

Diocese of Scranton *News Briefing*



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DIOCESE OF SCRANTON ANNOUNCES TEMPORARY CHANGES DUE TO CORONAVIRUS AND FLU SEASON



A woman wearing a mask for protection from the coronavirus watches as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican March 1, 2020. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

As public health officials in Pennsylvania and beyond continue to track the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and widespread flu activity, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera of the Diocese of Scranton is announcing new precautions for the celebration of Mass in the 11 counties of the Diocese of Scranton.

Effective immediately, Bishop Bambera has implemented the following directives:

- The distribution of the Precious Blood via the Chalice is temporarily suspended
- The Sign of Peace will now be exchanged without physical contact

"As of today, it is important to emphasize that there are no confirmed cases of the coronavirus in Pennsylvania, but the situation across the country is changing rapidly," Bishop Bambera said. "The safety and health of our local faith community and all of northeastern and north central Pennsylvania is a priority for me."

At this time, the Diocese is monitoring all information and updates being provided by federal, state and local government officials.

In addition to the temporary changes that are taking effect immediately, Bishop Bambera also issues the following reminders:

- Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion
- Parishioners are also reminded that if they are sick, especially with flu-like symptoms, they should stay home for their own well-being and that of others. If parishioners are sick or suspect they are sick with a contagious illness, they are not bound by the Sunday Mass obligation

In addition to the new directives being implemented today, Bishop Bambera reminds everyone of basic personal hygiene practices which are outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. They include:

- Covering coughs or sneezes with your elbow instead of hands
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes and other frequently touched items

The new precautions will continue as long as deemed necessary by the Bishop. "We will continue to monitor the situation and be ready to make any updates as needed," Bishop Bambera added.

**CALLED BY GOD: RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO
CONTINUING CONVERSION**



At 31 years old, Mylie King of Williamsport admits that she heard God's call to join the Roman Catholic Church for years but was initially ashamed.

"It took me a while to get the courage to do it because I was actually ashamed that I was never baptized as a child. Through the years, I've gained the strength to be able to go through the process but He's always been in my heart," King said.

King was one of 168 people who made their final declaration of intent to join the Church here in the Diocese of Scranton at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, held on March 1, 2020, the First Sunday of Lent, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

"I talked to a gentleman from my parish (Saint Joseph the Worker) and he said there was nothing to be ashamed about, saying it wasn't your fault you weren't baptized as a child," King recalled.

She added that many people in her parish community have been encouraging along the way.

"It makes me wish I didn't wait so many years to go through the process because they were all so welcoming and warm," King added.

Like King, those who will be received into the Church through Baptism at the Easter Vigil, called catechumens, have been participants in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) for many months.

At the Rite of Election, the Church ratifies their readiness for the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) and after inscribing their names in the Book of the Elect, the catechumens, now called "the elect," manifest their desire to receive these sacraments before the Bishop.

During the celebration of the Call to Continuing Conversion, which immediately followed the Rite of Election, those already baptized in the Christian faith in another denomination, and now seeking full communion with the Catholic Church - called

candidates - presented themselves to the Bishop and after having their readiness for the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist affirmed by their sponsors, were invited by the Bishop to join the Church during Lent in a spirit of repentance and renewed fidelity to their baptismal covenant, so that they will be prepared for the joyous reception of the holy sacraments.

Read more about the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion and hear from others that will be joining the Church during Easter Vigil Masses in the March 12, 2020 edition of The Catholic Light.

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON WELCOMES NEW SEMINARIAN



Thomas (Tom) Dzwonczyk was accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Scranton and will begin the Program for Priestly Formation in the fall of 2020.

He is a graduate of Holy Cross High School in Dunmore and is currently a senior at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts. While at Holy Cross High School, he was a member of the 'God Squad' lunch discernment group. He is a member of Saint John Vianney Parish in Montdale.

Congratulations Tom!

Let us pray for him, all of our seminarians and those who are discerning a call to

Diocesan Priesthood.

Pictured, left to right, Monsignor David Bohr, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation; Father Don Williams, Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarians; Tom Dzwonczyk; and Monsignor Thomas Muldowney, Vicar General of the Diocese of Scranton.

SIX PARISHES IN LYCOMING COUNTY WORKING TOGETHER ON PROGRAM



Six parishes in Lycoming County are joining forces for a special event during Lent and people from north central and northeastern Pennsylvania and beyond are invited to attend.

Saint Boniface Catholic Church, 326 Washington Boulevard, Williamsport, will host *Made for More: Visions from the Promised Land* on Tuesday, March 31, 2020.

The event will feature Christopher West, best-selling author, speaker and teacher, along with folk/Americana musician Mike Mangione.

"Where do we come from and where are we going? If we don't have compelling answers to these questions, we have no orientation in our lives," West said.

West is known around the world for his teaching of Saint John Paul II's "Theology of the Body." He is co-founder of the Theology of the Body Institute. Written by the late Pope John Paul II, the Theology of the Body offers an in-depth biblical exploration of the meaning of our creation as male and female in the divine image.

"We're taking people on a journey through some particular words of Christ. We start with: 'They look but do not see.' So we've been trained to look at the world, but not see it; to look at the human body, for instance, but not see it. All of creation has a message, and Jesus says, 'Come and become one who sees.' He's in the business of giving sight to the blind," West added.

Makenzie Conner, director of youth ministry for Saint Joseph the Worker Parish, says the program will include live music, videos, images and the spoken word.

"It will give you a greater understanding of what we are celebrating as Easter people and what we're looking for in the resurrection of Christ," Conner said about the timing of the program, which will be right before Holy Week.

Organizers are hoping for several hundred people to attend.

"My hope and goal personally for this event is that people attend, are open minded about it, gain something from it and then use that later in their everyday life or parish life," Conner added.

The evening is being hosted by Saint Joseph the Worker Parish in Williamsport and co-hosted by Saint Ann, Saint Boniface/Saint Lawrence and Immaculate Conception/Saint Luke parishes in Williamsport; The Church of the Resurrection Parish in Muncy; and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Montoursville.

"Every pastor is fully committed and fully involved in the process of bringing Christopher West and Mike Mangione and the *Made for More* project here to Williamsport," Conner said. "We wanted to be able to bring an experience, not just a speaker or workshop, but an actual experience!"

The event is open to everyone in the community, not just Catholic parishioners.

Made for More: Visions of the Promised Land is a ticketed event. The cost to attend is \$25 and tickets may be purchased at corproject.com/Williamsport.

Tickets may also be purchased by contacting any of the sponsoring parishes - or by contacting Makenzie Conner at (570) 323-9456 or emailing youthmin@sjwparish.com.

DIOCESE SIGNS ADMISSIONS AGREEMENT WITH KING'S COLLEGE



Formalizing a decades-old relationship, officials from King's College and the Diocese of Scranton have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will guarantee admission and a renewable four-year scholarship to graduates of the Diocese's four Catholic high schools who meet academic eligibility criteria.

Students who meet the criteria will receive a scholarship ranging from \$14,000 to \$22,000 per year, meaning the potential maximum four-year value would be between \$56,000 and \$88,000 to seniors.

"We are most grateful and appreciative for this opportunity for our students," Jason W.S. Morrison, Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education and Chief Executive Officer, said.

Leadership from both King's College and the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System participated in a signing ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020, at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Scranton.

"I was struck by your (King's) vision statement which talked about transforming hearts and minds with zeal and I think when we look at what the area needs and our society needs more than ever, to serve the common good, is transforming hearts and minds with zeal," Morrison said during the event.

Father John Ryan, C.S.C., President of King's College, signed the agreement on behalf of his school.

"It gives us a way to strengthen the relationship among and between our Catholic educational institutions. Our missions are really joined at the hip. We're really forming young women and men to be citizens of two areas: Citizens of Heaven and Citizens of Earth," Father Ryan said.

Under the agreement, King's College will guarantee admission to a vast majority of the College's academic programs and a four-year renewable scholarship to senior students from Holy Cross High School in Dunmore, Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre, Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg, and Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport.

Eligible students must have required minimum standardized test scores and a 2.75 or higher grade point average. Students meeting the GPA requirement have the option of applying to King's as test optional applicants.

Students who meet the criteria will receive a scholarship ranging from \$14,000 and to \$22,000 per year which is renewable each year for up to four years.

The student must maintain an appropriate, pre-determined GPA based on the value of the scholarship in order to renew annually.

Different grade-point-average and standardized test score requirements will apply to students applying for the King's Physician Assistant program and the College's engineering and nursing majors.

The agreement will take effect for students applying for admission starting with the 2020-21 academic year.

For more information on the admissions agreement, visit:

<https://www.dioceseofscranton.org/kings-college-to-grant-admission-and-annual-scholarships-to-students-from-four-high-catholic-schools-in-diocese-of-scranton/>

**HAVE YOU SUPPORTED THE DIOCESAN ANNUAL APPEAL YET?
GIFTS ARE STILL NEEDED!**



The Catholic Light
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

December 31, 2020



Pope to skip Dec. 31, Jan. 1 liturgies due to sciatica, Vatican says

Pope Francis will not preside over the traditional end-of-the-year prayer service nor the New Year's Mass in St. Peter's Basilica due to "painful sciatica," the Vatican said.

In a statement published Dec. 31, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said that instead, Cardinal Giovanni Batista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, will preside over the evening prayer and the singing of the "Te Deum" to thank God for the year that is ending. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, will preside over the Jan. 1 Mass for the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica, he said. However, Bruni confirmed that "Pope Francis will still lead the recitation of the Angelus from the library of the Apostolic Palace, as scheduled" Jan. 1.

The pope has suffered for several years from sciatica which, according to the Mayo Clinic, can cause sharp pain that radiates along the path of the

sciatic nerve, which branches from the lower back through the hips and down each leg. Pope Francis has spoken in the past about the physical pain he suffers due to the condition.

Pope Announces Yearlong Reflection On Family, ‘Amoris Laetitia’



As the fifth anniversary of his apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” approaches, Pope Francis announced that the Catholic Church will dedicate more than a year to focusing on the family and conjugal love.

During his Sunday Angelus address Dec. 27, the pope commemorated the feast of the Holy Family and said that it served as a reminder “of the example of evangelizing with the family” as highlighted in his exhortation.

[Read the Full Story](#)

Christmas Celebrations at the Cathedral



Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated three Christmas Masses at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton between Dec. 24 and Dec. 25, 2020.

In his homily message, the bishop said the heart of Christmas is Jesus, who is born to save us. He explained His life of love and service show us the only way forward amid the challenges we face and the harsh realization that we are ultimately not in control of our lives or world.

The bishop said, "May our prayer, then, be for the wisdom to recognize, to honor and to serve the simple blessings that abound, even in these difficult days: our families and friends, whether they are near or far this day – life, with all of its beauty and flaws – and faith, which reminds us that we have value and worth and are deeply loved by God."

[View a Photo Album from Midnight Mass at the Cathedral](#)



Students brighten the holiday season for nursing home residents

The Saint Faustina Mini/Youth Ministry partnered with the Greater Nanticoke Area Marching Band for Christmas Caroling this holiday season.

The groups visited two local nursing homes, Guardian and Birchwood.

The groups performed outside of the windows to put a smile on everyone's faces during this challenging year.



Catholic Social Services receives grant from Spitz Foundation

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.

[For More Information](#)

[For More Information](#)



Tradition of Epiphany door blessing with chalk can be symbol of hope in 2021

The ancient Christian tradition of marking doorways with blessed chalk on the feast of the Epiphany will carry new meaning for many Catholics in 2021. Following a year that saw families shaken by the coronavirus pandemic, the traditional home blessing will serve as a special symbol of hope and a visible reminder of faith.

The chalk, along with other symbols, can be a strong reminder of how important God is to us and of what an important factor Jesus is in our daily lives. The blessing, popular in Poland and other Slavic countries, has spread to many parts of the world.

It takes place on the liturgical feast marking the visitation of the Magi to the Christ Child and the revelation that Jesus is the son of God. The blessing involves taking simple chalk, usually blessed by a parish priest, and scrawling doorways with symbolic numbers and letters -- this year: "20+C M B 21."

[For More Information & Guide to Do a Chalk Blessing at Home](#)

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- Office for Parish Life
- Faith Formation Grants
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If you'd like more information about the Diocesan Annual Appeal, visit www.AnnualAppeal.org

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For a listing of all Diocesan and parish events, visit: [Calendar](#)

You are also encouraged to visit the Facebook pages of other Diocesan departments. They are listed on our website at: <http://www.dioceseofscranton.org/media/social-media/>

Thank you for connecting with us!

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