



Images shown above: Gerard Wazeter, Saint Frances X. Cabrini Parish, Carverton, gives reading at Cathedral Mass, 2018. | Parish lay leaders participate in groundbreaking for newest Diocesan Church, Saint Jude Church in Mountain Top, 2016. | Tony Butel, newly installed Parish Life Coordinator, greets parishioners at Saint Elizabeth in Bear Creek, 2016. | Cantors at the Mass for Musicians, Cathedral of Saint Peter, 2016.

The People of God

LAITY AS SERVANT LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

The faith of the early settlers in what would later become the Diocese of Scranton was a keystone of its founding in 1868. Before church buildings and full-time pastors, the laity modeled discipleship through their service to others. In each corner of Northeastern and North Central Pennsylvania, they showed dedication and determination in strengthening their spiritual homes in many meaningful ways.

Early parishioners across the Diocese helped build church structures and bring their communities together. For example, from 1854-1864, Patrick and Margaret Dugan of Crock's Feed Mill hosted their neighbors for periodic celebrations of Liturgy in their home near Nicholson. Later, new opportunities for families to become involved in church life through religious instruction, Altar and Rosary Societies, Holy Name Societies, Knights of Columbus, and other parish groups developed.

For Carol Salva, a retired Pastoral Associate from Our Lady of the Snows Parish in Clarks Summit, lay ministry was as natural as caring for her family, helping wherever she was needed. As a child, she watched her mother and grandmother serve the homeless at their door. Being a registered nurse for 30 years, Carol also received rich formation through a theology degree from Marywood University, completing the Liturgy Certificate and other Diocesan programs.

“One of the greatest challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church’s mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in the world.”

Pope Francis

These offerings broke open Vatican II concepts regarding laity’s “fully active, and conscious participation,” including the increase in the number of women in ministry.

Bishop John J. O’Connor, believing “lay involvement was essential” to the Church, established the Religious Education Institute (REI), and called for Diocesan Synod II to invigorate the laity. Bishop James C. Timlin, in his pastoral letter “The Welcoming Church,” requested the formation of parish councils as prayerful, discerning people of parish communities. Parish Pastoral Councils encouraged laity to share a diversity

of gifts within the community, to build up the Body of Christ.

During his episcopacy, Bishop Joseph F. Martino called on the laity to collaborate in the planning that addressed the challenging issue of demographic shifts and how parishes could be restructured to respond to this reality.

As consolidated parish communities took shape, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera initiated formation programs to prepare laypersons to be servant-leaders who can assume active roles in their parishes in a variety of ministries and in living out their Catholic faith.

On the shoulders of the REI, the Pastoral Formation Institute, and other Adult Faith Formation efforts, the Diocese now offers enrichment such as ‘Echoes of Faith’ for Catechists; a Master’s Degree in partnership with the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIMEX). For the third time, the Diocese has engaged in processes from RENEW International such as *ARISE Together in Christ*. In order to address ministry needs in Word, Worship, Community, and Service, the Office for Parish Life designed the *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry*, which began May of 2014. This certificate in lay ministry has provided parishioners across 11 counties of the Diocese a chance to grow spiritually and advance their ministerial competencies. Men and women in all



Shown with Bishop Bambera, Father Michael Quinnan and Father James Paisley are Jacki Douglas, Dori Hurley and Denise Williams – the first three Commissioned Ministers to complete the *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry* in June of 2017.

four pastoral regions are enthusiastically answering their baptismal call to holiness. In June of 2017, the first three Commissioned Ministers completed the *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry*. A second group of candidates will receive their commissioning from Bishop Bambera this summer.

With the introduction of the role of Parish Life Coordinator, lay leadership has been creatively approached in order to serve the mission of all the baptized. Bishop Bambera has called upon qualified lay women and men to meet new pastoral realities in the Church of Scranton, alongside their fellow members of the faithful. Each Parish Life Coordinator has partnered with Sacramental Ministers (clergy), to “provide both sacramental and administrative leadership in viable communities,” caring for each congregation they serve.

Lay participation is also growing in vibrancy among youth and young adults. Several hundred

members of the “young church” across the Diocese of Scranton have taken up Pope Francis’ challenge to “leave a mark” for good in the world. The *#leaveamark* initiative – begun in 2016 to commemorate National Vocation Awareness Week – has engaged the “young church” in ‘Partner with Francis’ listening sessions before the *2018 Synod on Young People*, retreat and pilgrimage experiences, nationally and internationally, and local days of service.

The Diocese of Scranton has a rich history of contributions from laity within community outreach organizations like Catholic Social Services, Pontifical Missions Society, Friends of the Poor, as well as groups that engage in spiritual outreach, like the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Cursillo Movement.

The daily Gospel witness of lay leaders within the Diocese will continue to guide and strengthen the Church well into the future.

FAITH FACTS:

- 1864: Patrick and Margaret Dugan deeded 106 square rods of land to Bishop James Wood (Philadelphia) for \$1.00, in order to establish Saint Patrick’s Parish in Nicholson, named in honor of the Irish immigrants who assisted in its building.
- 1908: John Mitchell, former president of the United Mine Workers, is baptized into the Catholic Church at Saint Thomas Parish in Archbald. Previously, Mr. Mitchell served as an advocate for worker’s rights in conducting negotiations with local clergy like Father John Curran and President Theodore Roosevelt, to resolve the 1902 miner’s strike in the Scranton area.
- 1980: “Follow Christ!” initiative, a four-phase process for parish renewal is begun with laity and priests across the Diocese collaborating to revitalize catechesis, family life, youth and young adult ministry, liturgy, community and spiritual outreach.
- 1985: Concluding a two-year listening process, a Diocesan Synod celebration was held at the University of Scranton together with members of the laity, in addition to clergy and religious, to collect declarations from the People of God on their hopes, desires, and needs from the Church of Scranton in order to address their lived experiences of faith.
- 2007: Lay leaders organize the first annual “Light the Fire” Youth Rally in order to enhance ministry to youth and young adults throughout the Diocese.

NEXT ISSUE:
Consecrated Life

1902
Scranton - Marywood Seminary Ladies received music instrument instruction.

1963
Towanda - Saints Peter and Paul Junior Catholic Daughters of America.

1993
Stroudsburg - Bishop Timlin led more than 800 people in a pro-life prayer vigil.

2006
Peckville - Knights of Columbus with Sacred Heart of Jesus parishioners lead rosary procession through the community.

2017
Scranton - Students display their Respect for Life posters.

