

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed...For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace."

2020 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE BISHOP JOSEPH C. BAMBERA

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the familiar passage above, the prophet Isaiah addresses the devastation wrought on the people of Israel by invading forces who plundered their land and sent many of God's chosen people into exile.

Yet, in the midst of such pain and suffering, Isaiah also offers a vision of hope. He proclaims that God will restore the ravaged lands and people to their former glory. A vision of ruin will yield to a promise of restoration through One who will succeed to the throne of David who is Christ and Lord.

This year, as we celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus in a way far different than we could have imagined last year, the promise of Isaiah, first spoken to the people of Israel some 2,700 years ago, speaks powerfully to our hearts as well.

By now, every one of us likely knows someone who has been afflicted with the coronavirus. Most have recovered, some are still burdened and far too many have died. We live in fear, consumed with worry and anxiety as we await a vaccine and anticipate our future.

Division and hostility – tragic consequences of the virus – are rampant throughout our world and even in our Church. The poor are burdened more than ever. And many have wondered – even aloud – where God is to be found in the midst of such suffering and pain.

In his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis acknowledges that the coronavirus pandemic "has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities."

The "Adoration of the Shepherds" is pictured in this painting by Italian artist Guido Reni. The feast of the Nativity of Christ is celebrated Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

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The Catholic Light

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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON 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.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Catholic Light is our official diocesan journal. The publication of notices, regulations and extra-synodical decrees in said paper constitute legal promulgation for all the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton, Clergy and Laity.

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Christmas Broadcasts on CTV



Friday, December 18, 2020

The Miracle of Bethlehem, 10:30 a.m.

A Christmas play depicting the life of Jesus from his birth in Bethlehem to his resurrection, depicted in narration, music and dance. Presented by St. Faustina Kowalska Roman Catholic Church, and pastor Father James Nash, Nanticoke. This presentation consists of 67 cast members and many volunteers who help with the production.
Encore: Tuesday, December 22, 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 24, 2020

Solemn Mass of Christmas Eve in Rome, 1:30 p.m.

Pope Francis celebrates the Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord from St. Peter's Basilica.
Encore: Friday, December 25, 4:00 a.m.

Pontifical Vigil Mass of Christmas from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, 4:00 p.m.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant and homilist for the Solemn Pontifical Vigil Mass of Christmas live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The EWTN Family Christmas Special, 6:00 p.m.

The Choir of the Eternal Word Television Network performs twelve timeless Christmas hymns on location at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament. With special introduction by Fr. Joseph Mary Wolfe, M.F.V.A.

The Promise, 9:00 p.m.

A touching and insightful dramatization, looking inside Gospel events relating to the Annunciation and birth of Christ.

Choral Meditations on the Nativity, 10:00 p.m.

The Nativity of Jesus is musically brought to life in this series of choral meditations, live from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Solemn Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve, 10:30 p.m.

Live from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Friday, December 25, 2020

Midnight Mass from the Holy Land, 1:00 a.m.

Holy Mass celebrating the Solemnity of the Nativity, live from the Holy Land.

"Urbi Et Orbi:" Pope Francis' Christmas Message & Blessing to the World, 6:00 a.m.

Pope Francis delivers his Christmas blessing to the city of Rome and the world.
Encore: Friday, December 25, 3:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Solemn Mass of Christmas from EWTN, 8:00 a.m.

The Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word celebrate the Solemn Christmas Mass from Our Lady of the Angels Chapel in Irondale, Alabama.
Encore: Friday, December 25, 6:30 p.m.

Pontifical Mass of Christmas from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, 10:00 a.m.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant and homilist for the Pontifical Mass of Christmas live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.
Encore: Friday, December 25, 3:30 p.m.

Solemn Mass of Christmas Day, Noon

The Solemn Mass of Christmas from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.
Encore: Saturday, December 26, Midnight

Catholic University of America's Christmas Concert, 5:00 p.m.

The annual Christmas concert presented by the Catholic University of America, featuring a brilliant blend of angelic voices and the wonderful sounds of the Christmas Season.
Encore: Sunday, December 27, 1:30 p.m.

Bishop Bambera's Christmas Message

EL MENSAGE DE NAVIDAD DEL OBISPO BAMBERA

Queridos amigos en Cristo,

“El pueblo que andaba en tinieblas vio una gran luz; sobre los que habitaban en la tierra de las tinieblas una luz ha brillado. Les has traído mucha alegría y gran gozo, como se regocijan delante de ti como en la siega, como se regocija la gente cuando reparte el botín. Porque has roto el yugo que los cargaba, la vara sobre sus hombros y la vara de su capataz...Porque un niño nos ha nacido, un hijo nos es dado; sobre su hombro descansa el dominio. Lo nombran Consejero Maravilla, Dios-Héroe, Padre-Eterno, Príncipe de Paz.”

En este pasaje familiar, el profeta Isaías se refiere a la devastación causada en el pueblo de Israel por las fuerzas invasoras que saquearon su tierra y enviaron al exilio a muchos de los elegidos de Dios. Sin embargo, en medio de tanto dolor y sufrimiento, Isaías también ofrece una visión de esperanza. Él proclama que Dios restaurará las tierras devastadas y la gente a su antigua gloria. Una visión de ruina dará lugar a una promesa de restauración a través de Aquel que sucederá en el trono de David, que es Cristo y Señor.

Este año, mientras celebramos la Navidad y el nacimiento de Jesús de una manera muy diferente de lo que pudimos imaginar el año pasado, la promesa de Isaías, que se habló por primera vez al pueblo de Israel hace unos 2700 años, también habla poderosamente a nuestro corazón.

A estas alturas, es probable que todos conozcamos a alguien que haya sido afectado por el coronavirus. La mayoría se ha recuperado, algunos todavía están agobiados y demasiados han muerto. Vivimos con miedo, consumidos por la preocupación y la ansiedad mientras esperamos una vacuna y anticipamos nuestro futuro. La división y la hostilidad, consecuencias trágicas del virus, son desenfrenadas en todo el mundo e incluso en nuestra Iglesia. Los pobres están más agobiados que nunca. Y muchos se han preguntado, incluso en voz alta, dónde se encuentra Dios en medio de tanto sufrimiento y dolor.

En su reciente encíclica Fratelli Tutti, el Papa Francisco reconoce que la pandemia de coronavirus “ha puesto de manifiesto nuestra vulnerabilidad y ha descubierto esas falsas certezas en torno a las cuales construimos nuestros horarios diarios, nuestros proyectos, nuestros hábitos y prioridades.” Sin embargo, también nos recuerda que la actual crisis de salud nos impulsa a reconocer que realmente somos “una comunidad global, todos en el mismo barco, donde los problemas de la persona son los problemas de todos ... Nadie se salva solo; solo podemos salvarnos juntos.”

Allí, hermanos y hermanas, comenzamos a ver el desafío y la bendición de la Navidad. ¡Porque a pesar de lo oscuro que se ha vuelto nuestro mundo, la promesa de Dios hablada a través de Isaías es nuestra esperanza! ¡Ha nacido un niño para nosotros! Un hijo se le ha dado a nosotros! Con el nacimiento de Jesús, Dios en medio de nosotros y tan cerca de nosotros como nuestro corazón, la luz se ha derramado en nuestras vidas. Jesús se ha sumergido en nuestra condición humana para salvarnos, no por nuestra justicia, sino por la gracia y la misericordia de Dios.

Y la manera más segura de encontrarnos con la presencia salvífica de Dios, incluso y particularmente en medio de esta crisis, es sumergir nuestras vidas en la misma condición humana que abrazó Jesús. La forma más segura para que experimentemos la gracia de Dios es modelar nuestra vida en la vida de Aquel cuyo nacimiento celebramos durante esta Navidad: servir a los heridos, perdonar generosamente, mostrar misericordia y amar desinteresada e incondicionalmente.

Hermanos y hermanas, muchos de ustedes durante estos días difíciles han demostrado que no solo comprenden el mensaje de la Navidad, sino que también han buscado reflejar la vida de Jesús en sus propias vidas. Has cuidado desinteresadamente a los enfermos tanto física como espiritualmente, dejando de lado tu propia comodidad y bienestar por el bien de los demás. Ha dado su generosidad, y necesita, para apoyar a aquellos que luchan por mantener a sus familias. Se ha acercado de manera creativa a aquellos que están confinados en casa o son ancianos, llevándoles comida y el regalo preciado de una sonrisa y un oído atento. ¡Has orado y has mantenido la fe!

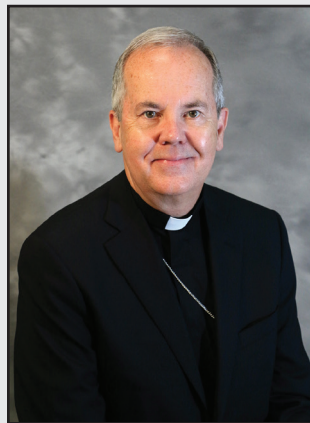
En resumen, has reconocido a Cristo en tus hermanos y hermanas y te has convertido en Cristo para ellos en su necesidad. Al hacerlo, como lo prometió Isaías, la luz de su fe en Jesús se ha mostrado brillante en medio de la oscuridad de nuestro mundo que sufre. Has dado vida al gran misterio de fe que celebramos en la Encarnación de Cristo. ¡Y nos recuerdas a todos que tenemos motivos para tener esperanza!

Gracias por el privilegio de caminar con usted en fe como su Obispo. Juntos, por la misericordia y el amor de Dios, sobreviviremos a este difícil momento de nuestra historia y todo saldrá bien.

Con oraciones por una Navidad bendita y segura, estoy Fielmente tuyo en Cristo,

+ Joseph C. Bambera

Reverendísimo Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Obispo de Scranton



Continued from Page 1

Yet, he also reminds us that the current health crisis prompts us to recognize that we truly are “a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all...No one is saved alone; we can only be saved together.”

Therein, brothers and sisters, we begin to see the challenge and the blessing of Christmas. For as dark as our world has become, the promise of God spoken through Isaiah is our hope! A child has been born for *us*! A son has been given to *us*! With the birth of Jesus – God in our midst and as close to us as our very hearts – light has poured into our lives. Jesus has immersed himself in our human condition to save us – not because of our righteousness – but because of God’s grace and mercy.

And the surest way for us to encounter the saving presence of God – even and particularly in the midst of this crisis – is to immerse our lives in the same human condition that Jesus embraced. The surest way for us to experience God’s grace is to pattern our lives on the life of the One whose birth we celebrate during this Christmastide: to serve the wounded, to forgive generously, to show mercy and to love selflessly and unconditionally.

Brothers and sisters, so many of you during these difficult days have shown that you not only understand the message of Christmas but also have sought to reflect the life of Jesus in your own lives.

You’ve selflessly cared for the sick both physically and spiritually, putting aside your own comfort and well-being for the sake of others. You’ve given from your bounty – and need – to support those who are struggling to provide for their families.

You’ve creatively reached out to those who are homebound or elderly, bringing them food and the treasured gift of a smile and listening ear. You’ve prayed and have kept faith!

In short, you have recognized Christ in your brothers and sisters and have become Christ for them in their need. In so doing, as promised by Isaiah, the light of your faith in Jesus has shown brightly amid the darkness of our suffering world. You have given life to the great mystery of faith that we celebrate in the Incarnation of Christ. And you remind us all that we have reason to hope!

Thank you for the privilege of walking with you in faith as your Bishop. Together, through the mercy and love of God, we will survive this difficult moment in our history and all will be well.

With prayers for a blessed and safe Christmas, I am,

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Joseph C. Bambera

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton

To view video messages from Bishop Bambera for the Advent and Christmas seasons, visit www.dioceseofscranton.org or visit the Diocese of Scranton’s Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube social media pages.

Pastors prepare messages of hope for a Christmas unlike any other

In liturgical terms, the coronavirus pandemic the world currently finds itself in the unrelenting grip of began with the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord in March.

Fast forward nine months and Christianity finds itself on the eve of the Miracle of Christmas — the Nativity of the Lord foretold by the Angel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary in the obscure town of Nazareth.

Now the question becomes: How do pastoral ministers throughout the Church of Scranton answer the challenging call to offer messages of joy, peace and hope to their scattered flocks for Christmas 2020?

For Father Carmen Perry, a Diocesan priest of 43 years who serves as pastor of Saint Luke Parish in Stroudsburg, the answer came recently while praying the Liturgy of the Hours as he was touched more deeply by one of the readings he has perused so often in the past.

“Perhaps it is because, during this dark time of the pandemic, as we journey through the holy season of Advent, we are reminded to welcome and open our lives to the Light of God and follow the Light,” Father Perry said.

The seasoned pastor was referring to a meditation from Saint Augustine in which the great Doctor of the Church reminds us:

“God, who is faithful, put Himself in our debt, not by receiving anything, but by promising so much to us. Through the prophets, He committed to writing those promises so we could see the way in which He would discharge them.”

Quoting the saint’s writings, Father Perry explained, “(God) promised us eternal salvation, everlasting happiness with the angels, an immortal inheritance, endless glory, the joyful vision of His face, His holy dwelling in heaven, and after resurrection from the dead, no further fear of dying.”

“God not only made a written contract,” Father continued, “but also established a Mediator — not a prince or angel or archangel, but His only Son.”

Harkening words from the popular Christmas carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem* — “where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in” — Father Perry offered, “As we celebrate the miracle of Christmas, and even though we are in this dark world of sin and death, Jesus has come to raise us in God’s own Eternal Life.”

“May the Light of Christ shine within you in the Christmas season — and always,” he concluded.

Referring to the fact that his Christmas congregations will be comprised of those in attendance in church and those participating through closed circuit television or virtual



Rev. Carmen Perry



Rev. Brian J.W. Clarke



Rev. David Bechtel

broadcasts in the comfort of their own homes, Father Brian J.W. Clarke stated, “The celebration of Christmas Mass will be no less of a celebration of the birth of Christ.”

Ordained in 2002, Father Clarke shepherds the parish faith communities of Holy Rosary in Hazleton and Holy Name of Jesus in West Hazleton.

“As discussions began regarding Christmas preparations,” Father said, “people asked about decorating the church. Originally we planned to scale back quite a bit. As people heard this, they asked if we could decorate as before. They offered to help and make sure everything was prepared.”

Regarding his faithful, the Hazleton pastor indicated that it did not matter to them if they were physically in the pews or watching the Mass virtually online. They expressed strong sentiments to be

able to experience the season’s familiar festiveness in order to help them enter into the celebrations.

“This year, even more so, the message will focus on the true celebration of Christmas, the birth of Christ,” Father Clarke expressed. “We are reminded that whether we are in a pandemic or facing some other crisis, it does not change the fact of Christ’s birth and the reason to celebrate. We pray that no matter the situation, all will be open to receive the joyful spirit of Christmas during this blessed season.”

As the pastor of Saint Peter Parish, Wellsboro, and Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Elkland, Father David Bechtel plans to convey his Christmas message on the true meaning of the Incarnation by way of hypotheticals: What if all the trappings we associate with Christmas — Santa Claus, toys, festive dinners, decorations

and presents under the tree — were suddenly absent from our celebrations? What if we cannot gather with loved ones due to sickness, death or even a global pandemic?

“If we believe Christmas is all of those things, that if we don’t have those things we cannot have Christmas, then we have a problem,” he remarked. “All of these have little to do with Christmas. The real meaning of Christmas is that God has come among us and God is with us.”

The youthful pastor continued by stating that many wonder why a loving God would not suddenly eradicate the pandemic or allow it to happen in the first place.

“God most certainly can take it from us,” he said of the ongoing health crisis, “but it is in times of adversity that we grow. It is in times of adversity that we find out who we really are. Times of adversity become times for the power of good to reveal itself.”

Such a pandemic, he suggested, allows for the opportunity of personal and spiritual growth and to utilize the God-given gifts and talents at our disposal to overcome life’s challenges.

“God is with us in this pandemic just as He has been with His people during times of crisis throughout history,” Father Bechtel offered. “The gift of Christmas serves as a reminder that God is with his people. God walks with his people. God will never leave us or forsake us. He is united with us and can never be divided from us.”

Important Reminders for those attending Christmas Masses in the Diocese of Scranton

- Consult with your parish to determine specific Mass times and whether reservations are necessary for attendance
- All individuals attending Mass must wear face masks
- Parishioners need to maintain proper six foot physical distancing when entering the church, during the Mass and while exiting the church
- People who are at risk because of an underlying health issue or who are elderly or infirm are strongly encouraged to stay home, for their own health, and to avoid any risk of contracting the virus. The obligation to attend Mass remains suspended at this time
- Any person who is sick, exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or caring for a loved one or immediate family member with symptoms of COVID-19, is urged to remain at home for the safety of others
- Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended at this time
- Anyone who is hesitant to attend Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day is encouraged to consider attending Mass during the Christmas Season, especially during the Christmas Octave
- A full list of Liturgical Norms for Public Masses during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the Diocese of Scranton website at www.dioceseofscranton.org

A listing of all parish Mass times for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and livestream schedules can be found on the Diocese of Scranton website

www.dioceseofscranton.org

Parish provides holiday assistance to refugee families

CLARKS GREEN – Nearly 60 refugee children, many from the Democratic Republic of Congo, will have gifts this holiday season thanks to the kindness of parishioners from the Church of Saint Gregory.

For the last several weeks, the parish has been collecting gifts for refugee families and their children, who range in age from newborns to teenagers.

“We created an Angel Tree at Saint Gregory’s and the parish adopted all the kids,” parishioner John Hambrose said.

Over the course of two days, Friday, Dec. 11, and Monday, Dec. 14, Hambrose and his wife delivered all of the gifts to the Catholic Social Services Immigration Program Office in Scranton.

“I’m very fortunate that Saint Gregory’s is working with us and my clients,” Sonya Sarner, Refugee and Immigration Services Program Manager of Catholic Social Services, said.

Sarner provided the Church of Saint Gregory’s Service Commission with the names and ages of children, along with their



John Hambrose, left, and his wife Meg, middle, parishioners of the Church of Saint Gregory, deliver dozens of gifts collected by members of their parish to Sonya Sarner, Refugee and Immigration Services Program Manager of Catholic Social Services on Friday, Dec. 11, 2020. The gifts will be distributed to local refugee families. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

clothing sizes and some things that would make good gifts for them. Parishioners handled the rest. In addition to toys and practical gifts, the parish is giving each family a Walmart gift card so that they can purchase other items they need.

“It really elevates everybody’s Christmas spirit,” parishioner Meg Hambrose said. “This is what it’s all about – giving to others, welcoming people who

are foreign to our community and making them feel welcome. That is part of what Saint Gregory’s mission is.”

In recent years, Scranton has become home to many new communities, including Congolese, Bhutanese, Syrian, Afghani, Somali, Burmese and other refugee groups who have resettled here with assistance from Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton.

This is not the first time the Church of Saint Gregory has assisted local refugees. For the last several years, the parish has sponsored a large Christmas Party for refugee families. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the party could not take place this year.

The Christmas Party has been a favorite annual event for both parishioners and the refugee children. For many Congolese kids, it was the first time they were able to see Santa Claus.

Outside of the holiday season, the Church of Saint Gregory also helps refugee families whenever Sarner is in need of assistance.

“I recently had a single grandmother, she lost her job, no food, no money,” Sarner explained. “They stepped in immediately and provided gift certificates and donations.”

As they dropped off dozens of bags of beautifully wrapped presents, John Hambrose took pride in being able to help his new neighbors.

“We hope the generosity reflects how fortunate we are,” he said.

Show the world the joy of faith, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Joy should be the hallmark of a Christian’s life, a reflection of knowing that one is loved by God, saved by Jesus Christ and committed to leading others to him, Pope Francis said.

“The closer the Lord is to us, the more joy we feel; the farther away he is, the more sadness we feel. This is a rule for Christians,” the pope said Dec. 13, Gaudete Sunday.

Speaking to visitors in St. Peter’s Square for the noon recitation of the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis told them, “Once a philosopher said something more or less like this: ‘I do not understand how one can believe today, because those who say they believe have a face from a funeral wake.’”

“Many Christians have that face – yes, a face from a funeral wake, a face of sadness,” the pope said. “But Christ is risen! Christ loves you! And you have no joy?”

As the celebration of Christmas approached, Pope Francis asked Christians to think about how they communicate the joy of being loved and saved.

“Think well today: how do I behave? Am I a joyful person who knows how to transmit the joy of being Christian, or am I always like those sad people, as I said before, who seem to be at a funeral wake?” the pope said. “If I do not have the joy of my faith, I cannot bear witness and others will say, ‘But if faith is so sad, it is better not to have it.’”

Mary, Joseph and John the Baptist knew joyful expectation and the happiness of seeing the savior arrive, the pope said.

And all three of them, he said, always pointed to Jesus, never to themselves.

“The Lord is always at the center,” and



A woman holds a figurine of the baby Jesus as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Dec. 13, 2020. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

the saints point to him, the pope said. “One who does not indicate the Lord is not holy.”

John the Baptist is a model for all those in the church who are called to proclaim Christ to others,” he said. They must do so “only by detaching from themselves and from worldliness, by not attracting people to themselves but directing them toward Jesus.”

After reciting the Angelus, Pope Francis spoke directly to a few children in the square and many others watching the Angelus on their computers or on television.

Gaudete Sunday usually is the day that Rome children bring the baby Jesus figurines from the Nativity scenes they are preparing to the Vatican for the pope’s blessing.

After blessing the figurines, the pope told the children, “When you pray at home, before the Nativity scene with your families, allow yourselves to be drawn by the tenderness of baby Jesus, born poor and frail among us, in order to give us his love.”

Parish holds Drive-thru Living Nativity



Mary, Mother of God Parish held a Drive-thru Living Nativity in front of its church on William Street in North Scranton on Sunday, Dec. 13, 2020. Members of the parish youth group portrayed the Holy Family, shepherds, wise men and others. The Nativity even featured live animals. The parish decided to hold the event outside in order to provide for proper social distancing and to ensure that the community could take part. Shown participating in the Drive-thru Living Nativity are, from left: Ryan Legg as Joseph and Mia Velez as Mary.

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Newly ordained deacons reminded of need to be servants to others

SCRANTON – As they celebrated the Rite of Ordination, eight men who became permanent deacons in the Diocese of Scranton on Nov. 28, 2020, were reminded of the need to put others before themselves.

During his homily, Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, reminded the men that they have opened their lives to the Lord’s love and because of it, they seek to love him in return through service to His people.

“To be a disciple of Jesus means to put ourselves in the humble, demanding role of servant to others, to intentionally seek the happiness and fulfillment of those entrusted to our care, regardless of the cost to ourselves,” Bishop Bambera said.

The newly ordained deacons will join the ranks of clergy who minister to the faithful in parishes and other settings throughout the diocese. Their diaconal ministry is threefold: service to the Word of God, service at the altar of the Lord and service to the poor.

As deacons, the men will proclaim the Gospel, preach homilies, prepare the altar for the banquet of Christ’s sacrifice, distribute Holy Communion, baptize, preside at weddings, funerals and other prayer services and be the living and working expression of the charity of the Church.

“Your ministry, to be fully diaconal and unified, must include some form of direct service to the poor and to those most in need,” the bishop explained.

The men accepting the diaconal call and responsibilities include Eugene N. Blockus, Joseph J. Chmiola, John C. Jorda, Peter J. Lemoncelli, Joseph R. Marcellus, Gerard P. Pernot, Angel Luis Rivera and Joseph Sudano.

“My brothers, God has called you to serve the Gospel in an authentic and vital way. While your ministry will not always be easy, set aside your fears and embrace your call with deep trust in Jesus’ promise to walk with you always. Follow Jesus’ example of selfless love and mercy. And serve God’s



Eight men were ordained to the Diaconate on Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. Participating in the Rite of Ordination, from left: Deacon John C. Jorda, Deacon Gerard P. Pernot, Deacon Eugene N. Blockus, Deacon Angel Luis Rivera, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, Deacon Joseph Sudano, Deacon Peter J. Lemoncelli, Deacon Joseph J. Chmiola and Deacon Joseph R. Marcellus. (Photos/Mike Melisky)

people generously as you would serve the Lord himself,” the bishop ended his homily by saying.

SERVICE ALREADY INSPIRING

Deacon Gerard P. Pernot said he was drawn to the diaconate as a way to say thank you for everything he has received in life. Even before ordination, he has been serving the community by volunteering with a hospice organization and assisting local refugees.

“I’ve been blessed to work with a refugee family who came to our country with six children and one bag. I didn’t know what to think, honestly, when I had the opportunity to get involved with the refugees. I have gotten so much more out of it,” Pernot said.

For the last several years, Deacon Joseph J. Chmiola has been visiting nursing home residents and homebound parishioners from his parish, Saint Jude Parish in Mountain Top.

“I really enjoy visiting with the shut-ins...They are like family members. I’ve been with them about three years, I know who they are, I know what they like, I know what they dislike,” he explained.

The bishop’s words about being a servant leader resonated with Deacon Peter J. Lemoncelli, who has been serving in hospice programs, along with doing hospital visitation, outreach to the elderly and assisting refugees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he has come to a deeper understanding of the struggles many face.

“I saw the perspective that the

homebound have, many of them being in their homes year after year, many of them with no relatives or family left,” Lemoncelli said. “It gave me a much stronger closeness to their needs.”

READY TO MAKE AN IMPACT

Deacon Angel “Luis” Rivera has been working with the Hispanic population across the Diocese of Scranton for several years. As a deacon, he hopes to continue welcoming their presence in parishes from the Poconos to the Wyoming Valley.

“We open doors. We made them feel welcome and I’m just there to serve them and if I can, bring them to a closer encounter with Jesus,” Rivera explained.

Deacon Joseph Sudano hopes his



During the Litany of Supplication, the elect prostrate themselves on the floor in a gesture of solemn petition. The assembly, through the intercession of all the saints, asks for God’s blessing for the candidates to be ordained.



After the Prayer of Ordination, Deacon Joseph J. Chmiola, left, receives a stole and dalmatic from Monsignor Dale R. Rupert. Deacon Eugene N. Blockus, right, receives his vestments from Rev. Alex J. Roche.



Deacon Walter G. Janoski, right, congratulates Deacon John C. Jorda shortly after the Prayer of Ordination.

diaconal ministry will allow him to help people find relevance with the church in their lives. He recently had a very positive experience leading a RCIA group, bringing adults into full communion with the church.

“I’m Director of Faith Formation at Saint Nick’s in Wilkes-Barre so I’ve been blessed to be able to work in the church for the last few years. I think that becoming a deacon will only enhance that and really just bring further growth and further opportunities for me to reach people,” he said.

As a nurse and paramedic, Deacon Eugene N. Blockus believes he can serve God and do His will by serving his community.

“I worked emergency medicine so I saw more tragedy than I saw good,” Blockus said. “During those times, I would stop when it was possible and quietly pray with the families or with the patients and I knew there was more that I could do. I felt there was a greater calling because a lot of times they would be looking for a minister or a priest.”

CALLED TO THE DIACONATE

Deacon John C. Jorda admits he never even considered being a deacon until just a few years ago. He didn’t know any deacons and was unfamiliar with their duties. With both his parents and children battling health issues, he even got upset with God. It wasn’t until he got back involved with the church that he discovered his future ministry.

“I started praying and one day while praying to God, what do you want me to do for you, it just popped in my head and it was burning inside of me and I couldn’t get it out of my mind,” Jorda admitted.

Jorda says the amount of support he received from parishioners has helped him throughout the years of formation. As for the formation program itself, Jorda said,

“it helped me learn more about myself... The material things don’t mean that much anymore. It’s all about helping people, helping people find their way like I found my way.”

Admitting that he is reluctant to try new things, Deacon Joseph R. Marcellus joined the Knights of Columbus and that move, unknowingly at the time, would help him find his path to ordination. As he began to meet more people, he became a lector and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

Using his profession as an architect as an example, Marcellus will now be able to help build God’s kingdom on earth, which we are all called to do through baptism. He credits the Diaconate program for opening his eyes to many different things.

“I build things, I design things, I put things together but probably the biggest thing I’ve gotten out of being in the Diaconate program is not what I’m building but what people build and give back to me. I’m constantly amazed when we try to help people or go out and do something or serve people, I am the one receiving, not the one giving,” he explained.



Deacon Angel Luis Rivera, participates in the Rite of Ordination of Deacons on Nov. 28, 2020 at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

APPOINTMENTS

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

Deacon Eugene Blockus, to diaconal ministry at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Hunlock Creek. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Donald J. Crane, from diaconal ministry, Saint Benedict Parish, Wilkes Barre, to diaconal ministry, Saints Peter and Paul Parish, Plains. Effective December 9, 2020.

Deacon Joseph Chmiola, to diaconal ministry at Saint Jude Parish, Mountain Top/Saint Mary Church, Dorrance. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon John Jorda, to diaconal ministry at Gate of Heaven Parish, Dallas. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Peter Lemoncelli, to diaconal ministry at Saint Ann’s Basilica, Scranton. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Joseph Marcellus, to diaconal ministry at Mary, Mother of God Parish, Scranton. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Gerard Pernot, to diaconal ministry at Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish, Kingston. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Angel Luis Rivera, to diaconal ministry at Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg. Effective November 30, 2020.

Deacon Joseph Sudano, to diaconal ministry at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilkes-Barre. Effective November 30, 2020.

Pope creates 13 new cardinals, including Washington archbishop

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – One by one 11 senior churchmen, including two U.S. citizens – Cardinals Wilton D. Gregory of Washington and Silvano M. Tomasi, a former Vatican diplomat – knelt before Pope Francis to receive their red hats, a cardinal’s ring and a scroll formally declaring their new status and assigning them a “titular” church in Rome.

But with the consistory Nov. 28 occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis actually created 13 new cardinals.

Cardinals Jose F. Advincula of Capiz, Philippines, and Cornelius Sim, apostolic vicar of Brunei, did not attend the consistory because of COVID-19 travel restrictions; however, they are officially cardinals and will receive their birettas and rings at a later date, the Vatican said.

In his homily at the prayer service, Pope Francis told the new cardinals that “the scarlet of a cardinal’s robes, which is the color of blood, can, for a worldly spirit, become the color of a secular ‘eminence,’” the traditional title of respect for a cardinal.

If that happens, he said, “you will no longer be a pastor close to your people. You will think of yourself only as ‘His Eminence.’ If you feel that, you are off the path.”

For the cardinals, the pope said, the red must symbolize a wholehearted following of Jesus, who willingly gave his life on the cross to save humanity.



Pope Francis places the red biretta on new Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington during a consistory for the creation of 13 new cardinals in St. Peter’s Basilica on Nov. 28, 2020. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cardinal Gregory, like the other new cardinals coming from outside Europe, was tested for COVID-19 before flying to Rome and again upon arrival. Even after testing negative, he and the others were required to quarantine for 10 days and were tested again immediately before the consistory. Cardinal Gregory stayed at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where Pope Francis lives, and his meals were left outside his door.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, the cardinal said he hopes Pope Francis will find him to be “supportive, encouraging and trustworthy” in his role as a cardinal, but his primary ministry is still to be the archbishop of Washington.

Father Andrew R. Gallia remembered

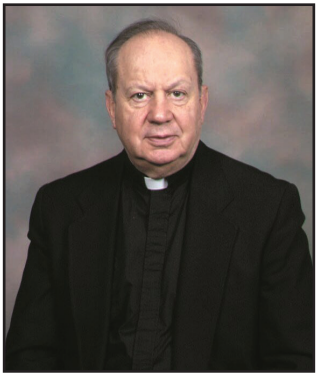
OLD FORGE – Bishop Joseph C. Bambera served as principal celebrant of a Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial for Father Andrew R. Gallia, pastor emeritus of Saint Mary’s Assumption, Jessup, on Dec. 16, 2020, at Prince of Peace Parish.

Father Gallia died on Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, at the Allied Hospice Center.

Father Gallia, son of the late Andrew P. and Jennie (Regni) Gallia, was born in Old Forge on May 21, 1935. Father graduated from Old Forge High School, Class of 1952. He attended The University of Scranton where he earned a B.S. in Education in 1956. He served as a teacher in the Morris Plains School District in New Jersey from 1956-1957.

Father Gallia entered the Saint Jerome Minor Seminary in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada in 1958. He then entered the seminary and completed his studies for the priesthood at St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore, Md. Father Gallia was ordained to the priesthood on June 16, 1962, by Most Reverend Jerome D. Hannan, D.D., late Bishop of Scranton, in Saint Peter’s Cathedral on June 16, 1962.

Father Gallia served as an assistant pastor at Saint Ann’s, Tobyhanna; Saint Lucy’s, Scranton; Our Lady of Sorrows, West Wyoming; Saint John the Evangelist, Scranton and Saint Anthony of Padua, Dunmore.



Rev. Andrew R. Gallia

Father Gallia received his first pastorate at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Carbondale, in 1979. Father was appointed pastor at Saint Mary’s Assumption, Jessup, in 1989 where he served for eighteen years until his retirement and appointment as Pastor Emeritus in 2007.

In addition to his pastoral appointments, Father taught religion to all grade levels at parish schools for seventeen years, from 1962 to 1979. He served the Diocese as Ordinary Confessor to the Novitiate and Sisters at Marywood College and the Novitiate at Misericordia University. He enjoyed giving counsel to the Novitiate and Postulant.

Father Gallia celebrated the 50th Anniversary of his Ordination with a Pontifical Mass celebrated by Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., in 2012.

Father is survived by a sister, Mary Avvisato and her husband Dominick, Old Forge; his wonderful, dedicated and faithful niece and caregiver Maria A. Panunti and her husband Mario; his caring and thoughtful niece Donna Avvisato along with other nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother Joseph, nephew Andrew, and great-niece Jillian M. Panunti.

Internment was to be conducted at the Cathedral Cemetery Mausoleum.



BISHOP BAMBERA’S SCHEDULE

- December 20** - Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- December 23** - Advent Mass for Chancery Staff
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- December 24** - Christmas Eve Vigil Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 4:00 p.m.
- December 25** - Midnight Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, Midnight
- December 25** - Christmas Day Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- December 27** - Feast of the Holy Family Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- January 3** - Mass for the Epiphany of the Lord
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.
- January 9** - 10th Anniversary Mass for Saint John Neumann Parish
Nativity Church, Scranton, 4:30 p.m.
- January 10** - Mass for the Baptism of the Lord
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.

A lifestyle, not a task: Vatican reminds bishops of ecumenical priority

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The ministry of a Catholic bishop must reflect the Catholic Church’s commitment to Christian unity and must give ecumenical engagement the same kind of attention as work for justice and peace, said a new Vatican document.

“The bishop cannot consider the promotion of the ecumenical cause as one more task in his varied ministry, one that could and should be deferred in view of other, apparently more important priorities,” said the document, “The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum.”

Prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the 52-page document was released Dec. 4 after its publication was approved by Pope Francis.

The text reminds each Catholic bishop of his personal responsibility as a minister of unity, not only among the Catholics of his diocese, but also with other Christians.

As a “vademecum,” or guidebook, it provides lists of practical steps the bishop can and should take to fulfill that responsibility in every aspect of his ministry, from inviting other Christian leaders to important diocesan celebrations to highlighting ecumenical activities on the diocesan website.



Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople exchange gifts at the end of a private meeting at the Vatican Sept. 17, 2019. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

And, as the chief teacher in his diocese, he must ensure that the content of conferences, religious education programs and homilies at the diocesan and parish level promote Christian unity and accurately reflect the teachings of the church’s partners in dialogue.

Demonstrating the importance of the document, the online news conference to present it featured not one, but four top Vatican officials: Cardinals Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for

Promoting Christian Unity; Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops; Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; and Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

With its explanations and its concrete suggestions, Cardinal Ouellet said, the booklet provides the tools for realizing “the ecumenical conversion of bishops and every disciple of Christ who wishes to better incarnate the joy of the Gospel in our time.”

Cardinal Tagle said the vademecum reminds bishops in missionary lands that they must not import Christian divisions to new parts of the world and asks Catholics to understand just how much the divisions within Christianity turn off people who “are looking for meaning in life, for salvation.”

“The non-Christians are scandalized, really scandalized, when we Christians claim to be followers of Christ and then they see how we are fighting one another,” he said.

But ecumenism is not seeking a truce or “compromise as if unity should be achieved at the expense of truth,” the document explained.

Catholic doctrine insists there is a “hierarchy of truths,” a prioritizing of essential beliefs based “on their relation to the saving mysteries of the Trinity and salvation in Christ, the source of all Christian doctrines.”

In conversations with other Christians, the document said, “by weighing truths rather than simply enumerating them, Catholics gain a more accurate understanding of the unity that exists among Christians.”

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18 - January 25, 2021

The theme for this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is,
“Abide in my love...you shall bear much fruit.”
 (cf. John 15:5-9)

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The “gravity” of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and “the lack of availability of alternative vaccines,” are “sufficiently serious” reasons to accept the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, the chairmen of the U.S. bishops’ doctrine and pro-life committees said Dec. 14.

“Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community,” they said. “In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”

The bishops addressed the moral concerns raised by the fact the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have some connection to cell lines that originated with tissue taken from abortions.

However, this connection to morally compromised cell lines is so remote and the public health situation is too grave to reject the vaccines, said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

Late Dec. 11, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave emergency-use approval to the Pfizer vaccine, with approval expected for Moderna the week of Dec. 14. UPS and FedEx began shipping the doses across the country Dec. 12, with the first shipments arriving Dec. 14.

Each state has a distribution plan for administering them. National guidelines call for health care workers and those in nursing homes and long-term care facilities to be first in line to get immunized.

On Dec. 8, The Lancet medical journal reported that four clinical trials of a third vaccine, being developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca “appears to have moderate efficacy in preventing symptomatic illness, and may significantly reduce hospitalization from the disease.” Astra Zeneca is expected to apply to the FDA for emergency use of its vaccine in the coming weeks.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said they found the AstraZeneca vaccine it to be “more morally compromised”



LaShawn Scott, a nurse at University of Louisville Hospital, receives the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine at the Louisville, Ky., health care facility Dec. 14, 2020. (CNS photo/Bryan Woolston, Reuters)

and concluded this vaccine “should be avoided” if there are alternatives available.

“It may turn out, however, that one does not really have a choice of vaccine, at least, not without a lengthy delay in immunization that may have serious consequences for one’s health and the health of others,” the two prelates stated. “In such a case... it would be permissible to accept the AstraZeneca vaccine.”

Shortly after Pfizer and Moderna announced Nov. 11 and Nov. 16, respectively, that their vaccines were 95% effective against COVID-19, critics claimed the vaccines have been produced using cells from aborted fetuses, leading to confusion over “the moral permissibility” of using these vaccines.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann addressed this issue in a Nov. 23 memo to their fellow bishops and addressed it again in their 2,400-word statement Dec. 12. In the memo, they noted some were “asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.”

In their new lengthy statement, the two committee chairmen emphasized that any such cell lines were derived from tissue samples taken from fetuses aborted in the 1960s and 1970s and have been grown in laboratories all over the world since then.

“It is important to note that the making of the rubella vaccine – or that of the new COVID-19 vaccines – does not involve cells taken directly from the body of an aborted child,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

“Cells taken from two abortions in the 1960s were replicated in a laboratory to produce two cell lines that can be reproduced again and again, indefinitely.”

“To make the rubella vaccine, cells from these cell lines are stimulated to produce the chemicals necessary for the vaccine,” they explained. “It is not as if the making of the vaccine required ever more cells from ever more abortions.”

The two committee chairmen said the Vatican, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of

the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life, “has offered guidance on the question of whether it is morally acceptable to receive a vaccine that has been created with the use of morally compromised cell lines.”

Both the congregation and the academy “emphasize the positive moral obligation to do good,” they said, “and in so doing to distance oneself as much as possible from the immoral act of another party such as abortion in order to avoid cooperation with someone else’s evil actions and to avoid giving scandal, which could happen if one’s own actions were perceived by other people to ignore or to minimize the evil of the action.”

“Our love of neighbor should lead us to avoid giving scandal, but we cannot omit fulfilling serious obligations such as the prevention of deadly infection and the spread of contagion among those who are vulnerable just to avoid the appearance of scandal,” the two prelates said.

At the same time, the bishops also cautioned Catholics against complacency about the moral issue of abortion and ethical issues surrounding the development of some vaccines.

“While having ourselves and our families immunized against COVID-19 with the new vaccines

is morally permissible and can be an act of self-love and of charity toward others, we must not allow the gravely immoral nature of abortion to be obscured,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

“It is true that one can receive benefits from an evil action in the past without intending that action or approving of it. The association with the evil action that comes with receiving benefits from that evil action, however, can have a corrupting influence on one’s perception of the evil action, making it more difficult to recognize it as evil,” they explained.

“One might become desensitized to the gravely evil nature of that action. One might become complacent about that action and ignore the obligation to do what one can to oppose the evil action,” they said, adding that others might see “one’s acceptance of benefits from an evil action” and feel the action isn’t really evil, feel less urgency “to oppose that evil” or even miss opportunities to do what they can “to oppose it.”

“We should be on guard so that the new COVID-19 vaccines do not desensitize us or weaken our determination to oppose the evil of abortion itself and the subsequent use of fetal cells in research,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

The Diocese of Scranton

The Catholic Light

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Celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mary's words are powerful reminder to all, bishop says on Guadalupe feast

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated throughout the Diocese of Scranton on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020.

The annual observance commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary to a Mexican Indian, Juan Diego, in December of 1531.

The Blessed Mother's message of hope continues to inspire people of Hispanic descent, especially those from Mexico.

Due to COVID-19, this year's celebrations were much more subdued across the Diocese. Large processions, which traditionally take place in Wilkes-Barre and Scranton were suspended in order to protect the public.

Masses marking the celebration continued in the Valley cities, along with East Stroudsburg, Jermyn and Hazleton among other places.

Bishop Joseph C. Bambera celebrated two Masses, the first at Saint John Neumann Parish in South Scranton at 11:00 a.m., the second at Saint Nicholas Parish in Wilkes-Barre at 6:00 p.m.

While noting how this year's celebrations are different than normal, the bishop said the Virgin Mary's words should be a powerful reminder to all of us.

"Her words emerge from a world filled with suffering and pain – a world of hardship, abuse, struggle and grief – a world in many ways no different than our own," Bishop Bambera said. "Yet, her praise of God and her willingness to say 'yes' to God's plan to bring salvation to His people are rooted in a faith so strong that it serves as the blueprint for authentic discipleship down through the ages, even to our own day."

Bishop Bambera told the faithful that sometimes we take the depth of Mary's faith for granted.

"When the angel announced to her that she would be the mother of God, she was not informed that her son would suffer, be put to death and then rise from the dead. She didn't know any of this. She simply trusted that the God who called her would care for her, regardless of how her life unfolded," the bishop said.



Above and Below Right: The faithful participate in Mass in celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Saint Nicholas Parish in Wilkes-Barre. (Photos/Mike Melisky)

Below Left: Bishop Joseph C. Bambera blesses an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Saint John Neumann Parish in Scranton. (Photo/CTV: Catholic Television)



Mary is reminder of God's blessing, pope reminds the faithful

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The humble image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a reminder of the gift of God's abundant blessings to all men and women, Pope Francis said.

By contemplating her, Christians can fully understand God's gift "in the abundance of his son by nature and his mother by grace," the pope said in his homily during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"This is the gift that God presents to us and has wanted to continuously highlight and reawaken throughout revelation," he said.

At the start of the Mass, the pope – dressed in white, the symbol of purity – made his way to a replica of St. Juan Diego's tilma, which bears the image of Mary, who appeared to the indigenous saint in 1531.

With a choir singing a Marian hymn accompanied by a guitar, the pope stood before the image, bowing reverently and incensing it three times.



Pope Francis touches an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as he celebrates Mass marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 12, 2020. (CNS photo/Paolo Galosi, pool)

In his homily, the pope reflected on the Gospel reading from St. Luke, which recalled Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

The reading, as well as the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, offer a reflection of three realities in the lives of Christians: abundance, blessing and gifts, he said.

Unlike human beings, who "by our very

nature, by our limitations" always "need comfortable quotas," he said, God "always offer himself in abundance" and "gives in abundance."

"Thinking about the mystery of Christmas, the Advent liturgy takes much of this idea of abundance from the prophet Isaiah," the pope said. "Generosity can be – I

like to think of it as – at least one 'limitation' that God has: the impossibility of giving himself in any way that isn't in abundance."

Recalling Elizabeth proclaiming Mary as "blessed among all women," the pope said that it reflects the reality of blessing. "God's style is always to say 'good,'" while the devil's style is to curse others, be mean and be "unable to give oneself totally."

"God always is to say what is good. And he says it with pleasure, he says it by giving himself," he said. "He gives of himself in abundance by saying what is good, by blessing."

Pope Francis said that the final reality – the "gift" – is reflected in the coming of Christ, who was "given to us in the one who is 'full of grace.'"

By "contemplating the image of our mother today, we 'steal' from God a bit of this style that he has: generosity, abundance, blessing – never cursing – and transforming our life into a gift, a gift for all," the pope said.

10,000+ toys distributed to families in need this holiday season

DICKSON CITY – Thousands of children across northeastern Pennsylvania will have presents under the tree this Christmas, thanks to an ongoing partnership between Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton and the Friends of the Poor.

On Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020, more than 500 families picked up gifts as part of the annual Gifts for Kids holiday toy distribution.

“It’s a privilege to be able to serve those in need. It’s the mission of Catholic Social Services and what better time than Christmas to be able to reach out and help, particularly children, celebrate the Christmas and holiday season,” Mary Theresa Malandro, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Human Services and Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, said.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution process changed significantly this year. Instead of being held at the University of Scranton’s Byron Center, where parents could select their own toys from tables, this year’s distribution was held by drive-thru in an effort to promote social distancing.

“They (families) registered and we took the information and spent four days putting all of the gift bags together,” Malandro explained.

Parker Hill Church generously donated space for volunteers to sort and package all of the gifts. The parking lot of the Church also provided ample room for families to wait in line during the distribution process.



Bags of pre-packaged toys filled every seat in the meeting room at Parker Hill Church as the Gift for Kids toy distribution began.



Volunteers with Catholic Social Services and Friends of the Poor distribute 10,000+ toys on Dec. 15, 2020. (Photos/Eric Deabill)

“It’s a wonderful feeling. It’s a blessing, it’s a privilege to be able to help everybody in the community,” Tracey Mulrain, Director of Catholic Social Services’ Offices in Lackawanna & Luzerne County, said.

In the Scranton-area, approximately 530 families registered for assistance. That translated to more than 10,000 gifts for roughly 1,800 children.

Catholic Social Services and Friends of the Poor received 7,700 toys from the Marine Corps ‘Toys for Tots’ programs and supplemented that with gifts provided by community members, Diocesan parishes, schools and other organizations.

“Our biggest age range was 9-11,” Meghan Loftus, President and CEO of Friends of the Poor, said. “We try to make

sure that each child has one large and one or two small toys, along with stocking stuffers like animals, puzzles, books, that sort of thing.”

Because of the pandemic, many families registered for help for the first time.

“It has been challenging in the middle of the coronavirus,” Malandro explained. “Many families and parents have become unemployed and cannot give to their children as they would like to, so I think this year, more than ever it is a real privilege to be able to help those that wouldn’t have a Christmas.”

While organizers of the toy distribution say they’re happy to be able to bring some holiday cheer just before Christmas, they are unfortunately well aware of the need

and poverty in this region.

“Our poverty rate in this area is 25-percent, compared to the state and federal level that is only 12 or 12 and a-half percent,” Loftus said. “One in four people in our area live in poverty and need some sort of assistance. That is what our agencies do 365 days a year.”

In addition to the toy giveaway in Scranton, Catholic Social Services also sponsored several other toy distributions this week. Nearly 400 families in Carbondale and another 400 families in Hazleton received toys as well in separate distributions. Families involved in youth programs through Catholic Social Services in Wilkes-Barre also received toys from the agency this holiday season.

Mid Valley Outreach meal returns to Carbondale

CARBONDALE – The smell of meatloaf filled the basement hall at Saint Rose of Lima Church on Thursday, Dec. 3, and it provided a taste of normalcy for approximately a dozen parish volunteers.

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, the parish hosted its weekly Mid Valley Outreach meal to anyone in need in the community. With the assistance of Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton, the parish will once again provide a warm, nutritious meal to people in the Carbondale community once a week.

“We’re very happy and excited to be able to provide for the people of the Carbondale area once again,” Rob Williams, Executive Director of Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen and Food and Clothing Pantry, said.

Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen provides the food, chef and everything it takes to deliver the meal, but parish volunteers help to serve it. Due to the ongoing health crisis, the meals are being served in to-go containers at the door.

“One of the greatest things for me, with regards to the Mid Valley Outreach, is that it’s local people serving local people,” Williams added.

The outreach meal started in Carbondale five years ago and quickly became popular. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers would typically serve between 80-110 sit-down meals each Thursday.

Jim Roberts serves as coordinator for the community meal.

“Jesus told us to feed the hungry and minister to them in any way you can,” he said.

Recognizing that the need for a warm meal never disappeared during the pandemic, Roberts said his volunteers were excited to get back to work.

“They are more than eager. They wanted to come back. They want to do this. They knew we would have to take precautions, wear masks and gloves and social distance but they wanted to come back. It is their way of serving,” he explained.



Cindy Opalka, left, and Jim Roberts, right, help to prepare meals for distribution at Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Carbondale on Dec. 3, 2020. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

Volunteer Cindy Opalka says the team of volunteers have formed a tight-knit family. Over the course of the last few months, she would often hear from people in the community how much the weekly meal was missed.

“I could not wait,” she explained, describing excitement to get back to serving.

Central to the work of Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen is volunteerism. That is why the partnership between the kitchen and Saint Rose of Lima Parish is so critical.

In addition to Carbondale, Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen has also provided meals to churches in Olyphant and Archbald on a weekly basis as part of the Mid Valley Outreach Program.

While those meals have not yet resumed, Williams is hopeful they will resume

early in 2021.

“We’ve been in conversations with those parishes and pastors and I’m hoping that in the new year, at some point in the new year, we’ll be in the position to continue our service to those communities as well,” Williams explained.

Making a difference, one meal at a time

SAYRE – A popular community meal, sponsored by Epiphany Parish in Bradford County, has taken on added significance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Offered on the second Tuesday of every month, some recipients say the meal has helped them during the financial instability of 2020.

“We’ve lost a lot of income due to COVID and it helps feed our family,” Laura Houseknecht said while picking up meals for her family recently. “Thank you to everyone that helps out with this meal. It has been great. We’ve been coming for years and thank you during this very hard time.”

Because of the pandemic, Epiphany Parish has been serving its community meal in to-go containers, instead of holding a sit-down meal, to avoid large crowds and help maintain physical distancing.

“We prepare a hot meal with dessert,” parishioner William Hillyard explained. “They just have to drive up, tell us how many dinners they need and we load up their cars.”

Everyone is welcome at the community meal sponsored by Epiphany Parish. Meals are served between 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

“It is open to the whole community, not

just to our parish,” Hillyard added.

Epiphany Parish receives a Social Justice Grant from the Diocese of Scranton to help pay some of the costs associated with the community meal. Generous gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal help support the Social Justice Grant Program and the important projects that receive funding.

“We’d like to thank the donors who give to the Annual Appeal, which in return comes back to us so we can continue to put on this service for our community,” Hillyard added.

Parishioners James and Patricia Briggs stopped by the community meal recently to pick up more than a dozen meals, which they share with their neighbors and friends.

“We usually get 14 dinners and where we live in the neighborhood is where we pass them out,” Patricia Briggs said.

By handing out the meals, the Briggs ensure their neighbors get a warm, nutritious



Volunteers Kate Gabb and Cathy Barrett place food in to-go containers to be distributed during a community meal in Sayre during the COVID-19 pandemic.

meal at least once a month.

“We would like to thank all the parishioners who donate to the Diocesan Annual Appeal. We think it’s a very important mission for the church and we definitely appreciate the contributions,” Patricia added.

“This truly does help the local people and

the needs of our community,” Father Andrew Hvozdozovic, pastor, Epiphany Parish, said.

The community meal is just one of several programs that Epiphany Parish has applied for funding through the Social Justice Grant Program. In previous years, the parish has received funding to help the Chow for Children Program, an ecumenical program which feeds roughly 45-50 families per week during the school year, the Knights of Columbus annual coat drive which helped nearly 400 children last year as well as the Helping Hands of Bentley Creek.

“If it wasn’t for the great generosity of the donors of the Diocesan Annual Appeal, we wouldn’t have these outstanding outreach possibilities here in Bradford County,” Father Hvozdozovic added.

For more information on all of the Diocesan ministries supported by gifts to the Annual Appeal, to view one of the regional Annual Appeal videos or to make a donation online, visit AnnualAppeal.org. Gifts can also be made by calling the Diocesan Development Office at (570) 207-2250 or by sending a donation to: Diocesan Annual Appeal, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503.

Appeal regional chairs named for Luzerne County

Bishop Joseph C. Bambera has invited Father Joseph Elston, pastor of Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Joseph Mareello Parishes, Pittston, and Paula and Joe Panzitta, parishioners at Corpus Christi Parish, West Pittston, to serve as this year’s Luzerne County regional chairs for the Diocesan Annual Appeal.

Father Elston is a native of Scranton and was a member of Nativity of Our Lord Parish, now Saint John Neumann Parish. Prior to serving in Pittston, he was



Rev. Joseph Elston

Chaplain and Dean of Students at Holy Redeemer High School, Wilkes-Barre, and Sacramental Minister at Holy Family Parish, Luzerne.

“I am happy to be the Luzerne County Clergy Chair for the Annual Appeal. A very important part of the Appeal is the sheer amount of help a person provides by giving to the Appeal. The necessary monies raised by the Appeal reach so many people and are depended upon by so many areas of ministry and outreach all across our Diocese,” Father Elston said.

The Panzittas are active members of their parish. Joe is a member of the Parish Council, Building and Grounds Committee and Parish Bazaar Committee and is one of the ministry coordinators for ushers. Paula serves on the Parish Council and the Finance Committee and has been a lector for the past 27 years.



Paula & Joe Panzitta

wife, Jennifer, live in Columbus, Ohio, and Andrew and his wife, Julia, reside in Dallas, Pa.

“I believe that giving to the Annual Appeal is an extension of the other volunteer work I do in my parish to share all that God has given to me,” Paula said.

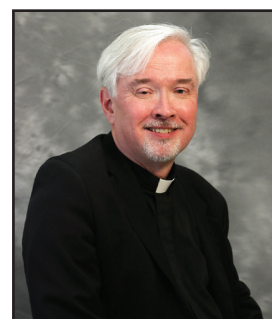
“Following in the footsteps of my grandparents and parents, I believe if you give, you will receive,” Joe added. “I always felt that I was very lucky and fortunate to benefit from all that I have been given.”

Joe has worked in his family’s contracting business, Panzitta Enterprises, Inc., his entire life and Paula works in the office. They have two sons. Matthew and his

Bishop Bambera names lay and clergy chairs on behalf of Lycoming and Tioga counties

Father Glenn McCreary, pastor of Resurrection Parish, Muncy, and Susan and Jim Dinsmore, parishioners at Saint Lawrence Parish, South Williamsport, are serving as this year’s Diocesan Annual Appeal regional chairs for Lycoming and Tioga counties.

Father McCreary was raised in Montoursville and grew up as a member of Saint Boniface Parish, Williamsport. He has served as pastor of Resurrection Parish for 19 years and was previously a parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception Parish, Scranton.



Rev. Glenn McCreary

“I find attractive the sense that when I give to the Diocesan Annual Appeal I’m participating in the mission of the whole Church. We can certainly support our local food pantries and homeless shelters. In the parish, our support responds to the needs of those who come to us looking for food, for rent, for fuel assistance,” Father McCreary said. “But, the Appeal invites us to a larger vision. We can feed the hungry throughout the eleven counties of our Diocese. We can support parish ministries in communities far and wide.”

Father McCreary continued, “We’re helping men on the entire spectrum of priestly ministry – from discernment, through seminary formation, through those first assignments, into mature

ministry and retirement. I’m tremendously grateful for my seminary preparation – and grateful for the people and the parishes that made it possible for me to experience that rich growth in faith and commitment.”

The Dinsmores are active in their parish. Jim is a Eucharistic Minister and Finance Council member and Susan helps count the collection and cooks at pancake breakfasts. They have been married for 27 years and have two sons in college, Ian and Joseph.



Jim & Susan Dinsmore

Jim is a wealth manager and certified financial planner with Evergreen Wealth Solutions, Williamsport. Susan is education director for Lycoming Nursery School, Williamsport.

In sharing their thoughts about support of the Appeal, Susan said, “When we give, we support our parish food pantries, social justice missions, Catholic education, and priest retirement, to name a few of the critical needs in our Diocese. Our contributions not only bring many blessings to others, we are blessed by our ability to give to them.”

“We know this year has been filled with many challenges emotionally, physically, and financially,” Jim added. “That is why any donation amount is gratefully accepted by the Diocese.”

Multiple Diocese of Scranton organizations received grants for important programs thanks to the generosity of several local and national charitable foundations. Among the most recent awards were:

- **The Robert H. Spitz Foundation, administered by the Scranton Area Community Foundation,** supported Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton with a \$20,000 grant for a project titled “Reviving a Core Model for Self-Sufficiency: A Return To Evidence-Based Relief Assistance.”

The grant is helping Catholic Social Services provide relief assistance in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties in a manner that has measurable impact on recipients’ lives. Clients who receive relief assistance, for example, are tracked in their progress toward achieving individualized goals, such as maintaining stable housing, obtaining or retaining employment or repairing family finances through better credit management.

Relief assistance, especially via case management, has always been a hallmark of Catholic Social Services’ work.

- **AllOne Charities** supported Holy Cross High School with a \$22,000 grant to form a pilot partnership with the NEPA Center for Independent Living to ensure that special-needs students get the best hands-on educational experience possible.

“AllOne Charities is pleased to serve as a partner in the innovative and collaborative work between Holy Cross High School and the NEPA Center for Independent Living,” John Cosgrove, executive director of AllOne Foundation & Charities, said. “There is so much



Shown at the AllOne Charities check presentation to Catholic schools, from left: Kristen Donohue, Superintendent of Catholic Schools; Jason Morrison, Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Chief Executive Officer; John Cosgrove, Executive Director, AllOne Foundation & Charities; Bishop Joseph C. Bambera and Sandra Snyder, Diocesan Grant Writer.

more we can achieve together in improving the access to quality programming for our friends and neighbors with special needs.”

Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education Jason Morrison recognized AllOne Charities’ commitment for enhancing access to special-needs programs for Catholic school students.

“We are grateful to AllOne Charities for the generous support of our students with exceptionalities,” he said. “This gift achieves our goal of ensuring that all students achieve their God-given potential and are prepared for life beyond the classroom.”

- **AllOne Charities** also supported the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center’s Respite Care Program, which offers a much-needed break to caregivers for children ages 5-13 who are actively receiving mental-health services.

The program, run in partnership with Luzerne County Mental

Health & Developmental Services and its System of Care, has seen greatly increasing client numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves newfound caregivers and the children for whom they are responsible. These caregivers lack child-care resources or natural supports to help them in their new roles.

“Wilkes-Barre CYC is on the front lines of providing excellent, compassionate and quality care for those with special needs and for those who care for them,” Cosgrove said. “AllOne Charities is pleased to support their invaluable work.”

- **The Margaret Briggs Foundation** supported Catholic Social Services’ Food Pantry in Carbondale with a \$10,000 grant to continue providing food amid rapidly increasing demand during the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the Carbondale pantry saw a record 1,154 households served, representing



Shown at the AllOne Charities check presentation to the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center, from left: Ryan Smith, CYC Program Officer; John Cosgrove, Executive Director, AllOne Foundation & Charities; Bishop Joseph C. Bambera and Jim Bebla, Diocesan Secretary for Development. (Photos/Dan Gallagher)

a 106 percent month-over-month increase and an unprecedented turn of events that has continued late into fall.

- **The Pulte Family Charitable Foundation,** headquartered in Boca Raton, Fla., also supported Catholic Social Services’ Carbondale Food Pantry with a \$15,000 grant. This was the first grant Catholic Social Services has received from the Pulte Foundation.

- **The Luzerne Foundation, in conjunction with the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation,** awarded \$5,870 to the Catholic Youth Center to take the initial steps toward creating a new meal kit and recipe program for Wyoming Valley families living in poverty. The program is on track to launch early in 2021.

- **The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation** also awarded a \$25,000 discretionary grant to support Catholic Social

Services’ COVID relief efforts.

- **The Luzerne County COVID relief grant program,** made possible by the CARES Act, awarded the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center \$11,845 and Catholic Social Services \$8,730 to support COVID relief efforts.

- Finally, the **Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Office for Safe Schools’ Targeted Grants Program** awarded a total of \$471,671 to Diocesan Catholic elementary and secondary schools to upgrade security systems.

“The Diocese of Scranton is incredibly appreciative of the work all of these supporters do locally, in our country and in our world,” Jim Bebla, Diocesan Secretary of Development, said. “Their grantmaking makes a notable impact on all who are served by our various nonprofit entities, and we thank them for their partnership, especially during these turbulent times.”

Hawley parish involves youth in Advent-inspired ‘Works of Mercy’ project

HAWLEY – “This is it. This is where the Holy Spirit is leading us.”

It was an instant and unanimously-felt proclamation from Mary Kennedy, director of Faith Formation at Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace in Hawley, that resonated with the parish’s Youth Minister, Ivet Bandirma.

They were in the midst of one of the courses for their Faith Formation Certification through the Diocese of Scranton, when it had hit them both like the proverbial “ton of bricks,” as described by Bandirma.

“The journey with our youth is so incredibly essential to their formation – especially in today’s

context – and it just makes perfect sense that our work to lead our kids should be through Jesus’ Works of Mercy,” Kennedy said.

The pair had been grappling with transitioning faith formation classes to a synchronous virtual environment during the challenges brought about by the year 2020, while keeping young people connected to their youth group work and getting families on board to gain momentum.

“We had a strong youth group, but with having to go virtual – the time and physical distance from our youth since April of this year – plus the fact that our strongest youth

have graduated and moved onto their first year of college,” Bandirma explained, “there have just been so many obstacles to faith formation that we never really anticipated before. So, this has forced us to rethink how to encourage lifelong faith formation and support our youth and their local families on their journey.”

Thus, the idea of centering their work squarely on The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy was born.

The plan is simple: focus on one Corporal or Spiritual Work of Mercy each month for the youth group as part of the general underpinning of all faith formation classes. The

goal is to align youth and families around one work each month, and offer discussions, opportunities for panels, and other activities, in addition to engaging in one specific Mercy Project for the month.

Though still in the planning phase for 2021, the team kicked off the Advent Season with “Stockings for Advent,” sponsored through the parish’s rectory.

“We want to make the Season of Advent a preparation for the Person of Jesus, which is a theme resonating with many parishes this year. We know our kids want to get out there and live their faith, so we are looking for ways to help

them engage meaningfully, while still keeping their safety in mind during these tough times,” Kennedy remarked.

Father Richard Beck, pastor of Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace Parish, has been an eager supporter of these activities, as the Works of Mercy ought to be the focus of everyone in today’s time.

“In our many conversations with Father, we’ve really understood that if we are not living our faith by our actions and inactions, we are not living in the way Jesus expects of us,” Kennedy said. “All too often, we can get sucked in by the different

Continued on Page 22

Diocese of Scranton
CATHOLIC
 SCHOOL SYSTEM
 FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

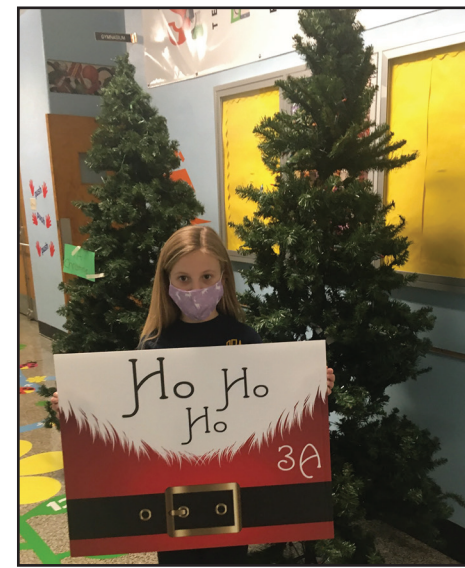
The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others.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



Gabriella Ives, a second grade student at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**, uses her Chromebook for coding.



Saint John Neumann High School in Williamsport



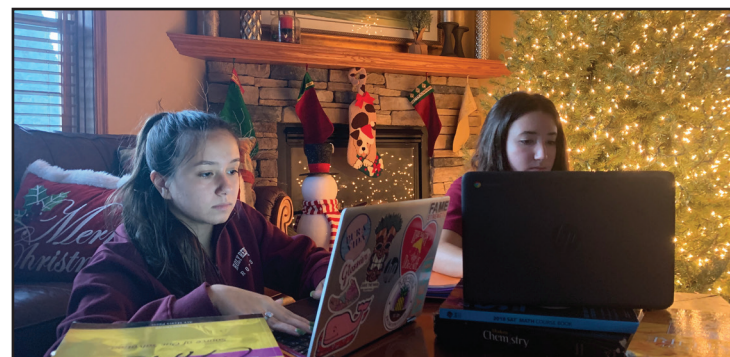
Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston



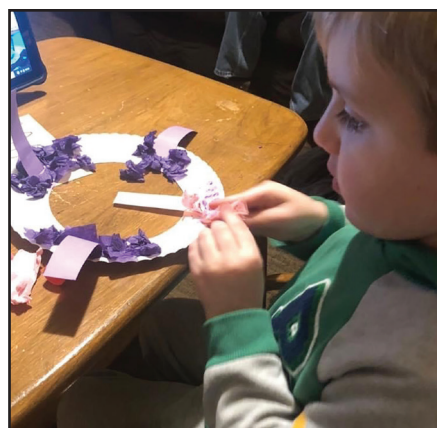
Holy Cross High School in Dunmore



The Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools presented the first Virtual Fall Forensics Tournament so students could still compete, albeit virtually. Sixth grader Robert Stanchak and eighth grader Abigail Butler, students at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter**, show their first place ribbons and certificates.



Aimee and Kendall Makowski, students at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre**, engage in synchronous learning via Google Meet. During distance learning, HRHS students receive live, remote instruction and participate in classroom discussions.



All Saints Academy in Scranton



Saint Agnes School in Towanda



Even while they are distance learning, the first grade class at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** prays together virtually.



Students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** collected 1,530 pairs of socks which will be distributed to local clients of Meals on Wheels.



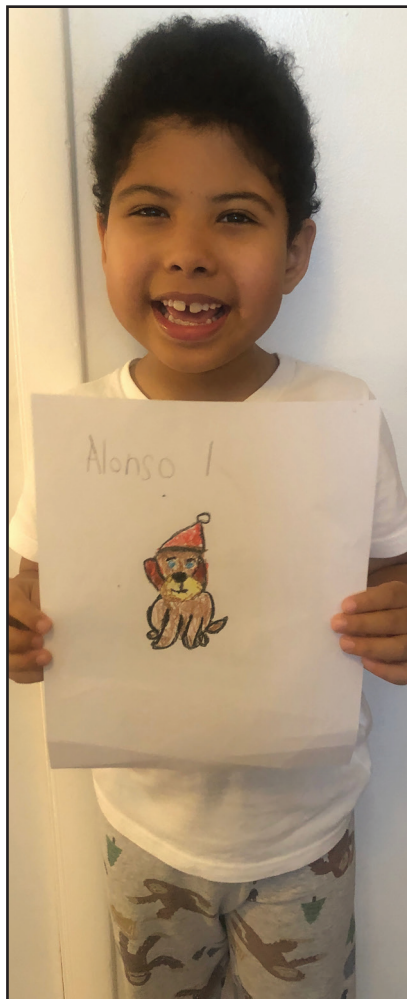
Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg



Mrs. Harbach, kindergarten teacher at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport**, read the book “The Giving Manger” by Allison Hottinger to her students. She challenged them to do an act of kindness each day of Advent. Each time they perform an act of kindness, they place a piece of straw in the manger to make a soft place for Baby Jesus.



Fourth grader C.J. Stevenson, a student at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea**, created an Advent wreath in one of his distance learning classes.



Alonso, a first grade student at **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**, is excited to share his drawing that answers the riddle “Who brings presents to dogs at Christmas?” as part of a class art project that is combined with a reading assignment. (Answer: Santa Paws)



Fifth and sixth graders at **Epiphany School in Sayre** completed “The Hour of Code” in celebration of Computer Science Week. They learned about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and used a machine learning site called Teachable Machine to teach a computer to recognize letters in American Sign Language.



Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg



Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20, 2020



FIRST READING

2 SM 7:1-5, 8B12, 14A, 16

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!”

Nathan answered the king, “Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you.”

But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: “Go, tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?’”

“‘It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.’”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Response: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.



The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) - Vigil Mass



FIRST READING

IS 62:1-5

For Zion’s sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch.

Nations shall behold your vindication, and all the kings your glory; you shall be called by a new name pronounced by the mouth of the LORD.

You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD, a royal diadem held by your God. No more shall people call you “Forsaken,” or your land “Desolate,” but you shall be called “My Delight,” and your land “Espoused.”

For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

Response: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

SECOND READING

ACTS 13:16-17, 22-25

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia and entered the synagogue, he stood up, motioned with his hand, and said, “Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-fearing, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out of it. Then he removed Saul and raised up David as king; of him he testified, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish.’

From this man’s descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.’”

SECOND READING

ROM 16:25-27

Brothers and sisters: To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

GOSPEL READING

LK 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?”

And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

GOSPEL READING

MT 1:1-25 or MT 1:18-25

[The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile. After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.]

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.



The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) - Mass During the Day



FIRST READING

IS 52:7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, “Your God is King!”

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy, for they see directly, before their eyes, the LORD restoring Zion. Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6

Response: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

SECOND READING

HEB 1:1-6

Brothers and sisters: In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.



The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, December 27, 2020



FIRST READING

SIR 3:2-6, 12-14

God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother’s authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard. Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.

My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins - a house raised in justice to you.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Response: Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

SECOND READING

COL 3:12-21

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

GOSPEL READING

LK 2:22-40

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, *Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord*, and to offer the

For to which of the angels did God ever say: *You are my son; this day I have begotten you?* Or again: *I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me?* And again, when he leads the firstborn into the world, he says: *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

GOSPEL READING

JN 1:1-18 or JN 1:1-5, 9-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.] The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.

[John testified to him and cried out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’” From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him.]

sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, He took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: “Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted - and you yourself a sword will pierce - so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.



“May the Holy Family be a model for our families, so that parents and children may support each other mutually in adherence to the Gospel, the basis of the holiness of the family.”

-Pope Francis, December 29, 2019



Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1, 2021

FIRST READING

NM 6:22-27

The LORD said to Moses: “Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: This is how you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace! So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Response: May God bless us in his mercy.

SECOND READING

GAL 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters: When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive

adoption as sons. As proof that you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.

GOSPEL READING

LK 2:16-21

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.



The Epiphany of the Lord, January 3, 2021

FIRST READING

IS 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Response: Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

SECOND READING

EPH 3:2-3a, 5-6

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.

It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his

holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

GOSPEL READING

MT 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.”

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.”

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.



The Baptism of the Lord, January 10, 2021

FIRST READING

IS 42:1-4, 6-7

Thus says the LORD: Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching.

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Response: The Lord will bless his people with peace.

SECOND READING

ACTS 10:34-38

Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, saying: “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word that he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

GOSPEL READING

MK 1:7-11

This is what John the Baptist proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Pope proclaims year dedicated to St. Joseph

Marking the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal church, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, "Patris Corde" ("With a father's heart"), the pope said Christians can discover in St. Joseph, who often goes unnoticed, "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all," he said. As Mary's husband and guardian of the son of God, St. Joseph turned "his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home."

Despite being troubled at first by Mary's pregnancy, he added, St. Joseph was obedient to God's will "regardless of the hardship involved."

The Diocese of Scranton is currently in the midst of celebrating a Year of St. Joseph as well.

Pope plans to visit Iraq in March

Barring any obstacles caused by the global pandemic, Pope Francis is set to begin international travel again in 2021 by visiting Iraq in March, which would make him the first pope to visit this nation.

"Pope Francis, accepting the invitation of the Republic of Iraq and of the local Catholic Church," will visit Iraq March 5-8, said Matteo Bruni, head of the Vatican press office. "He will visit Baghdad, the plain of Ur, linked to the memory of Abraham, the city of Irbil, as well as Mosul and Qaraqosh in the plain of Ninevah," Bruni wrote Dec. 7.

Details about the trip "will be made known in due course and will take into consideration the evolution of the worldwide health emergency," he added. It would be the pope's first international trip since his journey to Thailand and Japan in November 2019.

Pandemic will keep many pro-life groups from attending January's March for Life

While the annual March for Life in Washington is still scheduled for Jan. 29, the cross-country bus pilgrimages that have been at the heart of the event for decades are being decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Local events are being announced in lieu of the pilgrimages.

Among the cancellations announced so far are pilgrimages sponsored by the Diocese of Buffalo, New York, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Each of them typically brings 200 or more marchers for visits of at least three days, reserving large blocks of hotel rooms.

"We did not come by this decision lightly," the Buffalo Diocese said in a statement. "With the uncertain and ever-changing regulations due to COVID-19, bus capacity restrictions and traveling through other states, all to converge with other states around the country, we have decided it is in the best interest of all involved to make their own personal decisions and arrangements."

The faithful are encouraged to learn more about one Saint each week:

December 23: Saint John of Kanty
December 29: Saint Thomas Becket
January 5: Saint John Neumann
January 12: Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

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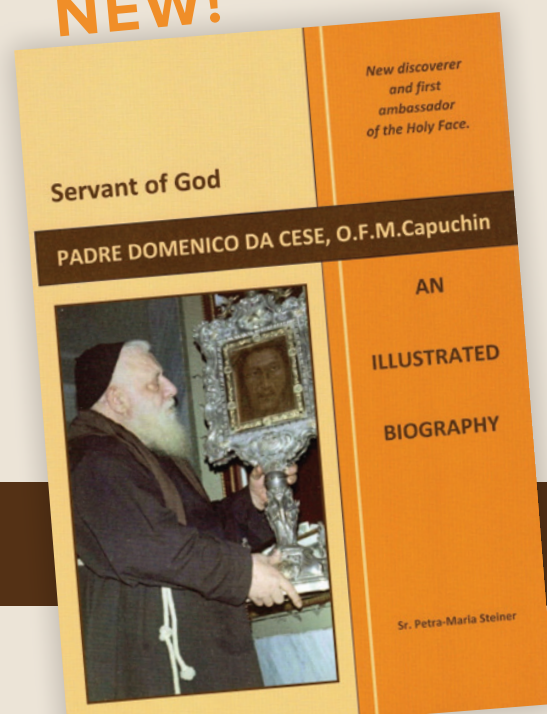
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Mission Message

Go Forth

By Father Brian J.T. Clarke
Diocesan Director,
Pontifical Mission Societies



You have surely heard the saying when one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. That consoling phrase comes from Saint Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians where he wrote: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." (1 Cor 12:26).

Since the early part of this year, we have carried each other's sufferings with great love and care and we have shined in this dark time of worry and fear. Even as the hope of vaccine distribution for COVID-19 is on the horizon, many are still burdened.

Over the course of my directorship of the Pontifical Mission Societies, I have challenged myself and others to be more aware of those who suffer in silence, or those poor and troubled men, women, and children throughout the world whose sufferings are unseen and unknown to most. That being said, it seems to me that in order to see the suffering of a brother or sister

in the developing world, we need to be attentive and wide-eyed to the issues affecting those living in our midst.

The missionary call that each of us has been given can be summed up in the corporal works of mercy, namely, to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; to ransom the captive; to bury the dead.

Each year, during Lent, I encourage my parishioners to spend the penitential season focusing on one of these disciplines and actively practice works of mercy. I find for myself — and others who have done this — that this focus really deepens my awareness of how we all have need for mercy and that one doesn't need to look too far to find someone in need.

As we continue to endure together as the body of Christ the heavy burden of this pandemic, may we seek daily to help lift the weight of those particularly burdened. Certainly, we think of those who are poor, ill and possibly alone.

As I mentioned earlier, those whose loads are heavy are not always front and center; the burdens of some are not as obvious as others. In these moments, I think of small business owners who serve our community with

great love and care. Restaurants and gyms are once again closed, causing unimaginable financial burdens for proprietors and their faithful staff. What can you do, what can I do to help alleviate the burdens of these men and women and their families?

Our young people have carried themselves heroically throughout these many months. Their lives have been turned upside down, with sports and other activities that help to drive their spirit and give them much needed outlets eliminated or paused. What can we do to ensure their spiritual and emotional well-being?

Above all, what alleviation can we bring to frontline workers who face the virus every day and are overburdened with heavy workloads, long hours, and navigating the seemingly endless tunnel of this virus? What can we do to lift them up?

Let's join together in the spirit of Saint Paul and his hope that we will band together as one. Choose one of these burdened brothers and sisters and reach out to them. Lift them up, give them hope, let them know they are not alone.

Let them know that Christ did not just come at Christmas 2000 years ago, but comes to us still. Let them encounter the Lord who lives in you and help them see that He lives in them, too.



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Apostleship of Prayer

Papal Intention for January 2021

Human Fraternity —

May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

12 Days of Christmas Cash Raffle — DEC. 25-JAN. 5, sponsored by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Buttonwood

section of Hanover Township; cash prizes will be drawn daily on the parish's Facebook page. Raffle tickets cost \$20 each and

are eligible for \$10,000 grand prize. For ticket orders or more information, call (570) 706-6951 or visit: www.exhc.org.

Charismatic Advent Prayer Meeting Dec. 19

SCRANTON — As they continue their mission to accompany Catholics in building a culture of Pentecost to support the New Evangelization, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Scranton is offering an Advent Prayer Meeting on Saturday, Dec. 19.

The in-person and livestream gathering will be hosted from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. by Queen of the Apostles Parish at Saint Mary Church, 715 Hawthorne St., Avoca.

The theme for the Advent prayer event is taken from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks."

According to Charismatic Renewal organizers, the prayer offering in anticipation of the last

week of Advent is an opportunity to lift hearts and voices to Jesus in preparation for Christmas through songs, praise, and spiritual gifts.

The program will also include a teaching by Father Phil Sladicka, host pastor of Queen of the Apostles, and an exhortation by Bob Valiante.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in-person attendance is limited to 65 people, as guidelines mandating facial coverings and physical distancing will be observed.

For registration information, contact the CCR office at (570) 344-2214 or by email: ccrenewal@comcast.net.

Livestream viewing will be available on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CCRScrantonDiocese>; or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ccrsanton>.

Virtual Grief Support Group Offering

Please consider joining the virtual grief support group offered by Cathedral of Saint Peter Parish in Scranton. Anyone is welcome; you do not have to be a member of the parish to participate. The group will convene online, Wednesday evenings 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The dates of the virtual meetings will be January 6, 13, 20 and 27. For more information please contact Deacon Ed Shoener at (570) 814-5133 or at (570) 344-7231.

Sacred Heart Men's Chapter marks 40th anniversary



The Wyoming Valley Chapter of Men of the Sacred Heart (MSH) recently gathered at Saint André Bessette Parish in Wilkes-Barre to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the group's founding with Holy Mass, recitation of the Rosary, and Holy Hour devotion. The Men of the Sacred Heart apostolate was established decades ago to foster adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus through singular devotions and home enthronements to the Sacred Heart. The Wyoming Valley MSH gathers on the first Friday of every month for 6:30 p.m. Mass and devotions at the Wilkes-Barre parish worship site of Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church, 672 North Main St. All faithful are welcome. Sacred Heart Men who attended the milestone anniversary commemoration are, pictured from left: Brian Clark; Alex Partika; David Alusick; Father Ken Seegar, host pastor; Bill Figler; Paul Young; J. Chris Lanczak and Christopher Calore. Chapter members also include Richard Sherrick, John Michael Sherrick and Millard Gallat.

Take-Out Spaghetti Dinner — JAN. 9, sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 356 in Great Bend; held from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Knights' Hall, 65 Kilrow St., Great Bend. Cost: adults, \$8; children, \$4. To reserve advanced orders, call (570) 879-4875. Walk-ins are welcome. Dinner held on the second Saturday of the month, September thru May.

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'Works of Mercy' project offered in Hawley

Continued from Page 13

narratives that are being pushed on social media and by the media, so we need to counter that with a Christ-centered approach to life. We often discuss the topics of the day, and in the end our position is the same: we serve the Lord, and whatever we do should be in service of spreading His Divine Love."

Indeed, during these current times, "love" appears to be a rare commodity given the world around us.

"If we delve deep inside ourselves, however," Bandirma explained, "and commune with Jesus in prayer like offering the Holy Rosary through our Beloved Blessed Mother's intercession, our outward experience and steps in faith become more informed and deliberate to moving His Love in the directions and spaces in which we are called to intervene."

She further noted, "This is a conscious choice that we have to make, realizing that our actions are going to be judged and that we, ourselves, are not called to judge, but rather to *Love*."

"Our focus with our youth and their families is possibly the most vital space where we can promote

that Love, by helping them build the foundation with a lifelong Love for Jesus and for His works. To quote the line from the old movie 'Field of Dreams,' we keep telling ourselves, 'if we build it, they will come.'"

That being said, the hope is to create a vibrant, warm and inviting faith community of youth and their parents, coming together for the specific purpose of walking in the steps of Christ.

Prayer Requests for Priests

The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule for the upcoming weeks is as follows:

December 17, Father Brian J.T. Clarke; December 18, Father Brian J.W. Clarke; December 19, Father Charles Connor; December 20, Father William Corcoran; December 21, Father David Cramer; December 22, Father Charles Cummings; December 23, Father Wilfredo Cusicanqui; December 24, Father Richard Czachor, V.E.; December 25, Father Vincent Dang; December 26, Monsignor Michael Delaney; December 27, Sulpician Father Daniel Doherty; December 28, Father John Doris; December 29, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus John M. Dougherty; December 30, Father Michael Drevitch; December 31, Passionist Father Brice Edwards; January 1, Pope Francis; January 2, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; January 3, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; January 4, Father Cyril Edwards, V.E.; January 5, Father Joseph Elston; January 6, Monsignor John Esseff; January 7, Father Joseph Evanko; January 8, Monsignor William Feldcamp; January 9, Father Neftali Feliz-Sena; January 10, Father Samuel Ferretti; January 11, Father Michael Finn; January 12, Father Richard Fox; January 13, Father Martin Gaiardo; January 14, Father J. Duane Gavitt; January 15, Father Anthony Generose; January 16, Father Richard Ghezzi; January 17, Father Ryan Glenn; January 18, Holy Cross Father Anthony Grasso; January 19, Father Joseph Greskiewicz.



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The Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry is a ministry formation program designed to equip and advance the servant leadership capacities of individuals serving their parish in areas such as:

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➤ Directors of Religious Education and Catechists
➤ Liturgical Coordinators
➤ Parish Staff
➤ Volunteer Ministry teams
➤ and others!

Through independent online study with the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) — in English or Spanish language tracks — as well as ministry skills workshops and opportunities for prayer and reflection, Diocesan Certificate candidates enrich their knowledge base, while also learning practical tools for effective parish ministry in their faith communities.

The Office for Parish Life anticipates welcoming new candidates into the Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry program in the new year.

Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact Kitty Scanlan, Coordinator for Lay Ministry Formation, at (570) 207-2213, or by email at Kitty-Scanlan@dioceseofscranton.org for application information, materials, and application submissions.

Blue Army Reparation Vigil

The next monthly First Friday Reparation Vigil, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary and sponsored by the Blue Army, will be held January 1, 2021, at Saint Joseph's Oblate Seminary, 1880 Highway 315, Laflin (Pittston).
Devotions begin Friday evening at 8 p.m. with recitation of the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, during which time confessions are heard. Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated at 8:55 p.m., followed by benediction, litany and consecration to the Sacred Heart.
The vigil continues with the crowning of the Blue Army Pilgrim Virgin Statue, the Blue Army Pledge, Fatima prayers and Marian hymns, followed by litany and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The vigil concludes with scapular enrollment at 10:15 p.m.



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IHM Sisters continue series of virtual prayer evenings

SCRANTON — The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters will continue their monthly “Evenings of Prayer with the Sisters of IHM” on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021.

Due to the ongoing

coronavirus pandemic, the Evenings of Prayer are offered on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. via videostreaming. Participants may access the devotions at: <https://video.ibm.com/channel/ihm-tv>.

The Jan. 13 Evening of Prayer will be offered as an “Interculturality Prayer” service.

For more information, contact the IHM Sisters in Scranton at (570) 346-5404 or communications@sistersofihm.org.

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*Christ bringing
HOPE to a
despairing world.*

*Christ bringing
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to a sinful world.*

*Christ bringing
NEW LIFE
to those who will
receive him.*

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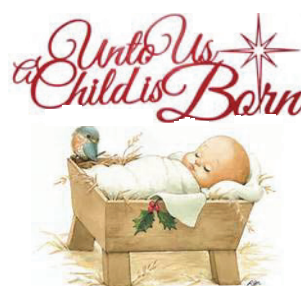
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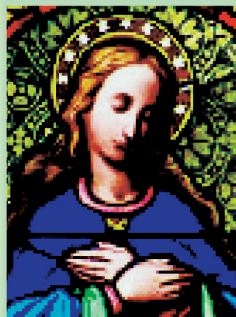


*May the blessings of the
Christ Child
be upon you during this
holy season.*

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Indian American Association of Northeast PA supports Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen



On Friday, Dec. 4, 2020, representatives from IAA NEPA (Indian American Association of Northeast PA) donated \$500 in support of the work and mission of Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre. Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen provides hot, nutritious meals to members of the community on a daily basis from 39 East Jackson Street, Wilkes-Barre. IAA NEPA made a separate \$500 donation to Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton the same day.

Shown, from left: Munireh Sayed; Alley Sayed; Leana Pande, IAA NEPA Youth Leader; Charmaine Johnson; Mona Pande, IAA NEPA President and Mike Cianciotta, Director, Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen.



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