



Images shown above: Students at Saint Agnes School, Towanda, 1926. | The Bernardine Sisters of Saint Francis, shown with Father Dudkiewicz, were the faculty of Saints Peter and Paul School, Plains, 1912. | Baccalaureate Mass for Holy Cross High School, Dunmore. | Students from Saint John Neumann School, Williamsport, 2017.

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, 1850-1917, started numerous schools, orphanages and hospitals in Europe and the Americas. She visited with Italians of Scranton and Dunmore in the summer of 1899, and informed Bishop Michael J. Hoban of her desire for a school somewhere in the lower Lackawanna Valley.



That became a reality when the Bishop purchased the old #16 school from the Scranton School District. The building on Chestnut Street in West Scranton (since renamed Saint Frances Cabrini Avenue) was renovated and served as the school that bore her name, as well as a convent and academy for the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart – and part of the structure became the original Saint Lucy's Church. In effect, the need for classroom space led to the founding of a parish. In 1946, she became the first U.S. citizen to be canonized.

The marble statue of Mother Cabrini that once stood at the elementary school now sits on the grounds of Saint Lucy's Church in a shrine dedicated in 1998.



Third grade, Mother Cabrini School in West Scranton, 1951.

Teaching the Faith...

CATHOLIC EDUCATION PREPARES YOUNG FOR LIFE, SERVICE TO GOD AND OTHERS

A vital mission of the Catholic Church has been the teaching of the faith to our young people. Providing them with the academic and moral fiber to lead value-centered lives has been a hallmark of the Diocese since its earliest days to the modern regional school systems of today.

The arrival of various religious orders of women, as requested by our Bishops and supported by the growing number of parishes, was the foundation of Catholic schools in the region.

The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sisters of Christian Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Bernardine Sisters, Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Religious Teachers Filippini, Sisters of Saint Frances X. Cabrini, Daughters of Mercy and others immersed themselves in the teaching apostolate.

These congregations served the educational needs of the various ethnic, immigrant communities. They were pioneers in more ways than one; their presence enabled the first Bishop of Scranton, William O'Hara, to build a network of parochial schools in the major parishes throughout the Diocese.

In addition to parochial schools, the religious communities operated academies – secondary

(high schools) as we know them today. Eventually these came under the jurisdiction of parishes.

Throughout the ensuing decades, more schools were established, the curriculum expanded and facilities were developed to ensure that students were prepared for success in their chosen fields. In addition, more lay women and men began to staff the schools.

In recent years, with decreases in population and economic downturns affecting families and resources, the Diocese was compelled to evaluate all of its schools and make necessary adjustments. As a result, some buildings were closed and consolidated into regional systems with centralized administrations.

In addition to the faith formation that occurs in the Catholic schools, parishes throughout the Diocese offer religious education programs that engage thousands of children. These programs, staffed by dedicated personnel and volunteers, support parents as they pass on the faith to their sons and daughters. Sacramental preparation for First Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmation is a key component of the programs. Participation in parish ministries and liturgies is encouraged. A number of parishes also provide



The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary are among the religious orders that played a foundational role in the development of Catholic schools in the Diocese.

programs for older students to help them grow in their understanding of the faith. The Diocese, through the Office for Parish Life, provides a curriculum and resources for the parish religious education directors.

What has remained constant throughout the years is the dedication of the many religious and lay teachers, administrators, support staff and members of the community to advance the mission

of Catholic education.

With the goal to educate the whole person, Catholic schools instill in the young a lifelong commitment to live their faith and serve others. By providing them with opportunities to serve, Catholic schools prepare students for their future roles as good citizens, productive employees, compassionate leaders and, most of all, as committed faithful disciples within the Church.

MISSION STATEMENT

“We, the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Scranton, are committed to educate students and their families in the Catholic faith. We provide a Catholic education that is spiritually sound and academically excellent. We strive to prepare our students to be faith-filled leaders and life-long learners dedicated to serving the Church and society.”

FAITH FACTS:



- The First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 exhorted bishops to have a Catholic school in every parish to educate students in the faith as well as secular subjects. Bishop William G. O'Hara, the first Bishop of Scranton, established 24 schools. During the tenure of Bishop Michael J. Hoban, 86 schools were opened.
- The earliest known Catholic secondary school was Saint Joseph's Academy for girls in Susquehanna County, founded in 1856 by Father John V. O'Reilly and administered first by the Sisters of the Holy Cross and then the IHM Sisters.
- From 1868 to 1900, 16 secondary schools were established in the Diocese. Their facilities ranged from one room to dormitories.
- The IHM Sisters established Saint Cecilia's Academy (pictured above) in Scranton and Saint Rose Academy in Carbondale before the dawn of the 20th century. In 1902 they acquired Marywood Seminary.

NEXT ISSUE:
Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations

1873
Luzerne County - Saint Nicholas was the first schoolhouse in Wilkes-Barre.

1875
Wilkes-Barre - Saint Mary's School was the first school the Sisters of Mercy established in the Diocese of Scranton.

1904
Pittston - Saint John's School welcomed students from all denominations.

1916
Wyoming County - Saint Michael's Industrial School.

1953
Kingston - West Side Central Catholic High School.

2017
Williamsport - Saint John Neumann Regional Academy.

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