ST. ANDREW DINNER
Overview & Recommendations

HOUSTON
VOCATIONS
ARCHDIOCESE of
GALVESTON·HOUSTON

DESCRIPTION

St. Andrew Dinner is a program in which the pastor/parochial vicar invites high school aged young men from his parish who are open to the vocation of priesthood. These young men could be recommended by the youth minister or another adult, but the key invitation comes from a priest. The participants will have the opportunity to have dinner and a conversation with the pastor, parochial vicar, Vocations Director, other priests and/or seminarians about what it means to be a priest. The stronger their relationship with Jesus and the more they want to learn about the priesthood, the more successful these dinners will be.

GOALS

1. *Get to know a priest*: St. Andrew Dinners give young men an opportunity to get to know priests in a small, informal, group setting. They can hear stories and ask questions.
2. *To find companions on the discernment journey*: St. Andrew Dinners bring together young men who may have considered a vocation to the priesthood to create fraternity. Discerning one's vocation to the priesthood, because it is so counter-cultural, is more easily done with other like-minded young men.
3. *To connect interested parents with a parent of a priest or seminarian*. St. Andrew Dinners tend to bring together parents who remain in the area waiting to pick up their sons. Often parents are a major factor in the sons' decision to enter seminary. Connecting them with a peer who can address their concerns can be critical.

WHY IS IT CALLED "ST. ANDREW DINNER"?

John 1:35-42… "Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)."

AUDIENCE
The men invited should be between the ages of 14 (incoming freshmen) and 18 (outgoing seniors). Their parents can be invited to a simultaneous dinner as well; one in which parental concerns can be addressed by a lay volunteer. We recommend smaller dinners with more like-minded men, but if the group is large (8 or more), we recommend carefully dividing the men into small groups based on age, interest and the number of available priests and seminarians.

DATE FORMAT
Flexible; parishes have hosted anywhere from brunch to late evening.

TIME FRAMES
Also flexible, but generally 2 hours.

PLACE
Ideally, the young men would meet and eat in the rectory along with the parish priests. If this is not feasible, any area where meals can be served with tables/chairs can be used. If parents are present, they should eat at a separate table, where they can have a separate and private conversation. We also recommend using the church or chapel to pray after dinner.

LEADERS
Priests of host parish or other Archdiocesan priests. Seminarians will be invited to attend but are not always able to make it. The Vocations Director will also be in attendance if available. A parent of a seminarian or priest, and/or, leaders of the Vocations Committee or Serra.

PLANNING
One lead person is needed to contact other volunteers, coordinate with parish staff, and communicate with the Office of Vocations. This person (or team) is in charge of promoting* the dinner within their parish and surrounding parishes. The lead person will oversee everything the day of and will previously have secured the date, reserved facilities, and organized food for the dinner and decorations (tablecloths, small center piece, etc.). **

**Personal invitation is the most successful way to increase attendance and for young men to actually show up to the dinner. Asking key leaders in the parish who have a relationship with the youth (i.e. youth ministers, core leaders, faith formation teachers, confirmation teachers, etc.) to identify men that the priests can personally invite will be very beneficial. It is good to also share the Andrew Dinner flyer (provided by the Office of Vocations) via social media, parish wide emails, mass announcements, bulletin ad, and any other forms of communication with parishioners.*
*** The Office of Vocations will do an Archdiocesan-wide online registration form and will provide the link and information of attendees who signed up to the parish. Additionally, the Office of Vocations will promote the Andrew Dinner using their own media platforms with the specific dates and times provided by the parish. Physical and electronic flyers will be shared with the parish for advertising/promotion. The Vocations Office can also provide a small gift (party favor) to each young man that attends that includes resources on other vocations events, prayers, and books to guide them in their discernment.*

VOLUNTEER TEAM & TASKS

Day of:

1. ***Food Prep –*** *Prepare dinner for priests, participants, and volunteers. Parents are also encouraged to stay for dinner and talk with the parents of a seminarian in a separate room.*

2. ***Setting the room –*** *A few volunteers are needed to set the space, preparing for the night. This is particularly needed if the dinner is not hosted at the rectory, rather in a classroom. Tablecloths or small centerpieces may be necessary. Arrange tables conducive to small group discussion with 6-8 chairs per table.*

3. ***Registration/Name Tags*** *– Everyone should have a name tag (first name only). A sign-in table is necessary to have a sign-in sheet available to track attendance and make sure contact information for each participant is correct. Only participants need* ***to sign in****.*

4. ***Food Servers –*** *These people are in charge of moving the food line quickly and efficiently once dinner is served.*

5. ***Reset –*** *Make sure the space is reset to how it was when first arrived. Clean the space and take the trash out (if necessary).*

In the months and weeks before the dinner:

1. ***Planning –*** *gather a group of volunteers to help the day of the dinner, promotion, and planning. Above are some of the tasks for the day of. Assign specific people specific tasks to share the workload and make it as simple as possible. One person will need to contact the parish office to reserve the space, make sure the parish priests are available, and contact the Office of Vocations to get the registration link, promotional flyer, and schedule a parent of a priest or seminarian to talk with the adults if space is available.*

2. ***Promotion –*** *share the event flyer with key people in the parish: the communications team to share on social media, the bulletin, and any e-newsletters or bulletin boards, youth ministers to invite the youth, faith formation and confirmation teachers to invite their classes, altar server ministry leader to invite altar servers, the priest for a mass announcement, boy scout troop, and any other group that consists of high school aged young men.*

3. ***Cooking –*** *get a final head count from the Office of Vocations (including parents of participants that RSVPed) to begin food preparation.*

AGENDA
Sample Schedule

6:30pm	Participants check in & get name tag Welcome Introduction and Explanation of “St. Andrew Dinner” Ice Breaker Game (see attached game examples at the end of this document)
6:45	Prayer (priest) Dinner begins *Note: Priests should sit with participants during the meal*
7:00	Table discussions with the participating priests or seminarian. *Note: See small group discussion guide below.*
7:45	One priest shares his vocation story and invites young men to consider taking the next step.
7:55	Move to the chapel for 30 minutes of adoration or night prayer.
8:30pm	End

For Questions:
Please consult Ashley Jarrell, Parish Vocation Program Manager: (713) 594-1556; ajarrelll@archgh.org

Andrew Dinner Small Group Questions

(For Priests: Feel free to personalize these questions)

- Take about 5 minutes asking each member of the group to introduce themselves (where they are from, what high school they attend, fun facts, etc.).

- Take about 5 – 10 minutes asking each member of the group about their faith ("When was the moment that you knew God was real?" "How do you pray?" Etc.).

- Take about 5 minutes asking each member of the group if they have ever thought about being a priest – their answers might surprise you.

- Take about 5 minutes to share your own vocation story; speak of key moments that describe your relationship with God.

- Take about 5 minutes: Go around the table and allow each person to talk about what are the fears, the pressures and the issues that keep people from considering a priestly and religious life. Take time to share how you addressed these issues.

- Take about 5 minutes: Go around the table and allow each person to talk about what are the things that may inspire them to join the priesthood, perhaps something that a priest did that they remember.

- About 5-10 minutes: Take questions from the high school guys. Here are some example questions to get the conversation started.
    - What do you enjoy most about being a priest?
    - How did you know that you were called to be a priest?
    - What is the best way to "get close to God" when you are super busy?
    - How do you deal with the anxiety of everyone watching you?

GUIDE FOR PRIESTS

Thank you for hosting an Andrew Dinner! This two-hour event will be a great opportunity for you to gather with fresh faces in a small group, informal setting over dinner.

The following is a list of expectations for all priest and religious staff members:

- Please arrive 10 minutes prior to the event start to help greet participants as they arrive.
- You will be asked to briefly introduce yourself to the group at the beginning of the evening.
- Enjoy a casual dinner with participants.
- After dinner, lead a small group discussion and share your vocation story (see the guide below)

Small Group Discussion Guide
Note: Groups will be divided so that men are together with a priest or seminarian (if available).

1. Share the key moments of your vocation story with the group (approximately 10 minutes). Remember to bring out spiritual motives, not just the external facts/events. Here are some points to consider:
    - What prompted you to first consider a Church vocation?
    - How did you respond at that time?
    - What prompted you to actively discern it, that is, take the first step?
    - What led you to the decision to apply/enter formation?

2. You will then have 20-30 minutes to answer questions and discuss with the group.

3. If there is time remaining, consider adding some points to your story.

Feel free to bring any materials (brochures, prayer cards, business cards) that you might want to give to participants.

Note: We expect to have approximately 10-30 participants at each Andrew Dinner, 2-4 priests, volunteers and possibly parents* at the dinner.

*on the registration form, we ask if parents will be attending as well. If parents are attending, we will make note of it and ask parents of current seminarians to also attend to eat dinner in a separate room in close proximity to the high school young men.

Ice Breaker Game Example:
Break into two teams. A player from each team comes to the front of the room standing around a bell. Whoever rings the bell first after the question is asked gets a chance to answer the question. The other team can steal. Keep score to see which team wins. The team that wins can be first in line for food. Personalize or change the questions below if needed.

1. **How many parishes are in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston?***
   Answer: 146 parishes
2. **How many years does it typically take for a seminarian to go from applicant to priest?***
   Answer: 7 years
3. **What is the name of the seminary in Houston?**
   Answer: St. Mary's Seminary
4. **How many books are in the Catholic Bible?***
   Answer: 73 books
5. **Who is the Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**
   Answer: Bishop Italo Dell-Oro
6. **On what date was Pope Leo elected?**
   Answer: May 8, 2025
7. **Who is the patron Saint of priests?**
   Answer: St. John Vianney
8. **Did the priests or seminarians win the basketball game last year?**
   Answer: Seminarians
9. **In what month are priestly ordinations for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston traditionally held?**
   Answer: June
10. **What are the sacraments of initiation?**
    Answer: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist
11. **How many priests were ordained in 2026?**
    Answer: 4
12. **What feast do we celebrate on the last Sunday of September?**
    Answer: Good Shepherd or Priesthood Sunday
13. **How old is our diocese?***
    Answer: 179 years old
14. **What is the diocesan newspaper called?**
    Answer: Texas Catholic Herald
15. **What color do bishops wear?**
    Answer: pink
16. **Which month is considered the "month of Mary"?**
    Answer: May
17. **Complete the Bible verse from Hebrews 7:14, "You are a priest forever according to the order of _____.**
    Answer: Melchizedek
18. **How old was JP II when he was ordained a priest?***
    Answer: 26 years old
19. **How many archangels are there?***
    Answer: 7
20. **What is the name of the gold vessel used to adore the Eucharist in adoration?**
    Answer: monstrance

***winner can be whoever is closest to the number**