

REACHING OUT WEDNESDAYS

Topic: St. Andrew's Dinners

Diocese of Toledo: We are doing St. Andrew Dinners for the first time this year. (The old "Come and See" dinners fizzled away a few years ago and we had not done anything for the past 3 or 4 years.) Some notes about what we have done:

1. We chose four parishes scattered throughout the diocese, in strategic areas. Maybe the priests in the area are particularly supportive, or we know there are potential candidates in the area.
2. We hosted a dinner at each of these parishes: one in November, January, March, and one to come in April (next year we decided to avoid winter and do October, November, March, April). These were each on a Wednesday night.
3. The bishop, of course, attends every one
4. Priests are asked to invite young men, focusing mainly on juniors in high school through mid-20's
5. I have sent many reminders throughout the year to priests to promote their participation
6. The schedule:
 - a. 6:00 p.m. gather and pray evening prayer
 - b. After prayer, they proceed to dinner (school cafeteria or parish hall) making sure priests, bishop, and vocation director are scattered around the room
 - c. The bishop always eats first, then visits at each table briefly
 - d. Either before or after dinner, priests introduce to the others present each of the men they brought
 - e. After dinner (around 7:00), bishop tells his vocation story, then two or three other priests do so
 - f. Floor is opened for questions/answers
 - g. we give each young man a blue "Is Jesus Calling you to be a Catholic Priest" booklet, as well as a contact card to fill out. This card has the option of getting on our mailing list or saying they don't want further contact at this time.
 - h. We are done by 8:00
7. The menu is simple, provided by a caterer who is "friends of" the parish: lasagna, salad, rolls, dessert, water, lemonade.
8. For the first three meals, we have had a total of 19 priests, 3 seminarians, 1 deacon (filling in for a sick priest), and 49 young inquirers as our guests. We are all very excited about the response, including the bishop.

Diocese of Austin: Our diocese (25 counties, 19,000+ square miles) has annually held a "Project Andrew" gathering for single Catholic men (age 16 – 45) discerning the seminary/priesthood. We stress the importance of "modern day Andrews," the priests inviting young men to accompany them to the gathering.

This gathering is held in February on a Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Cathedral with the bishop in attendance. The day includes presentations by the vocation director, seminarians, priests of the diocese (diocesan and religious), and a presentation and Q&A session with the bishop, as well as celebration of the Liturgy with the regular daily mass assembly, and lunch. This year we added a Holy Half-Hour. (Please see attached 2011 schedule.)

The Serra Club provides hospitality during the day – meeting and greeting, set-up and clean-up, helps put out continental breakfast and lunch.

February is a difficult time to hold this event because most young people are still settling back from Christmas breaks, but in Texas, football is king, and our diocese encompasses two of the largest universities (Texas and Texas A&M) in the country. Therefore, it has been determined that Februarys are the best time to avoid football games. This usually ensures large attendance from the campus ministry sites from these universities at Project Andrew.

Several years ago, we tried hosting “Andrésitos,” little Andrew, throughout the diocese at four of the smaller campus ministry locations, in addition to the annual Project Andrew at the Cathedral. There was attendance but without the bishop, there is less of a draw.

Diocese of Phoenix: We are having our first diocesan-wide Andrew’s Dinner after Easter. We are asking pastors to bring 1-4 men from each of their parishes to the dinner. It will be hosted by the auxiliary bishop and will just feature vespers, dinner with their pastors which includes a witness and a talk by the bishop.

Archdiocese of St. Paul - Minneapolis: Operation Andrew Dinners are held in our archdiocese twice a year, in the fall and in the late winter, at the archbishop’s residence. The young men are hosted by their pastors or campus priests at the dinner set up by the vocation director and the archbishop. Twenty-five to thirty-five come each time it is offered. The evening begins at 6 p.m. with the vocation director and archbishop greeting the guests at the door, with the priest-host introducing their guests to the archbishop and vocation director. The entire group then goes into the chapel for Evening Prayer. Afterward, they have spaghetti and salad in the dining room, during which time they have conversation at the tables and then hear vocation stories from two of the priests. The archbishop and the vocation director each say a few words. The event ends at 8 p.m.