



Images shown above: Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Luczka and son, early parishioners of Saint Mary Czeszochowa Parish, Polish-speaking congregation, Blossburg, Tioga County. | Choir members of the Saint Joseph's Slovenian Church in Forest City circa 1908. | Opening session of the "Follow Christ" renewal program in March 1980. | Bishop Bambera confirms adults on Pentecost Sunday, 2017.

"The church, not the mine site, was the soul and center of the ethnic community. Only with the formation of a parish did an active community come into existence. In fact, the words 'settlement' and 'parish' in Polish, Slovak and Lithuanian are identical."

The Kingdom of Coal
Donald Miller



Saint Rose of Lima Church, Carbondale (left) and Saint Thomas Aquinas Church, Archbald (below) both in Lackawanna County, are examples of the churches of the mining communities.



Our Parishes... WHERE FAITH IS LEARNED AND LIVED

Northeastern and north central Pennsylvania was originally considered a missionary outpost of the Diocese of Philadelphia during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Catholic faithful were scattered throughout the area, yet all desired to have access to the sacraments. Missionary bishops from the Diocese of Philadelphia (among whom was the then future Saint John Neumann) and the first residential priests would make the sacraments available three or four times a year to Catholics who lived in those assigned regions.

From seeds planted in 1793 when the first Catholic services were held in a small chapel in French Azilum, the French refugee colony in Bradford County, to the building in 1825 of a church (Saint Augustine) and cemetery in Silver Lake, Susquehanna County, the roots of faith began to grow. Throughout the mid-1800s, parishes would become more formally established as German and Irish immigrants were also settling in the area, prior to the 1868 creation of the Diocese of Scranton. In the following years, Polish, Slovak, Italian, and other ethnic groups would grow in numbers, necessitating formation of "national" parishes based on language needs. In addition to shared heritage, the evolving local industries shaped the lives of Catholics who engaged in trades such as mining, railroading,

farming, lumber and canal building.

After the Diocese of Scranton was formed in 1868 by Pope Pius IX, parish communities began to discern new ways to grow.

The Second Vatican Council called for the Church to re-imagine the concept of "parish." The focus shifted from *structures* to an emphasis on *members* as "the church," much like the early faith communities of the region had done. Bishop J. Carroll McCormick, the Sixth Bishop of Scranton (1966-1983), would lead the efforts to implement liturgical reforms and build upon the vision of Vatican II. His labors and those of his successors, Bishop John O'Connor (1983-1984) and Bishop James C. Timlin (1984-2003), would bring to life the many developments which laid the groundwork for the varied aspects of parish life that are so present throughout the Diocese today.

During the tenure of Bishop Joseph C. Martino, the Ninth Bishop of Scranton (2003-2009), with demographics and resources shifted over subsequent years, the process of "*Called to Holiness and Mission*," beginning in January 2008, called the faithful of the Diocese to examine anew the definition of a "parish" entity and discern in new ways as the People of God how to serve the greater needs through the consolidation of worship sites and development



Parishioners of Saint Jude in Mountain Top participate in the dedication of their new church in 2017.

of wider embracing parish communities.

Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, the Tenth Bishop of Scranton, would then in his 2011 pastoral letter "*Wounded and Loved, Regathering the Scattered*," offer a compelling vision for the future of the Church of Scranton when he said: "My greatest hope is that by bringing together strong parish structures and well-formed parishioners, the result will be more growing, life-giving, and vibrant parishes..."

In recent years, newly formed communities have found the pastoral planning process to be a unique avenue for healing, allowing parishioners to identify common hopes and create visions for their spiritual homes. Through a baptismal call to share God-given gifts, clergy, religious, and laity across the 11 counties of the Diocese have partnered

together in order to help direct the Church of Scranton toward realizing its spirit of "co-responsibility," sharing in the mission and life of God.

One of the fruits of the recent Diocesan-wide pastoral planning has been the strengthening of ministry to Hispanic Catholics, the most recent arrival of new Catholics in the Diocese of Scranton.

Whatever form the local parish community has taken during the long journey of the People of God throughout the Diocese of Scranton, their vibrant faith and vision have been key to moving forward. That same life-giving faith continues to sustain parishes today and will guide us on our journey into the future as one people united by God's love.

CHRONOLOGY OF ORIGINAL PARISHES (1828-1866)

- 1828 - Saint Augustine (Holy Family), Silver Lake
- 1828 - Saint Joseph (Holy Family), Saint Joseph
- 1828 - Saint Francis Xavier, Friendsville: resident pastor in 1864
- 1832 - Saint Rose of Lima, Carbondale
- 1845 - Saint John, Honesdale
- 1845-1846 - Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Wilkes-Barre
- 1847 - Lanesboro original church (in 1853 was moved to Susquehanna as Saint John Nepomucene with a resident Pastor)
- 1848 - Saints Peter and Paul, Towanda
- 1852 - Saint Basil, Dushore
- 1853 - Saint Vincent de Paul, Scranton (today the Cathedral of Saint Peter)
- 1853 - Saint Mary, Pittston Junction (after five years it was reverted to a mission)
- 1853 - Saint Andrew, Blossburg
- 1853 - Saint Mary Magdalene, Honesdale
- 1854 - Saint Juliana, Rock Lake
- 1854 - Saint John the Evangelist, Pittston
- 1855 - Saint Philomena (BVM Queen of Peace), Hawley
- 1856 - Saint Mary of Mount Carmel, Dunmore
- 1858 - Saint Thomas Aquinas, Archbald
- 1862 - Immaculate Conception, Eckley (1902 moved, and in 1930, Saint Ann, Freeland)
- 1864 - Saint Francis Xavier, Friendsville
- 1864 - Saint John Nepomucene, Susquehanna
- 1865 - Annunciation, Williamsport
- 1866 - Saint Gabriel, Hazleton

List compiled by the late Monsignor John P. Gallagher, Ph.D., former Diocesan Historian based on the assignment of the first pastor.

CLARIFICATION:

In the previous issue of *The Catholic Light* the reference to the first presence of the Catholic faith in the Diocese was incorrectly stated. The first presence of the Catholic faith was in 1793 at the French refugee colony, Azilum, just south of Towanda in Bradford County. The first parish in the Diocese was Saint Augustine at Silver Lake in Susquehanna County.



1852

Susquehanna County - Father John O'Reilly founds St. Joseph's College for men.

1854

Bradford/Sullivan County - Saints Philip and James Church is blessed by Bishop Neumann, which later becomes the official Saint John Neumann Shrine in the Diocese of Scranton and Towanda.



1858

Susquehanna County - The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters (I.H.M.) are the first order of women religious to arrive in the area.



1865

Scranton - Cornerstone laid by Philadelphia Bishop James F. Wood for what later becomes the Cathedral of Saint Peter.



2017

Mountain Top - Saint Jude's, the newest Catholic parish, was dedicated in September.



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