

Diocese of Scranton

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MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ.

In union with our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

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Bishops Conclude 'Ad Limina' Visit To Rome

Bishops from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including those from the Diocese of Scranton, have returned from their early December "ad limina" visit to Rome - encouraged to shepherd their people amidst the challenges faced by the Church.

Like their brother bishops from other regions of the United States who made "ad limina" visits this fall, they were reminded that the "new evangelization" includes renewing diocesan structures, helping Catholics publicly live the moral dimension of their faith and defending their right to do so.

The bishops also spoke to Vatican officials about energizing the faith of Catholics, re-proposing the faith to people who have drifted away and proclaiming the Gospel in new ways.

The bishops had the opportunity to meet with Pope Benedict XVI. Having a personal encounter with the Holy Father is "a very humbling opportunity," said Bishop Joseph C. Bambera. "The meeting reminded all of the bishops that we share a common vision with our Holy Father. While there are some differences in how the Church functions in various parts of the world, and while structures may vary, we are still one and the same Church, and we all are bound together with the successor of

St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ. Being with the Holy Father was a great sign of our unity as the People of God. It was a very inspiring and hope-filled experience."

The "ad limina" visits for bishops from the various geographic regions are held approximately every five years; sometimes the intervals in between visits are longer. The last visit for Scranton bishops was in 2004.

The delegation from the Diocese of Scranton also included Bishop Emeritus James C. Timlin; Bishop Emeritus Joseph F. Martino; Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus John M. Dougherty; and Father Brian J.W. Clarke, Vicar General and Chief Canonical Counsel.

They kept a busy schedule during their 12 days in Rome. In addition to the session with Pope Benedict, they met with officials from various Vatican offices, such as the Secretariat of State, the Congregation for the Clergy, the Signatura and the Pontifical Councils on the Laity and the Family.

Bishop Bambera noted that Pope Benedict, in particular, and the other officials in the Holy See are keenly aware of and interested in the issues that are affecting the Church in the United States and its dioceses.

These include threats to religious liberty and freedom of conscience posed by government authorities, the progress of implementing the revised Roman Missal, demographic shifts and their impact on parish structures, and the need to remain vigilant to protect children and address any allegations of sexual abuse.

"It is gratifying to know that our Holy Father is definitely interested in our welfare, and our perceptions of the strengths and areas of concern in the Church overall and in our dioceses," Bishop Bambera said.

For more on the visit, including photos, click on:

[Bishops' Ad Limina Visit](#)

Bishop Bambera Makes Clergy Appointments

His Excellency, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera announces the following appointments, effective as indicated:

ASSISTANT PASTOR

Reverend Bryan B. Wright, from Assistant Pastor, Saint Catherine of Siena, Moscow, to Assistant Pastor, Church of the Epiphany, Sayre, effective December 14, 2011.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Reverend David R. Betts, from Assistant Pastor, Nativity of the BVM, Tunkhannock, to Leave of Absence for reasons of health, effective December 9, 2011.

DEACON

Reverend Mr. Gregory Eichman, F.S.S.P., to Diaconal Ministry at St. Michael's Church, Scranton, effective January 1, 2012.

Discernment Weekend for Young Men

February 10 - 12, 2012

*Fatima Center, Dalton
Young men ages: 15-30*

Many young men have imagined the possibility of being a priest one day. Many have been told by others that they possess the qualities that would make a good priest. Often, as young men consider how to share their lives, the idea of priesthood occurs over and over again, even as they look to other possible careers or to the married life. Frequently young men find peace around their search to know where God is leading them by talking through their interest in priesthood and by listening to the experience of those who have already decided to enter seminary to become priests.

The Vocation Office of the Diocese of Scranton is hosting a weekend of discernment for young men in high school and beyond to assist them in recognizing whether God is inviting them to step forward and offer their lives as diocesan priests. The weekend program runs from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon and includes a presentation on the basics of praying into God's will for us, testimony from current seminarians, celebration of Mass, personal prayer, and fraternity.

For further information contact Father Jim Rafferty, Vocation Director, at 207-2216 or Rev.James.Rafferty@dioceseofscranton.org

Pro-Life Bills Move Through Legislature

As the Pennsylvania legislature prepared to break for the Christmas and New Year's holidays, they took action on two pieces of pro-life legislation. One is on its way to the governor's desk. The other will likely move forward when the legislature returns to session in January.

SB 732 - Abortion Clinic Regulations Passed into Law

Championed by Rep. Matt Baker (R-Tioga), Senate Bill 732 passed the Pennsylvania House of Representatives by a vote of 151-44 on Dec. 13. It passed the Senate earlier this year by a vote of 38-12 and on Dec. 14, it was again passed in the Senate (32-18) in concurrence with the House. The bill awaits the governor's signature.

The new law addresses concerns that stemmed from a tragedy that occurred in the Philadelphia abortion clinic of Dr. Kermit Gosnell where a woman died and seven newborn babies were killed by infanticide. Conditions in the clinic were so filthy and unsafe that investigators called it a "house of horrors."

The measure holds abortion facilities to the same fire and safety standards, personnel and equipment requirements, and quality assurance procedures as other freestanding ambulatory surgical facilities.

The passage of this bill into law is a victory for women and children in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) is urging all advocates to thank their legislators who voted yes for their pro-life vote on SB 732 (see the list at the end of this article). If you live in one of these legislators' districts, visit www.pacatholic.org to become a member of the Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network and send an easy email thank you message.

HB 1977 - Abortion Ban in Health Insurance Exchanges Passes PA House

On Dec. 12, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives voted 146 to 45 to remove abortion funding from the state health care exchanges that will be created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). We ask that you thank those who supported this bill (see the list at the end of this article).

This margin of victory in the state house indicates that the legislature is not in favor of using taxpayer's money to fund abortions.

According to a 2010 Quinnipiac Poll, 67% of Americans oppose abortion funding in the federal health care exchange.

House Bill 1977 now goes to the state senate. The Pennsylvania Catholic Advocacy Network has online tools at www.pacatholic.org to make it easy for advocates to send a message to their state Senators requesting a pro-life vote!

Women's Right to Know Act: Ultrasound Access Bill

In addition to the legislation mentioned above, the PCC is also supporting the Ultrasound Access Bill, which requires that a woman be given the option to see her ultrasound and see/hear her unborn child's heartbeat. The PCC expects this bill to be introduced in 2012 in the House of Representatives. Over 100 representatives have already signed on as co-sponsors.

Following is a list of the local State Representatives who voted yes on final passage of SB 732 (*Abortion Clinic Regulations*) and the State Senators who voted to concur:

REPRESENTATIVES:

Baker, Matthew E. (R- Tioga) - District 68, Boback, Karen (R- Luzerne) - District 117, Brown, Rosemary M. (R- Monroe) - District 189, Carroll, Mike (D- Luzerne) - District 118, Everett, Garth D. (R- Lycoming) - District 84, Kavulich, Sid Michaels (D- Lackawanna) - District 114, Major, Sandra (R- Susquehanna) - District 111, Mirabito, Rick (D- Lycoming) - District 83, Mullery, Gerald J. (D- Luzerne) - District 119, Murphy, Kevin P. (D- Lackawanna) - District 113, Peifer, Michael (R- Wayne) - District 139, Pickett, Tina (R- Bradford) - District 110, Scavello, Mario M. (R- Philadelphia) - District 176, Smith, Ken (D- Lackawanna) - District 112, Staback, Edward G. (D- Lackawanna) - District 115, Toohil, Tarah (R- Luzerne) - District 116.

SENATORS:

Argall, David G. (R- Schuylkill)- District 29, Baker, Lisa (R- Luzerne)- District 20, Blake, John P. (D- Lackawanna)- District 22, Browne, Patrick M. (R- Lehigh)- District 16, Gordner, John R. (R- Columbia)- District 27, Yaw, Gene (R- Lycoming)- District 23, Yudichak, John T. (D- Luzerne)- District 14.

Following is a list of the local representatives who voted "yes" to HB 1977 (*Abortion Ban in Health Insurance Exchanges*):

Matthew E. Baker (R-Tioga), Karen Boback (R-Luzerne), Rosemary M. Brown (R-Monroe), Mike Carroll (D-Luzerne), Garth D. Everett (R-Lycoming), Sid Michaels Kavulich (D-Lackawanna), Sandra J. Major (R-Susquehanna), Rick Mirabito (D-Lycoming), Kevin P. Murphy (D-Lackawanna), Michael Peifer (R-Wayne), Tina Pickett (R-Bradford), Mario M. Scavello (R-Philadelphia), Ken Smith (D-Lackawanna), Edward G. Staback (D-Lackawanna), Tarah Toohil (R-Luzerne).

Inaction on Voucher Program in PA House

In the final days of its 2011 session, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives did not take up the issue of vouchers, to the great disappointment of school choice proponents across the state.

Senate Bill 1, The Opportunity Scholarship Act, passed the Senate in late October by a vote of 27-22. School choice supporters were hopeful that families in Pennsylvania would soon be able to choose the education that is best for their children, but the voucher proposal

discussed by House leadership was vastly different than Senate Bill 1. Ultimately, this different language was never put before the House for a vote. Legislation concerning charter schools that included an increase to EITC was put forth for a vote and did not pass.

Senate Bill 1 remains an active piece of legislation. One part of Senate Bill 1 is the Opportunity Scholarship, or voucher, program; another important part is an increase the long standing and successful Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. Recognized as a national model and the best example of public-private partnership in Pennsylvania, the EITC program has allowed more than 40,000 students to attend the school of their choice in this school year alone. Hundreds of public school initiatives would have gone unfunded without this program.

The inaction on vouchers in the House is disappointing, especially for those who see school choice as a social justice issue. In a statement in support of school choice, the Pennsylvania Bishops said, "The current treatment of these children, particularly children from low-income families, is unjust and inequitable. Families are often prevented from accessing the educational options that would be best for them because of economic or social barriers. School choice legislation that includes vouchers and an increase to EITC reinforces that parents - not the state - are the primary educators of their children."

Send a message of support for school choice to your legislator using the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.pacatholic.org.

Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion Training

Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish Hall, Brodheadsville

Jan. 10 & 17 (Tuesdays), 6 to 9:30 p.m.

Father Michael Quinnan

Fee: \$30. To register: call 570-207-2213, ext. 1107

Retrouvaille for Troubled Marriages Set for Feb. 10-12

If you know a marriage in trouble, throw the couple a lifeline and tell them about Retrouvaille, a Catholic program that helps couples communicate once again (or for the first time.) Even if you are separated or divorced, Retrouvaille can help if you want to make the marriage work. The next program in the Scranton Diocese begins Feb. 10-12 at Fatima Center in Dalton. Call 1-800-470-2230 for more information or to register. All calls are confidential. Visit our web site at www.retrouvaille.org. Finances should not prevent a couple in need from attending.

Real Estate Availability

The Property & Risk Management Division of the Diocese currently maintains a listing of real estate available for sale or use throughout the Diocese. If interested in learning about the available opportunities, please contact Ed Carlin, Property Assets Director, P&RM Division, at 570-558-4310.

December Editions of Free Adult Faith Resources

The December edition of the monthly adult faith formation (AFF) resource, *Disciple*, is now available. This month's issue features commentary on the Sunday Gospel readings; a look at Catholic belief about the Incarnation; an Advent reflection from Pope Benedict XVI, and reviews of the book *Letters to a Young Catholic* and the film *Into Great Silence*.

Also available on the Adult Faith Formation page is the next installment of *AD: Anno Domini*, which looks at the key events occurring in the life of the Church from A.D. 1600-1700 (previous installments, beginning with A.D. 30-100 are cataloged online).

The December edition of the monthly family resource, *Familia Fidelis*, is also available. This month's issue features a reflection for parents on four simple steps for praying together; a look at what's so special about Mary for teens; a review of *24 Christmas Stories to Welcome Jesus* for children, and a look at this month's "Friend for Families," St. Philip Howard.

As always, past issues of these newsletters can be found on the Adult Faith Formation and Family Life pages of the diocesan website at www.dioceseofscranton.org

Wedding Anniversary Mass To Be Celebrated June 3

If you and your spouse, or a couple you know, will be celebrating a 25th or 50th wedding anniversary in 2012 please contact your parish office to register for the annual Wedding Anniversary Mass with Bishop Bambera. The celebration will take place on Sunday, June 3 at 2:30 p.m. in St. Peter's Cathedral. Participants will receive a commemorative certificate and have the opportunity to pose for a photo with the Bishop while enjoying a light reception. The deadline to register with your parish is March 15.

Get the Word Out About Your Faith Formation

Do you have an adult faith formation event taking place in your parish? Do you want to get the word out to parishioners around the Diocese? If so, please e-mail your events to Brendan-Murphy@dioceseofscranton.org and we'll include them on the calendar of events listing on the Adult Faith Formation page. This will enable parishioners around the Diocese to find faith formation opportunities near them. Please be sure to include a brief description of the event; dates/times; a contact phone number/e-mail; and cost (if applicable).

Embed the *Disciple* Podcast on Your Parish Website

The *Disciple* Podcast is a monthly podcast created by the Diocese's Office for Parish Life and Evangelization which seeks to educate and inspire. Each episode highlights an area of Catholic belief, something good happening in our parishes, the life of a saint, and a calendar of adult faith formation events. To embed the *Disciple* player on your parish website is easy. Please contact Brendan Murphy at (570) 207-2213, ext. 1133 or Brendan-Murphy@dioceseofscranton.org to receive the embedding code for your webmaster. Embedding the podcast on your website will allow parishioners to listen to it directly on your site or download it to a CD or mp3 player.