing priesthood to management
- Lessons and early outcomes from the *Stronger Priests* initiative

Session III: Building a Healthy Presbyterate: Reflections from a Diocesan Bishop

Bishop Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Fall River

Systemic renewal ultimately requires episcopal leadership. Bishop da Cunha will offer a pastoral and episcopal reflection on the Diocese of Fall River's effort to strengthen its presbyterate through the "*Stronger Priests*" initiative. The emphasis will be on the bishop's role: what prompted action, what required leadership, what proved difficult, what has been learned and how the initiative has affected his understanding of responsibility for the life of the presbyterate.

Participants will explore:

- Why strengthening the presbyterate became an episcopal priority
- Balancing care for priests with expectations, accountability and mission
- Governance challenges, resistance and lessons learned
- What the bishop can shape — and what he cannot
- Advice for bishops considering a more intentional approach to presbyteral renewal

Session IV: From Insight to Action: Episcopal Priorities for Strengthening the Presbyterate

Facilitated Discussion

The symposium concludes with structured bishop-to-bishop conversation focused on translation rather than replication. Participants will identify the most significant pressure points in their own presbyterates, assess where diocesan structures or culture may need attention and name practical priorities for strengthening priestly life in their local Churches.

Participants will explore:

- What requires attention now in my presbyterate?
- Which conditions are within episcopal or diocesan influence?
- What is one structural, cultural, or leadership change worth pursuing?
- What should be explored further after the symposium?

Intended Outcomes

- A clearer, data-informed understanding of the realities shaping priestly life today.
- A framework for viewing priest care and presbyteral health as a matter of institutional and episcopal stewardship.
- Concrete lessons from the Diocese of Fall River's "*Stronger Priests, Stronger Parishes, Stronger Church*" initiative.
- A small number of practical priorities that can be adapted to each bishop's diocesan context.
- Peer exchange with other bishops facing similar questions of priestly flourishing, culture, leadership and renewal.