

Bishop unites students with televised Catholic Schools Opening Mass

SCRANTON – While the COVID-19 pandemic has led to challenges and difficulties for many people, it has also opened the door to new opportunities.

With the help of technology, all 19 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton joined together to celebrate an opening Mass on Sept. 30, 2020. The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera served as principal celebrant and homilist.

“I would much rather be in each of your schools celebrating this Mass...but we are grateful for this opportunity to join together, to pray and to give thanks to God for watching over us in these challenging times,” Bishop Bambera told the students during his homily.

From East Stroudsburg to Sayre, Williamsport to Hazleton, students remained in their classrooms and viewed the Mass on TV screens and smart boards. The bishop celebrated the Mass from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.



Bishop Joseph C. Bambera was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Catholic Schools Opening Mass held on Sept. 30, 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mass was broadcast live in all 19 Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Scranton. (Courtesy: CTV)

The bishop acknowledged the anxiety that many students are feeling because of the coronavirus. He spoke about how sports, plays and other activities have been impacted by the virus.

In the midst of challenging times, Bishop Bambera reminded the students how blessed they are.

“We were able to get up today and experience another day of life, weren’t we? We’re able to participate in this Mass. We’ve got friends around us. We’ve got

teachers who have done so much for us. We’ve got families who love and care for us. We have all of these things and more because of a God who loves us and watches over us, especially during these difficult days,” he explained.

The Gospel story for the Catholic Schools Opening Mass involved the miracle of Jesus multiplying loaves and fish to feed thousands of hungry people. The bishop said he chose the passage, John 6:15, for several reasons.

“The first reason focuses on God. The miracle story reminds us of just how much we are loved and cared for by God. While a lot of difficult things have been happening around us, God watches over us and provides us with what we need to get through each day and to find peace,” Bishop Bambera said.

The second reason why he chose that passage is because it focused on people.

“The multiplication of loaves and fish did not start with nothing. First, a boy was willing to share what he had – a couple of fish and five barley loaves. Jesus also chose to use his disciples to have the people sit down on the grass, to pass out the food and to collect what was left over,” the bishop continued.

That is the main message the bishop wanted each student to hear.

“We will get through these days and God will take care of us and those we love but we have a responsibility as well,”

Bishop Bambera told the students watching. “We have to allow ourselves to be used by Jesus – to be his hands, heart and voice – in serving our brothers and sisters and in making miracles happen.”

During the last few months, Catholic school students have already been serving their community. They have written cards to nursing home residents, collected food for parish food pantries and offered prayers to those who are sick, alone or afraid.

“In doing all of these things, I hope you noticed something. You’ve thought of others more than yourselves. You’ve lived the great commandment to love God and to love your neighbor,” the bishop said.

Bishop Bambera also gave the students a task.

“Give God room in your lives, continue to love and serve your brothers and sisters in the midst of these difficult days,” he ended his homily by saying.

Educators receive Saint John Paul II Award for dedicated service

SCRANTON – Five educators in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System are being honored for their commitment to Catholic education and being faith-filled examples to young people.

During the Catholic Schools Opening Mass, held Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter, each educator received the Saint John Paul II Award for 25 or more years of dedicated service to Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton.

The recipients include: Ann D’Arienzo, Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green; Yvonne Gordon of Holy Rosary School in Duryea; Shari Hilfiger of All Saints Academy in Scranton; Patricia Hopkins of All Saints Academy in Scranton and Sister Karen Steinberg, I.H.M., of Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton.

“I feel very proud and humbled,” D’Arienzo said after receiving her award from the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton.

During their many years of service, each educator has created an environment to help young people grow and learn.

“I love watching their faces as they connect. It is just amazing,”

Sister Karen Steinberg, I.H.M., explained.

The Catholic Schools Opening Mass, celebrated by Bishop Bambera, was broadcast live to all 19 schools throughout the diocese and made available to students taking part in the Diocesan Virtual Academy. Parents and community members were also invited to join in watching the Mass.

Hilfiger, who teaches third grade at All Saints Academy, credits her students for continuing to make her educational experience enjoyable. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, her students have remained positive.

“It has been absolutely amazing. The children have been so receptive. They come in every day and they’re so eager to follow the rules so that we can be there and engage and learn,” Hilfiger said. “We can tell by the smiles on the children every morning that this is where we’re supposed to be.”

Gordon says leading young people to know, love and serve God has been a privilege.

“It is sharing your faith, helping them along the way. It’s a commitment, a vocation, where



Five educators from the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System receive the Saint John Paul II Award for 25 or more years of dedicated service to Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton. The recipients received the awards at the Catholic Schools Opening Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Sept. 30, 2020. Shown after the Mass are, front row, from left: Ann D’Arienzo, Our Lady of Peace School, Clarks Green; Yvonne Gordon, Holy Rosary School, Duryea; Sister Karen Steinberg, I.H.M., Saint Clare/Saint Paul School, Scranton. Back row, Jason Morrison Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Chief Executive Officer; Shari Hilfiger, All Saints Academy, Scranton; Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton; Kristen Donohue, Superintendent of Catholic Schools. Award recipient Patricia Hopkins, All Saints Academy, was unable to attend the Mass. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

you want to share with the children what you know about God and your own relationship with God,” she explained.

As she announced the recipients of the Saint John

Paul II Award, Catholic Schools Superintendent Kristen Donohue thanked each educator for their service.

“To them, who so diligently teach, lead, inspire, challenge,

mentor, affirm and encourage, we express our sincerest gratitude and our heartfelt prayer for their faithful service to the ministry of Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton,” Donohue said.

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The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others. Each day, our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing today's youth and young adults to become tomorrow's faith-filled leaders.



La Salle Academy in Jessup



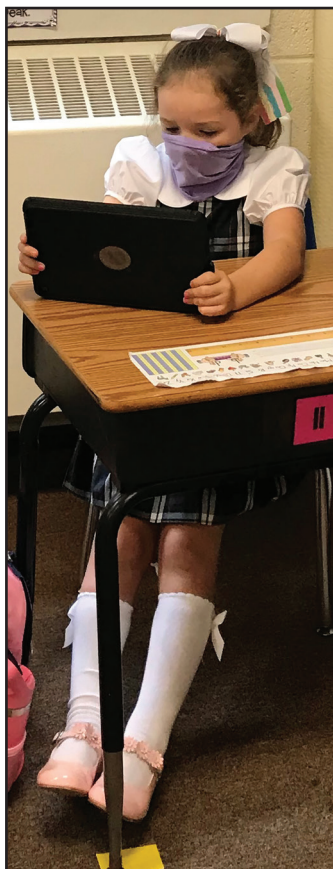
Holy Cross High School in Dunmore



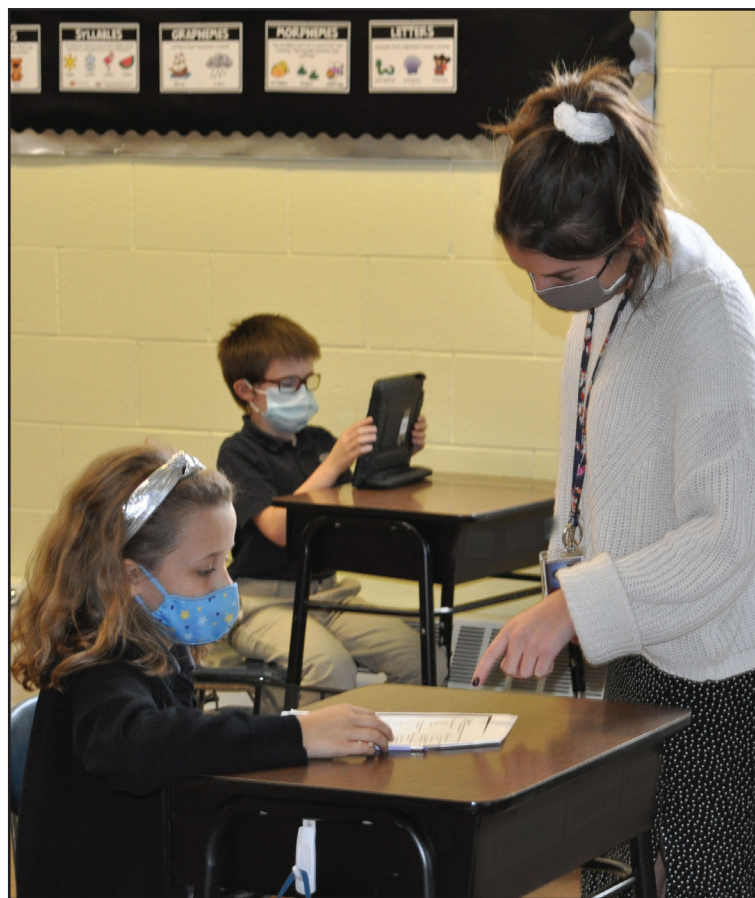
All Saints Academy in Scranton



Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore



Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton



Saint John Neumann Elementary School, Williamsport



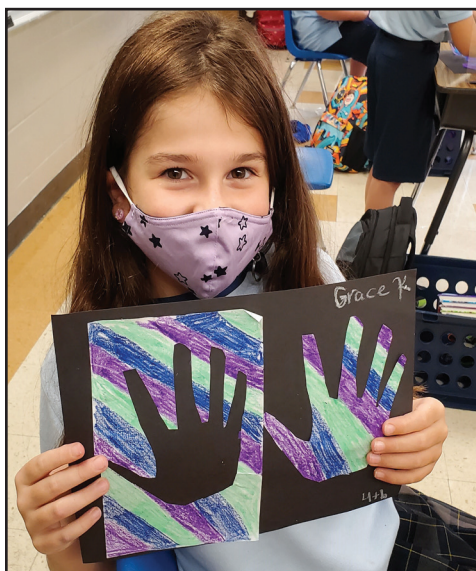
Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg



Colt Boyanowski, a Pre-Kindergarten student at Holy Rosary School in Duryea, holds his favorite teddy bear to be blessed on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi.



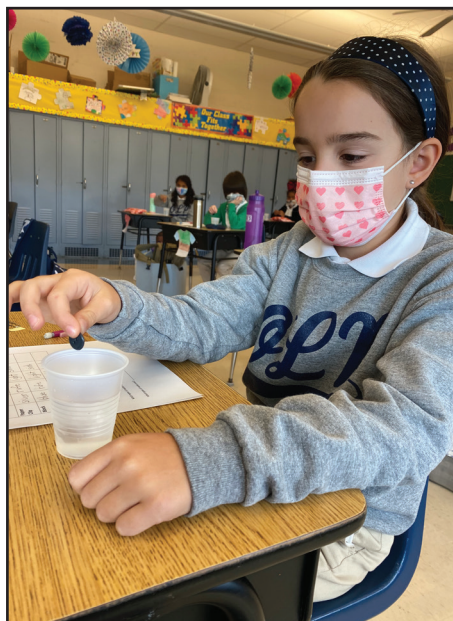
Saint Agnes School in Towanda



Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter



Saint Jude School in Mountain Top



Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green



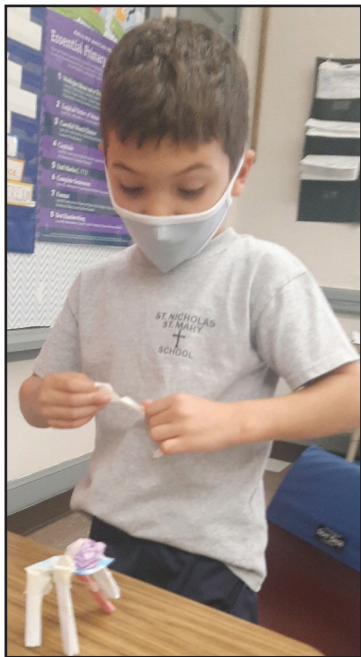
Students at Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg participate in Bishop Bambera's virtual Mass celebrating the opening of our schools.



Holy Family Academy in Hazleton



Father Alex Roche, Vocations Director for the Diocese of Scranton, blessed the stuffed animals in the Pre-Kindergarten class at Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston for the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. Father Alex was joined by his dog, Apollo, who also received the blessing.



Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre



Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport