

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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*“Embrace the Good News
of Christmas”*

**BISHOP
BAMBERA’S 2022
CHRISTMAS
MESSAGE**



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“In the darkness, a light shines. An angel appears, the glory of the Lord shines around the shepherds and finally the message awaited for centuries is heard: ‘To you is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord’ (Lk 2:11). The angel goes on to say something surprising. He tells the shepherds how to find the God who has come down to earth: ‘This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger’ (Lk 12). That is the sign: a child, a baby lying in the dire poverty of a manger. No more bright lights or choirs of angels. Only a child. Nothing else ... That is where God is, in littleness. Littleness is the path that he chose to draw near to us, to touch our hearts, to save us and to bring us back to what really matters.”

These words of Pope Francis challenge all of us as we journey through these final days of Advent to Christmas to reflect upon God’s way of doing things. From the moment of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem two thousand years ago to our encounters with the Holy today, God has continually entered our lives in littleness and in the most unlikely of ways. It could be in the birth of a helpless, vulnerable child, in the face of a fragile, elderly parent, in the poor wandering our streets, in immigrants seeking a better life



Mary and the Christ Child with angels are depicted in a painting titled “Holy Night” by Carlo Maratti. (CNS/Bridgeman Images)

for themselves and their families, and in simple gifts of bread and wine transformed into the living presence of God.

Sadly, however, we too often look in the wrong places for meaning and purpose in our lives. We pursue worldly success, material possessions, comfort, convenience or power and we miss the heart of where God’s promise of salvation and peace is found. Left to our own devices, we self-righteously express contempt for those who are different from ourselves. We sow seeds of division in an effort to advance our own agendas. And then we wonder why our world is so unsettled –

why our hearts are uneasy – our families are broken – our communities are unsafe – and far too many of our brothers and sisters suffering because of war and greed in Ukraine, areas of the Middle-East, Africa, and other parts of the globe.

Yet, in a world that has been turned upside down, we are once again given the opportunity to embrace the Good News of Christmas, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

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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.

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Tuesday, December 20, 2022

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. An encore presentation of the 2021 production from St. Faustina Kowalska Roman Catholic Church in Nanticoke. This presentation consists of dozens of cast members and many volunteers who help with the production.

Encores: Tuesday, Dec. 20 at 8 p.m.; Friday, Dec. 21 at 11 a.m.; Tuesday, Dec. 27 at 8 p.m.; and Wednesday, Dec. 28 at 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 24, 2022

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

Live from St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Pope Francis presides over Midnight Mass on the Solemnity of the Birth of Our Lord.

Encore: Sunday, Dec. 25 at 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.

Carols by Candlelight from Knock Shrine, 5:30 p.m.

Experience the sights and sounds of Christmas from the Marian Shrine in Knock, Ireland. This beautiful concert of Christmas carols, sung by candlelight, will lift your spirits and bring joy to this wonderful season.

In Concert - Johann Sebastian Bach: Christmas Cantatas, 8:00 p.m.

Recorded at the Church of Saint Roch in Paris, France, experience Bach's Christmas Cantatas as performed by the Collegium Vocale Gent.

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

The harmonious blending of voices raised in worship for Christmas, live from the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

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.

Sunday, December 25, 2022

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: Sunday, Dec. 25 at 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 Alabama.

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

Celebrate the Solemn Mass of Christmas Day live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

Encore: Saturday, December 25, 5:00 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.

Bishop Bambera's Christmas Message

Continued from Page 1

Through the Incarnation, God has immersed himself in our human condition – not because of our righteousness – but because of his grace and mercy. This fundamental belief in the limitless love of God, given human shape and form in Jesus' birth, confronts the brokenness of our lives with hope. It beckons us to move beyond the division and fear that have engulfed our world, our Church and our lives to recognize an essential reality: we are all far more similar than we are different. As such, we are all brothers and sisters who, on our own, are powerless to save ourselves. We are all in need of the heart of Christmas and the power and presence of Jesus – born to save us, to give us life and to enfold us in his peace.

Brothers and sisters, having been assured of his presence in the littleness of human existence, we know where to encounter the living God and so experience his gifts of acceptance, forgiveness and mercy. Recall Jesus' words, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

During these days that so often challenge our peace, may we pray for the wisdom and humility to open our lives to this great mystery of faith that we celebrate through the Incarnation of Christ. May we welcome and serve him generously and so discover the true and lasting reason for our hope!

With gratitude for the privilege of serving as your Bishop and with prayers for a holy and blessed Christmas for you, your family and all you hold dear, I am,

Faithfully yours in Christ,

† *Joseph C. Bambera*

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



The Nativity scene and Christmas tree decorate St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 5, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

"Abraza la Buena Nueva de la Navidad"

Mensaje de Navidad 2022 del obispo Bambera

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

"En la oscuridad, una luz brilla. Aparece un ángel, la gloria del Señor resplandece en torno a los pastores y finalmente se escucha el mensaje esperado desde hace siglos: 'Os ha nacido hoy un Salvador, que es Cristo el Señor' (Lc 2,11). El ángel continúa diciendo algo sorprendente. Les dice a los pastores cómo encontrar al Dios que ha bajado a la tierra: 'Esto os servirá de señal: encontraréis a un niño envuelto en pañales y acostado en un pesebre' (Lc 12). Esa es la señal: un niño, un bebé acostado en la pobreza extrema de un pesebre. No más luces brillantes ni coros de ángeles. Sólo un niño. Nada más... Ahí es donde está Dios, en la pequeñez. La pequeñez es el camino que él eligió para acercarse a nosotros, tocar nuestros corazones, salvarnos y llevarnos de vuelta a lo que realmente importa".

Estas palabras del Papa Francisco nos desafían a todos mientras viajamos a través de estos últimos días de Adviento a Navidad para reflexionar sobre la forma en que Dios hace las cosas. Desde el momento del nacimiento de Jesús en Belén hace dos mil años hasta nuestros encuentros con el Santo hoy, Dios ha entrado continuamente en nuestras vidas en la pequeñez y de las maneras más inverosímiles. Puede ser en el nacimiento de un niño indefenso y vulnerable, en el rostro de un padre frágil y anciano, en los pobres que deambulan por nuestras calles, en inmigrantes que buscan una vida mejor para ellos y sus familias, y en simples regalos de pan y vino, transformado en la presencia viva de Dios.

Lamentablemente, sin embargo, con demasiada frecuencia buscamos en los lugares equivocados el significado y el propósito de nuestras vidas. Perseguimos el éxito mundano, las posesiones materiales, la comodidad, la conveniencia o el poder y nos perdemos el corazón de donde se encuentra la promesa de salvación y paz de Dios. Abandonados a nuestros propios recursos, expresamos con superioridad moral nuestro desprecio por aquellos que son diferentes a nosotros. Sembramos semillas de división en un esfuerzo por avanzar en nuestras propias agendas. Y luego nos preguntamos por qué nuestro mundo está tan inestable, por qué nuestros corazones están inquietos, nuestras familias están rotas, nuestras comunidades son inseguras y demasiados de nuestros hermanos y hermanas sufren a causa de la guerra y la codicia en Ucrania, áreas de Oriente Medio, Oriente, África y otras partes del mundo.

Sin embargo, en un mundo que se ha puesto patas arriba, se nos da una vez más la oportunidad de abrazar la buena noticia de la Navidad, que "tanto amó Dios al mundo que ha dado a su Hijo unigénito, para que todo el que crea en él no perezca, sino que tenga vida eterna" (Jn 3, 16).

A través de la Encarnación, Dios se ha sumergido en nuestra condición humana, no por nuestra justicia, sino por su gracia y misericordia. Esta creencia fundamental en el amor ilimitado de Dios, al que se le dio forma humana en el nacimiento de Jesús, confronta el quebrantamiento de nuestras vidas con esperanza. Nos llama a ir más allá de la división y el miedo que se han apoderado de nuestro mundo, nuestra Iglesia y nuestras vidas para reconocer una realidad esencial: todos somos mucho más similares que diferentes. Como tal, todos somos hermanos y hermanas que, por nosotros mismos, somos impotentes para salvarnos a nosotros mismos. Todos necesitamos el corazón de la Navidad y el poder y la presencia de Jesús, nacido para salvarnos, darnos vida y envolvernos en su paz.

Hermanos y hermanas, seguros de su presencia en la pequeñez de la existencia humana, sabemos dónde encontrar al Dios vivo y así experimentar sus dones de acogida, perdón y misericordia. Recordemos las palabras de Jesús: "Todo lo que hicisteis por uno de estos hermanos míos más pequeños, por mí lo hicisteis" (Mt 25,40).

En estos días que tantas veces desafían nuestra paz, pidamos sabiduría y humildad para abrir nuestra vida a este gran misterio de fe que celebramos a través de la Encarnación de Cristo. ¡Que lo acojamos y lo sirvamos con generosidad y así descubramos la verdadera y duradera razón de nuestra esperanza!

Con gratitud por el privilegio de servir como su obispo y con oraciones por una Navidad santa y bendecida para usted, su familia y todos sus seres queridos, soy,
Fielmente tuyo en Cristo,

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

'Tis the season to be inspired by the message from our church pulpits

WILLIAMSPORT - Perhaps more so than any other time during the Church's liturgical year, for the next ten days — as faithful flock to their parish places of worship for the conclusion of the Advent season in joyful anticipation and celebration of the Solemnity of Christmas — priests and deacons will labor arduously to inspire their congregations with wisdom and insight.

As we approach the fourth and final week of the Advent of Christ, our clergy plan to somehow put into human terms the divine awesomeness of that first Christmas night. In all are finiteness, how do we begin to grasp that pre-ordained moment when God touched the Earth and mankind like never before or since, creating the single most important event in the history of the world — the coming of the Incarnate Lord...the Word made Flesh to dwell among us...the Birth of the Newborn Babe of Bethlehem?

For Father John Chmil, pastor of Saint Ann Parish in Williamsport, Advent will close with the publication of a true, personal story of faith and hope he has penned for the season.

Addressing the question of why faith matters, Father Chmil recounted a childhood experience that shook his faith and made him look at life differently.

"Faith matters to me because it gives me hope," he began. "Faith teaches me to trust in God. Faith leads me to a deeper understanding of my own life and the mystery that God actively partakes in it."

The priest told of the time when, as a five-year-old boy, he went to the hospital for minor surgery. There he shared a room with a child of the same age named Stephen.

As kindred spirits, having to be hospitalized for different reasons, the boys soon bonded and a close, albeit brief, friendship quickly developed.

After returning to his room after the medical procedure, young John realized Stephen was nowhere to be found, and the future priest would never see his new friend again.

It wasn't until many years later, after he was already ordained, Father Chmil eventually discovered the little boy's sad fate.

"When I was in my thirties, I talked to my parents about

being in the hospital and I asked my mother if she knew what happened to Stephen," Father Chmil recalled. "She began to cry and told me that while I was in surgery Stephen passed away." He had leukemia.

His friend's death didn't make any sense; however, it did give the young priest an ever deeper faith as he began to look at Stephen's life — and his own — differently.

"My despair led me to raise my heart and mind to Jesus. I began to think of the hope that Jesus gives humanity by his life, death and resurrection," Father shared. "In a life of faith, Advent is a season of hope. I trust Jesus and I pray that he is the Light that pierces the darkness in this time of waiting."

In discussing the focus of his Christmas homily this year, Father Chmil remarked, "The manger scene says it all."

He will tell the tale of the fourth-grade student who filled the role of the innkeeper in his school's Christmas play.

At first, the boy recited his prescribed line to Mary and Joseph, "Go away, there is no room," several times. However,

he eventually relented, and feeling compassion for the young couple with a child on the way, said, "All the rooms are taken, but you can have my room."

With that, Father Chmil noted, an invaluable lesson was taught.

"The little boy had plenty of room in his heart for them," Father said. "We are called to do the same thing."

"In the stable of Bethlehem, heaven and earth meet. May we always make room for Christ in our lives, for His light dispels the darkness of our sins and brings us His peace."

Father Cyril Edwards, V.E., pastor of Mary, Mother of God Parish in North Scranton, plans to invoke the memory of a Queen to elaborate on the birth of a King.

"Americans do not pay too much attention to the affairs of British royalty. Yet, this year, perhaps like never before, we watched with a lot of attention to the fanfare surrounding the death of Queen Elizabeth," Father Edwards said, recalling the recent passing of Britain's longest-reigning monarch.

"Can this event teach us something for Christmas?"

The priest explained that Elizabeth tried to "shed" some of the trappings of royalty and connect with the common person.

"As a younger woman, she made every effort to show the people she was one of them," he continued. "No wonder she developed a beloved identity and, thus, her death evoked such remarkable emotion and attention."

In stressing one of the most well-known Scripture passages, "God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save us," Father Edwards noted that, though divine, Jesus came to live among us, taking on our human nature to "become like us in all things but sin."

"He was born in a barn to humble parents," the pastor emphasized. "He would know so many human emotions — sadness, grief, betrayal, suffering. The impact of this event must change our lives!"

"My prayer life now can speak to a God who walked this earth just like I do," Father concluded. "Let us hope that this Christmas season truly draws us closer to the loving God who came to live with us."

Parish prepares Christmas gift bags for children in need



DUNMORE - Members of the Holy Name Society of SS. Anthony & Rocco Parish and the Saint Anthony's Playground Association recently gathered to assemble Christmas gift bags for children of the Friends of the Poor. The gift bags were to be distributed to the children during their after-school programs.



Come Home for Christmas!

For a full schedule of Mass times for all parishes in the
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
 visit dioceseofscranton.org

Longing for Christ to come? Participate in the 'O Antiphon' tradition this year

SCRANTON – It is easy to get caught up in the “external” at Christmas – making and buying gifts, writing Christmas cards and decorating – but if you are looking to be reminded what the season is all about then turn to the “O Antiphons.”

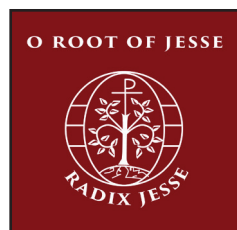
The “O Antiphons” are seven prayers that are recited on the days immediately before Christmas, beginning Dec. 17. The prayers – scriptural texts just a few lines long, begin with “O” and include the desire for Christ to come.

He is addressed by a different title on each of the seven days; O Wisdom, O Lord, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Rising Dawn, O King of Nations, O Emmanuel.

The Church has been singing the “O Antiphons” since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany the *Magnificat* canticle of Evening Prayer from Dec. 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment, not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well.

The Antiphons repeated use of the imperative “Come!” embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

Recite the following “O Antiphons” in the coming days:



December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
 guiding creation with power and
 love:
 come to teach us the path of
 knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel,
 giver of the Law to Moses on
 Sinai:
 come to rescue us with your
 mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem,
 sign of God's love for all his
 people:
 come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David,
 opening the gates of God's
 eternal Kingdom:
 come and free the prisoners of
 darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn,
 splendor of eternal light, sun of
 justice:
 come and shine on those who
 dwell in darkness and in the
 shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and
 keystone of the Church:
 come and save man, whom you
 formed from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and
 Giver of Law:
 come to save us, Lord our God!



Parishes spreading Christmas joy to nursing home residents and the homebound



Mary, Mother of God Parish in North Scranton filled 65 bags with personal care items, puzzles and candy to be delivered to homebound parishioners. Each bag was also adorned with ornaments made by faith formation students.



Faith formation students at Saint Eulalia Parish in Roaring Brook Township have been busy making Christmas cards for the residents of nearby Saint Mary's Villa in Elmhurst. In the above photo, fifth grade students were showing off their creativity!

Spirit of giving celebrated on Feast of Saint Nicholas

WILKES-BARRE – The spirit of giving and generosity filled Saint Nicholas Church on Dec. 6 as parishioners came together to celebrate their patronal feast day.

After several years of subdued celebrations because of the COVID-19 pandemic, children and families were invited to bring forth to the altar toys, games and gifts which will benefit people in need in the community.

“It is a wonderful experience to show the kindness and the giving of the people of Saint Nicholas Parish,” parishioner Bob Hines explained. “It is not just one group of people that get involved, it is everybody. It’s our Social Concerns Committee, our Liturgy Committee, and our Events Committee.”

Father Joseph Verespy, pastor of Saint Nicholas and Our Lady of Fatima Parishes, felt the energy inside the church during the special 6 p.m. Mass.

“The last couple years were very low key because of the pandemic. This year, we really wanted to revive the spirit and enthusiasm so we reached out to the kids in faith formation, the kids in Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School. I think we succeeded in stirring up the fire again. We’re really happy,” Father Verespy said.



With donated toys surrounding the altar, Father Mark DeCelles, Assistant Pastor of Saint Nicholas Parish and Our Lady of Fatima Parish, celebrates Mass on Dec. 6, 2022, the Feast Day of Saint Nicholas. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

During his homily, Father Verespy invited all of the children in attendance to come forward and sit near all of the toys that had previously started to amass at the altar before the Mass even began. The Wilkes-Barre pastor asked the kids questions about

Saint Nicholas and highlighted the gifts being donated at the Mass is one way we can show people we love them, even if we don’t know them.

“Saint Nicholas lived a long time ago but we still honor him, we still love him

and we try to be like him,” he explained.

Following the homily, at the time of the Presentation of the Gifts, anyone who had not previously brought forth their gifts was encouraged to bring them to the altar.

“The kids really understand, as we found out during the homily, they really understand what Saint Nicholas is all about,” Hines said.

At the conclusion of Mass, after the final blessing concluded, the parish received word that a special visitor had arrived – Saint Nicholas himself, accompanied by his helper, Ruprecht – who was played by 11-year-old Adam Martino.

“This is the time to show people that we love them, even when we don’t know them,” Saint Nicholas told the crowd.

Before arriving at the church, Father Verespy said Saint Nicholas was also able to visit Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School.

“Saint Nicholas went through the school and the littlest kids put their shoes out and got a treat from Saint Nicholas and he visited all the classrooms so they were thrilled. It has been a great day here on the campus of Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary’s,” Father Verespy said with enthusiasm in his voice.

Faith formation families in Montdale celebrate life of Saint Nicholas

MONTDALE - On Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022, families involved in the faith formation program at Saint John Vianney Parish celebrated and learned about Saint Nicholas during the annual CHRISTmas Countdown event.

The event began with the story of Saint Nicholas’ life and then the children placed their shoes around the altar with hopes that the well-known saint would fill them.

Families were also given the opportunity to make a Saint Nicholas ornament. The day ended with a visit from Saint Nicholas - who of course - filled the shoes of all the children.



Spreading Christmas cheer through song in Luzerne County

FAIRMOUNT SPRINGS - On Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022, families from Saint Martha Church, which is part of Holy Spirit Parish, spent the afternoon Christmas caroling for the residents of Bonham Nursing Home as well as at the home of a nearby homebound parishioner.

This is just one of the church’s many activities taking place before Christmas.

Saint Martha’s also has its annual “Giving Tree” set up to benefit the Pro-Life Center in Wilkes-Barre. Parishioners were encouraged to take a tag off the tree, purchase one or more of the suggested items and return the items so they can be delivered.



Be surprised by God this Advent, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Even the most fervent believers go through moments of doubt and questioning about God, and it is a good thing, Pope Francis said, because it helps one see that God does not fit into the little box people make for him.

Doubt “helps us understand that God is always greater than we imagine him to be. His works are surprising compared to our calculations; his actions are different, always, they exceed our needs and expectations; and therefore, we must never stop seeking him,” the pope said during the Angelus prayer Dec. 11.

People face a constant “temptation: to make ourselves a God to our measure, a God to use,” the pope said. But “God is something else.”

Pope Francis spoke about the day’s Gospel reading about how John the Baptist, while in prison, sent followers to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah even though John had earlier baptized Jesus in the Jordan.

With an estimated 25,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the midday prayer, the pope said sometimes people find themselves in an “inner jail,”



A girl holds a figurine of the baby Jesus after Pope Francis’ recitation of the Angelus Dec. 11, 2022. The pope blessed figurines of the baby Jesus brought by children for their Nativity scenes. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

unable to recognize the Lord or even trying to hold him “captive” to preconceived ideas about who God must be.

“Dear brothers and sisters, one never knows everything about God, never!” he said. “Perhaps we have in mind a powerful God who does what he wants, instead of the God of humble meekness, the God of mercy and love, who always intervenes respecting our freedom and our choices.”

And, he said, it is a temptation to think one knows everything about other people, too, using one’s prejudices “to attach rigid

labels to others, especially those we feel are different from us.”

Advent, he said, is a time to let go and allow oneself to be surprised by God.

Especially as families prepare a Nativity scene or one goes to look at one set up somewhere, he said, it is an occasion to think about who the Lord really is and how to imitate him in daily life.

“Advent is a time in which, instead of thinking about gifts for ourselves, we can give words and gestures of consolation to those who are wounded, as Jesus did with the blind, the deaf and the lame,” the pope said.

After reciting the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis blessed figurines of the baby Jesus that hundreds of children had brought to the square in preparation to place them in Nativity scenes at home or at school.

He asked children “to pray before the creche that the nativity of the Lord will bring a ray of peace to children all over the world, especially those forced to live the terrible and dark days of war, this war in Ukraine that destroys many lives, so many lives, and many children.”

Four parishes join together for Advent service of Word & Song



Choir members from Holy Family Parish in Luzerne, Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish in Kingston, Saints Anthony & Rocco Parish in Dunmore and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Dunmore participate in an Advent Service of Word and Song at Holy Family Church on Dec. 8, 2022. (Photo courtesy/Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton)

LUZERNE – Beautiful music, fitting for the days leading into Christmas, filled Holy Family Church on Thursday, Dec. 8, as a popular Advent service of Word and Song continued for another year.

“We Long for You, O Lord,” was the theme of this year’s event, which featured the combined choir of voices from Holy Family and Saint Ignatius Parishes in Luzerne County and from the Dunmore parishes of Saints Anthony & Rocco and Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

“Separately we are all very good choirs. We all have wonderful music ministries in these parishes, but together, we are so much more,” Linda Houck, Director of Worship/Business Manager at Holy Family Parish, said. “I think some of that is the shared faith, the shared preparation for Christmas and we have people who are in our choirs who look forward to this every year.”

This year’s joint choir featured a combined 38 voices.

“It is a tremendous sound,” Houck added.

In addition to featuring the choral reflections, several soloists

and an instrumental ensemble, the Advent service also features numerous scripture readings. Many people who attend the free event come back year after year.

“There really is a longing in everyone’s heart,” Houck said as she reflected on this year’s theme. “What we find as we progress through the Advent season and into Christmas is that longing is really satisfied in God. That is what we celebrate at Christmas and that is what we are preparing to do.”

Father David Cappelloni started the Advent tradition 13 years ago when he was pastor at Holy Family Parish. When he moved to Dunmore in 2007, he had the idea to create the multi-county service.

“He said wouldn’t it be a great idea to combine our efforts and do an Advent service together and we did,” Houck explained. “People have made cross-county friendships and they’re participating in something that is bigger than just their parish.”

In addition to Holy Family Parish, the Advent service of Word and Song was also presented on Sunday, Dec. 11 in Dunmore.

Advent by Candlelight celebration in the Poconos

BRODHEADSVILLE – On Saturday, Nov. 26, the ladies of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish were treated to an “Advent by Candlelight” celebration.

The evening began with a delicious meal served by candlelight in McCawley Hall, after which the women proceeded into the church for a program with the theme of “Advent Through The Eyes of Mary.”

The program consisted of beautiful music, reflections and the personal stories of some of the women. The evening ended with dessert and fellowship.

It was agreed that the theme touched the hearts of all who attended and gave participants a wonderful focus for the four weeks of anticipation and waiting for God’s entry into humanity.



"This is us spreading God's love to everybody in the community"

Christmas Gifts for Kids program in Scranton area helps 1,711 children

DICKSON CITY — More than 1,700 children in the greater-Scranton area will have gifts to open on Christmas morning because of a partnership between Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton, Friends of the Poor and Catherine McAuley Center.

The three non-profit agencies teamed up on Wednesday, Dec. 7 to distribute presents to 750 needy families at LCBC Church on the Scranton Carbondale Highway.

"I'm in awe. I'm thrilled that we can help that many families," Joe Mahoney, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Human Services and Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, said. "It really is a team effort. The three agencies came together and did this. A lot of hard work went into it and it is worth it."

Beginning at 9 a.m., parents and caregivers were invited to shop for the toys that they will give their children on Christmas morning. From Cocomelon dolls, Paw Patrol gift sets to scooters and bikes, there were thousands of gifts set up in a large auditorium.

Meghan Loftus, President and CEO of Friends of the Poor, said the toy distribution means parents will have one less thing to worry about as the holiday season approaches.



"Before I became a mom, I thought about the kids and how much better this made the day for them," she explained. "Now what I focus on is the relief in the parents' faces, just the stress in their eyes when they come in and the tension in their bodies and how happy they are when they're walking out because it's just one less thing they have to worry about."

Staff members of the three non-profit agencies and volunteers from the community escorted each of the families through the auditorium to select gifts based on the age range of their children. They also provided stocking stuffers, books, games, puzzles and clothing.

Eleven students from Holy Cross High School in Dunmore volunteered to help families shop.

"I think this is a wonderful



opportunity to connect with the community and give back to families, especially during the holiday season," Avianna Voglino, 17, said. "I am so grateful to be a part of this today."

The high school senior said each parent was very appreciative.

"Every person I have been with has said thank you for helping out," she added. "I've donated to Toys for Tots in the past so it's nice to know where everything is going and who it is going to."

Katie Mellody, 18, said the service project fits into the theme of the academic year at Holy Cross.

"The theme for this year is 'Is there room in your heart for God to write a story?'" Mellody explained. "I think everyone taking part in this feels that way, yes, there is."

As she watched all the families

and volunteers, Loftus was struck by how everyone came together no matter their values or faith.

"We do this work, as a Catholic-based institution, because we believe in it. We believe it is our obligation," Loftus said. "This is us spreading God's love to everybody in the community but we don't think that anyone needs to be of our faith to be deserving of that love and of that help."

This was the first year that Catherine McAuley Center participated in the Gifts for Kids Program with the other two agencies.

"When someone comes to one of our doors and they're looking for help, we're able to say, here are all of the gift giveaways that are available in our area and we're all working together. We don't have to refer somebody to a different agency. We can answer

Far left: Katie Mellody, left, and Avianna Voglino, seniors at Holy Cross High School in Dunmore, were among 11 Catholic School students who helped serve as escorts for families during the Christmas Gifts for Kids toy distribution at LCBC Church in Dickson City on Dec. 7, 2022.

Left: Scooters, basketballs and dolls were among the presents available to the 750 parents and caregivers at the Christmas Gifts for Kids toy distribution. Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton was one of the three non-profit agencies that helps sponsor the annual program. (Photos/Eric Deabill)

their questions right there and even get them registered for the event," Krista Somers Murray, Executive Director, Catherine McAuley Center, said.

For those who were unable to attend the Dec. 7 toy distribution, the three agencies will hold one more gift-giving event on Wednesday, Dec. 21, at the Byron Center at The University of Scranton. Beginning at 8:30 a.m., more toys will be available for parents on a first come, first served basis.

While there is no pre-registration, parents must qualify by having an income level below the federal poverty line. They must also bring identification, proof of Lackawanna County residency and something that has their child's name on it (Social Security card, birth certificate or even a report card) to the event.

Catholic Social Services helping hundreds more families with gifts in Hazleton & Carbondale

HAZLETON — In addition to the large-scale Christmas Gifts for Kids Program that Catholic Social Services helps to organize in the Scranton area, the agency also has two other gift distribution programs in Carbondale and Hazleton.

After registering 250 families in October, the toy giveaway in Hazleton will take place on Dec. 17 this year. Parents and caregivers will once again be able to shop and pick up toys and

clothes for their children.

Lee Ann Lywiski, who helps organize the Mountain City's gift program, said the event would not be possible without the support of area churches and generous community members.

"We have a lot of churches that will take tags and put them on a tree. Parishioners will take those tags, purchase the items, bring them back to the church and then they find their way up here," she explained.



Toys are ready to be distributed to families on Dec. 17 in Hazleton.

With decades-high inflation, Lywiski, who also manages the Saint Joseph Food Pantry operated

by Catholic Social Services, has seen many new people looking for assistance this year.

"With the price of everything going up, people are struggling. We're seeing a lot of new faces come through our pantry and for the toy program," she explained.

The story is very similar in the city of Carbondale. Catholic Social Services helped distribute toys and gifts to several hundred families on Tuesday, December 13, at Saint Rose of Lima Church.

The distribution began at 8 a.m. and lasted for the entire day.

In both areas, staff of Catholic Social Services helped fulfill the agency's mission by responding compassionately to the needs of the community and replacing despair with hope.

"It is such a joyful time because the parents are getting a need met and we're getting to help and that feels good. It feels good when you get to help somebody," Lywiski said.

Bishop to head USCCB Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs Committee again

BALTIMORE – During the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops fall general assembly in November, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera was voted chairman-elect of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs by his brother bishops.

Bishop Bambera was elected over Auxiliary Bishop Peter L. Smith of Portland, Oregon, in a vote of 128 to 111. He will begin his three-year term at the end of the 2023 fall general assembly.

While Bishop Bambera is currently a member of the committee, this will be his second time leading the group that assists the bishops in their commitment to advancing Christian unity and building ties of friendship and understanding with other religious traditions.

On Nov. 28, the committee recently made headlines by decrying rising antisemitism in the United States.

Saying they are outraged by growing “antisemitic rhetoric” across the country, the members of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs urged Christians

to decry hate-filled statements and violence aimed at Jewish individuals, homes and institutions.

Committee members also denounced “any rhetoric which seeks to demonize or dehumanize the Jewish people or Judaism as a religious tradition,” in a statement.

“In unequivocal terms, we condemn any and all violence directed at the Jewish people, whether motivated by religious, racial, or political grievances,” said the committee.

“The rising trend of antisemitic incidents has become even more painful in light of the church’s relationship to the Jewish tradition and our connections to the Jewish people in dialogue and friendship,” the committee said.

The Anti-Defamation League, which tracks incidents of antisemitism, reported 2,717 cases of harassment, vandalism and assault in 2021, an increase of 34% from a year earlier. The number of incidents is the highest on record since the group began tracking them in 1979.

Two rabbis involved in ecumenical

dialogue with the committee praised the statement for the resilient solidarity it signifies to the Jewish community.

“The main emotion with the statement is gratitude,” said Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff, representative of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association in the National Council of Synagogues.

“Knowing that the bishops, that the church, is so willing to speak in such a strong way against antisemitism is incredibly fulfilling, incredibly gratifying,” Rabbi Zacharoff told Catholic News Service.

Rabbi Noam Marans, director of interreligious and intergroup relations at the American Jewish Committee, wrote in

an email that the statement “reminds the Jewish community that we are not alone, that U.S. Catholic leadership understands resurgent antisemitism as a threat to Jews.”

He also said that antisemitism must be addressed by “all peoples, including, perhaps especially, the faith community.”

The bishops’ statement draws its inspiration from “Nostra Aetate” (“In Our Time”), the Second Vatican Council’s 1965 declaration on the relationship between the Catholic Church and non-Catholic faiths. It explains that over six decades the committee has built partnerships with the National Council of Synagogues, the Orthodox Union and the newly established Modern Orthodox group.

APPOINTMENTS

His Excellency, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, announces the following appointments, effective November 28, 2022

Deacon John Bankus, to diaconal ministry, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Swoyersville

Deacon John Bubb, to diaconal ministry, Saint Joseph the Worker Parish, Williamsport

Deacon Martin Castaldi, to diaconal ministry, Divine Mercy Parish, Scranton

Deacon Matthew Eisley, to diaconal ministry, Immaculate Conception Parish, Bastress and Saint Luke Parish, Jersey Shore

Deacon Thomas Kostic, to diaconal ministry, Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish, Hazleton

Deacon Steven Miller, to diaconal ministry, Our Lady of Victory Parish, Tannersville

Deacon Nicholas Rocco, to diaconal ministry, Saint Eulalia Parish, Roaring Brook Township

Deacon Frank Zeranski, to diaconal ministry, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Moscow



BISHOP BAMBERA’S SCHEDULE

December 17 - Mass at Waymart State Correctional Institution
Waymart, 9:00 a.m.

December 21 - School Mass at Holy Redeemer High School
Wilkes-Barre, 9:00 a.m.

December 22 - 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, 12:00 a.m.

December 25 - Christmas Day Mass
Gino Merli Veterans Center, Scranton, 9:30 a.m.

December 28 - Project Andrew Evening Prayer
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 5:30 p.m.

January 3-6 - Region III Bishops’ Retreat

January 8 - Mass for the Baptism of the Lord
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.

January 9 - Mass with Capuchin Sisters
Tunkhannock, 4:30 p.m.

January 14 - Mass for the Filipino Community
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 6:00 p.m.

“Embrace your call with deep trust”

Eight new deacons “humbled” and “excited” to serve the Diocese of Scranton

SCRANTON – At the very moment that Nicholas M. Rocco knelt on floor of the Cathedral of Saint Peter in front of the bishop for the Prayer of Ordination, an amazing sense of joy swept over the 49 year old.

“It is powerful. You just think of all those that have come before you, right to the Apostles, it’s a powerful moment,” he explained. “It is a day I’ll never forget.”

Rocco said he would have never become a deacon without the love and prayers of his family and friends.

“I would not be here without the love and support of my family and my children. My youngest one was only six when I started this, and here we are more than four and a-half years later, and my oldest one just got her driver’s permit,” he said.

Rocco was one of eight men ordained a Permanent Deacon in service to the People of God for the Diocese of Scranton on Saturday, Nov. 26, 2022. Several hundred family and friends attended the 10 a.m. liturgy.

“Excited, humbled and honored,” is how Steven J. Miller, another newly ordained deacon, described the Ordination Mass upon its conclusion.

A deacon’s service has three aspects: service to the Word of God, service at the altar of the Lord, and service to the poor. The newly ordained deacons join the ranks of clergy who will minister throughout the diocese. Each man will complete a five-year formation program.

“It is beyond words. I feel so humbled, but mostly at peace, and I thank the Lord for calling me to the diaconate. I couldn’t be happier,” Martin J. Castaldi



The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, ordained eight men as permanent deacons for the Diocese of Scranton on Saturday, Nov. 26, 2022, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. Pictured following the Ordination Mass are, front row, from left: Rev. John V. Polednak, V.E., Episcopal Vicar for Clergy; Deacon Walter Janoski, Coordinator of the Candidate Advisor and Pastoral Formation Programs; Deacon Matthew R. Eisley; Deacon Nicholas M. Rocco, Bishop Bambera, Deacon John F. Bubb; Deacon John F. Bankus; Rev. Gerald W. Shantillo, V.G., S.T.L., Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia; Monsignor David Bohr, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation and Director of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program. Back row, from left: Deacon Thomas A. Kostic; Deacon Martin J. Castaldi; Deacon Steven J. Miller; and Deacon Frank H. Zeranski. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

explained. “It is humbling to be up at the altar in the celebration of the liturgy and the Eucharist and to have the vestments on for the first time and be up there sharing in the celebration with the priests and other deacons.”

During the Rite of Ordination, each deacon needs to declare his intention to be ordained and then lays on the floor of the Cathedral in a gesture of solemn petition.

The Litany of Supplication, when the crowd prays for the intercession of all the saints, and asks for God’s blessing for the deacons, is always one of the most powerful moments of the Mass.

“You could feel that the whole community was with you,” John F. Bankus said. “At the same time, you felt the responsibility

that would now be yours, as you enter this new vocation.”

“There were a lot of parts that I tried to keep myself together and composed,” John F. Bubb added.

Knowing that there were several of his fellow parishioners from Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in attendance at the Mass was comforting for Frank H. Zeranski.

“It was just amazing to have them here. I don’t use the word ‘amazing’ very often but it was amazing and awesome. This is one of the few times the word awesome actually fits,” he said.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as ordaining prelate and principal celebrant for the Ordination Mass. During his

homily, he said it was a day of great rejoicing and urged the eight men to serve God’s people as generously as they would serve the Lord himself.

“God has called you to a vital ministry in service of the Gospel. Set aside your fears. Embrace your call with deep trust in Jesus’ promise to walk with you always. Live the truth of the Gospel that is rooted in the person of Jesus. Follow always His example of selfless love and mercy,” Bishop Bambera said.

The bishop also reminded the men that they have not been called to the diaconate because they are perfect but because the Lord knows they each love Him and seek to serve Him in His people.

That part of Bishop Bambera’s homily really stuck with Matthew R. Eisley.

“Just the reminder that you don’t have to be perfect to answer the call. We all have our flaws, but God can use us, as we are, if we’re willing to be used in that capacity. That is what he asks,” Eisley said.

In all of their work as deacons, whether they’re preaching homilies, distributing Holy Communion to the sick, baptizing, presiding at weddings or funerals or serving the poor and those most in need, the new deacons realize they must help the world discover the Truth that is the person of Jesus Christ.

“Serving is everything,” Tom Kostic explained, adding that after the Mass, he was ready to get to work.

Promise of the Elect



Steven J. Miller, left, and John F. Bubb, right, declare their intentions to be ordained to the Diaconate and place their hands between those of Bishop Joseph C. Bambera.



During the Litany of Supplication, the elect prostrate themselves on the floor of the Cathedral of Saint Peter in a gesture of solemn petition. (Photos/Mike Melisky)

Laying on of Hands and Prayer of Ordination



Rev. Bert S. Kozen, V.F., Pastor, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Bastress, and Saint Luke Parish, Jersey Shore, helps vest Deacon Matthew R. Easley.



Bishop Bambera places his hands upon the heads of Nicholas M. Rocco, left, and Thomas A. Kostic, right, and says the Prayer of Ordination making each man a deacon.

Handing On of the Book of Gospels



After being ordained deacons and vested, John F. Bankus, left, and Martin J. Castaldi, right, receive the Book of Gospels from Bishop Bambera.

Deacon Frank H. Zeranski, who has been appointed to diaconal ministry at Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow, hugs a friend following the Ordination Mass outside the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Nov. 26, 2022.





OUR FAITH IS A POWERFUL WITNESS TO OTHERS

- A Priesthood Perspective by Fr. Bob Simon -



In the fall of 2021, in my first months as the new pastor in Brodheadsville, our staff began to discuss our Advent Adult Formation Series. Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish has a longstanding commitment to adult faith formation. Many of our parishioners crave learning more about their faith.

With folks coming back as COVID-19 numbers decreased, and as we desired to reconnect parishioners with Sunday Mass, I presented a series on the Mass. We took a deep dive into the parts of the Mass as well as the historical development of the Mass and its meaning, especially by reflecting on the insights of the pioneers of the liturgical reform of the twentieth century and the Fathers of the Church.

This year, we are currently in the midst of a series I am leading on the Mystery of the Eucharist. We are using the series, *Presence*, offered by Formed.org and produced by the Augustine Institute. I am also presenting material from Jean Danielou, S.J., in his classic work, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, published in 1956. We are considering how at every Mass, the once-for-all-sacrifice of Calvary is made present. Likewise, at every Mass, we participate in the heavenly liturgy.

My own love of the Mass goes back as far as I can remember. I explain this love of the Mass when asked about it by relating that even as a very small boy there was something I just “got” about the Mass and the liturgy of the Church. I can still picture the raised hands of our assistant pastor, Fr. Richard Zavacki, elevating the host at the consecration.

I know that each year back then, and even today, the celebration of Holy Week is my personal, annual Eucharistic revival. As a boy, my brother, my sister, and I were very blessed that my family actively participated in liturgies of the Sacred Triduum. As children, we processed each year in the Holy Thursday procession. We were very blessed that after the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, my dad would take us to visit parishes to spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at the carefully prepared Place of Reposition. The short visits to each church were wisely planned to accommodate a child’s short attention span. But my dad, took us to a good number of churches. We delighted every year in the experience. We would talk often of which churches were our favorite and how touched we were by the faith and devotion of the other adorers.



Holy Thursday Procession at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville.

Last year as we celebrated the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper during the Sacred Triduum, there was a moment that gave me hope as we pray and yearn for a Eucharistic revival. Our Lady Queen of Peace has long had a tradition of inviting everyone at Evening Mass to join in the procession to the Repository.

This past year we processed outside the church while the Knights of Columbus bore a canopy over the Holy Eucharist. The cross, candles, incense and girls strewing rose petals all passed between an honor guard of parishioners who lined the path bringing the Blessed Sacrament to our chapel. As the Holy Eucharist neared him, a high school age boy, unfamiliar to me as involved in the parish, dropped to his knees. I saw his faith and devotion, and thought, “that young man will never doubt the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.”

I pray that our National Eucharistic Revival will help us to celebrate each Mass with utmost reverence. I believe our faith, devotion and reverence at each Mass is a powerful witness to others. Adult faith formation is important, but ultimately it is each of us and our active participation at Worship that will, by God’s grace, bring about a Eucharistic Revival. I know that I, like so many others, love the Mass and gift of Faith, not primarily because of what I learned in a classroom about the Mass or the mystery of the Eucharist. It is in the school of the liturgy that I’ve fallen in love with the greatest of Sacraments.

Let’s start with small steps. I find when celebrating multiple liturgies, that if I try at each Mass to put a focus on one part of the Mass and really let it come alive for me, I soon find myself overwhelmed by the power and beauty of the “Sacrament of Sacraments” celebrated for the life of the world.

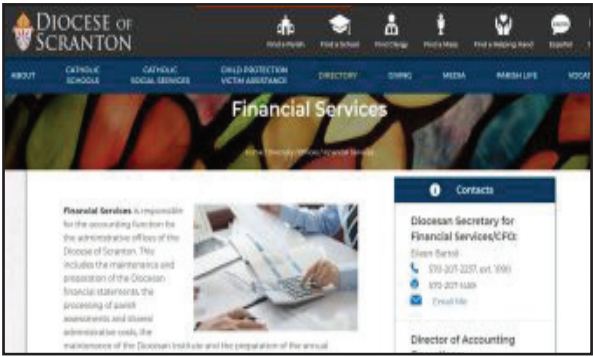
Father Simon has been pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville since August 2021. He has previously served as pastor at parishes in Moscow, Susquehanna, Scranton and Old Forge.

For second consecutive year, Diocese of Scranton receives top score in independent financial transparency report

SCRANTON - For the second consecutive year, a lay organization of faithful Catholics has named the Diocese of Scranton as being one of the most financially transparent dioceses in the United States.

For six years, Voice of the Faithful has reviewed all U.S. Catholic dioceses' online financial transparency. The group's 2022 report identifies the Diocese of Scranton as one of only five dioceses to receive an overall score of 100% in regards to transparency. This year's other top-scoring dioceses include Charleston, Lexington, Orlando and Rochester.

The Diocese of Scranton also received an overall score of 100% for financial transparency in 2021.



The Voice of the Faithful's sixth annual review of all dioceses was conducted between June 1 and Aug. 31 by three independent reviewers and their report, "Measuring and Ranking Diocesan Online Financial Transparency: 2022 Report," was released on Nov. 28, 2022.

In addition to receiving a

report indicates the Diocese of Scranton's finance page stands out from others with "key financial information easily accessible."

"I am happy to report for the second year that the Diocese of Scranton is being recognized for its commitment to financial transparency," the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Diocese of

perfect score in the report, the Diocese of Scranton and its website was highlighted as having one of the best finance pages. The

Scranton, said. "Each one of us is a steward of the resources given to us by God and we all share in the mission of making sure they are used responsibly. By having easy access to financial reports, policies and procedures, every parishioner can see that the money donated to the diocese goes exactly where it is intended."

Voice of the Faithful scores dioceses' financial transparency practices on a scale from zero to 100. The organization awards each diocese points for publishing a variety of financial documents, including audited financial reports, information about the diocese's cathedra (tax collected from individual parishes) and a current list of members on the diocesan finance council.

Information on the Diocese of Scranton's financial policies and guidelines, audited financial reports and finance council members can be found at dioceseofscranton.org/directory/offices/financial-services.

The Voice of the Faithful's 2022 report shows that overall, diocesan online financial transparency scores increased from 69% in 2021 to 70% in 2022.

Voice of the Faithful 2022 reviewers concluded that, "Although significant progress in financial transparency has been achieved in the last decade, and in particular during the last three years, members of the Church in the U.S. must be vigilant if they wish to prevent financial mismanagement and abuse."

Parishes to publish financial reports in January, initiative in response to Synod on Synodality

SCRANTON- Through the Diocese of Scranton's listening efforts during the Synod on Synodality in 2022, one of the main themes that emerged from online surveys and in-person listening sessions was a broad demand for greater transparency from church leadership in all matters of importance. One of the areas frequently mentioned is parish financial matters.

Financial matters can be difficult for clergy to talk about, and in some cases, difficult for parishioners to understand. However, as the People of God, parishioners who donate money and service to their parish have the right and responsibility to understand how their money is used.

The bottom line is that in order to be good stewards, parishioners should have a basic understanding of parish financial operations.

On August 31, 2022, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera signed a decree instituting "Norms for Annual Parish Financial Reporting" which are to be considered law in the Diocese of Scranton. Each year beginning in 2023, on the second weekend in January, every parish in the Diocese will be required to publish a five-year financial trend analysis in its bulletin, which will include a narrative to help people understand the document.

While a pastor/

parish life coordinator is primarily responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a parish's financial and physical resources, they receive assistance from a Parish Finance Council. The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body of laypersons that advise a pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish. It is widely accepted that an active, well-informed Parish Finance Council strengthens accountability and assists the pastor with his responsibilities.

Parishes are much more expensive to maintain now than they were in the past. As the Diocese of Scranton continues in its Vision 2030 Pastoral

Planning Process, striving to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming decade, it is critical for parishioners to have an understanding of the financial position of their parish.

It is the hope that by having more financial transparency between a parish and its parishioners, there can be greater trust and cooperation to further the mission of the Church. Pastors and parish staff must be open, consultative and collegial in the conducting of affairs and parishioners must accept responsibility for their parish and contribute generously – both money and service – to its programs and projects.

Parish Financial Report SAMPLE PARISH A TREND ANALYSIS					
	Fiscal Year July 1 - June 30				
	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Revenue					
Collections	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Faith Formation Fees	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX
Fundraising/Development	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Other Income	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Designated Income/Grants/PPP Loan	X	X	X	X	X
Transfers Savings Account/Other	XXXXXX	X	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Diocesan Special Collections	XXXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Total Revenue	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Expenses					
Administration	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Rector's Office	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Liturgy	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Faith Formation	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Social Justice	XXXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXX
Operation & Maintenance of Plant	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Fixed Expense	X	X	X	X	X
Debt Service	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Capital Outlays	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Designated Expenses /Transfers Out	X	X	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Catholic School Assessment	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Diocesan Special Collections Remittance	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Total Expense	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Parish Surplus/(Deficit) - CASH Basis	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
(Increase)/Decrease in Unpaid Diocesan Obligations	**(SEE NOTE)**				
	(XXXX)	(XXXX)	XXXX	X	(XXXX)
Actual Parish Net Surplus/(Deficit)	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	(XXXX)	XXXXXX
NOTE					
Outstanding Diocesan Obligations could include: Diocesan assessments, School assessments, health insurance, self-insurance, pension and other expenses.					
End of Year Unpaid Diocesan Obligations	XXX	XXX	X	XXXX	XXXX
Beginning of Year Unpaid Diocesan Obligations	XXX	X	XXXX	XXXX	X
(Increase)/Decrease in Unpaid Diocesan Obligations	(XXX)	(XXX)	XXXX	X	(XXXX)
Diocesan Loan/Debt	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

THREE MAIN SECTIONS OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

REVENUE

All of the money that a parish collects during its fiscal year.

EXPENSES

All of the money that a parish spends during its fiscal year.

ACTUAL PARISH NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)

This section reflects a parish's true ability to pay all of its obligations if there are any outstanding Diocesan obligations.

No Learning Loss Here

Assessment data shows steady growth for Catholic school students during pandemic

SCRANTON – Nearly three years after all K-12 schools in Pennsylvania were forced to close because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant attention on the impact of that decision. Dozens of national studies have concluded the closure of schools in Pennsylvania and many other states had a negative effect on student learning.

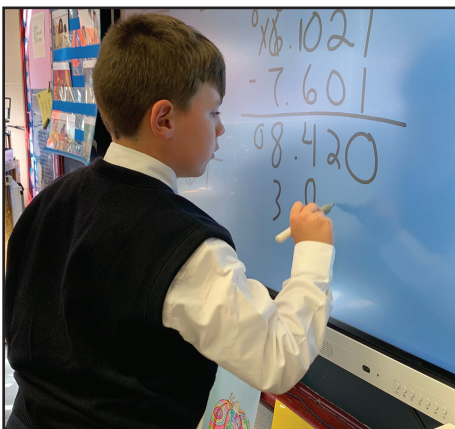
An analysis of student assessment data from the 19 Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Scranton, however, shows that despite the many challenges and obstacles posed by the pandemic, there has been no significant “learning loss” in the Diocesan School System.

Data released by the Diocesan Office for Catholic Schools shows its students have continued to show overall academic growth in the core subjects of reading and mathematics since the fall of 2019.

Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education and Superintendent of Catholic Schools, acknowledged teaching students through the pandemic was a challenge, but credits educators and administrators for making sure students received the best education possible.

“We had a diocesan-wide professional development day planned days prior to the school closure. Upon learning of the potential for closure, we quickly changed the focus of that day. Administrators and teachers used this day to creatively design remote instruction. These dedicated professionals approached this surreal task with a keen focus on doing whatever it takes to provide new instruction remotely for our students,” Donohue said. “I say with immense pride and respect, we closed our buildings in compliance with the state directive Friday, March 13, 2020, and started teaching remotely Monday, March 16, 2020. Our school families were a tremendous piece of the success, too. As a result of true collaboration with the focus on what is best for our students, we never skipped a beat.”

All schools in the Diocese of Scranton were virtual from March – June 2020.



A student at La Salle Academy in Jessup uses an interactive SMART Board as part of a math lesson on Nov. 3, 2022.

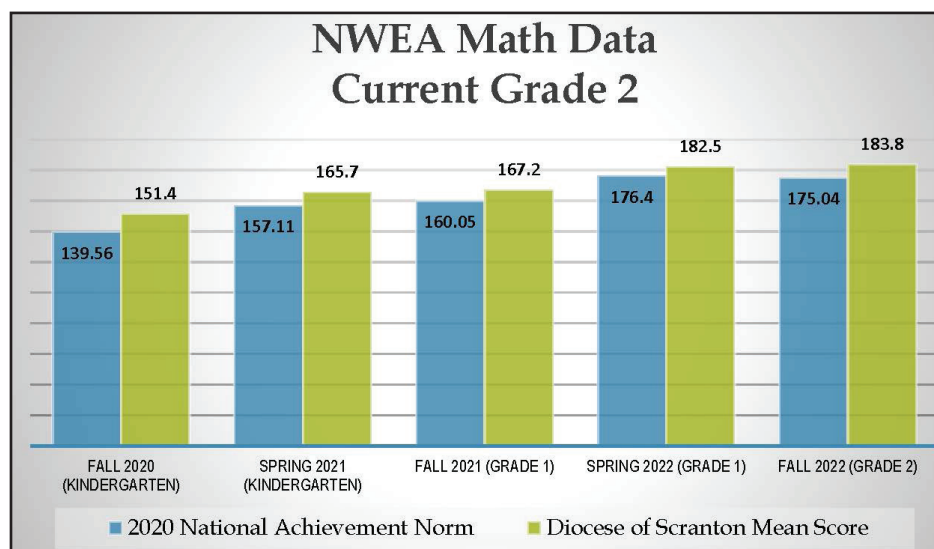
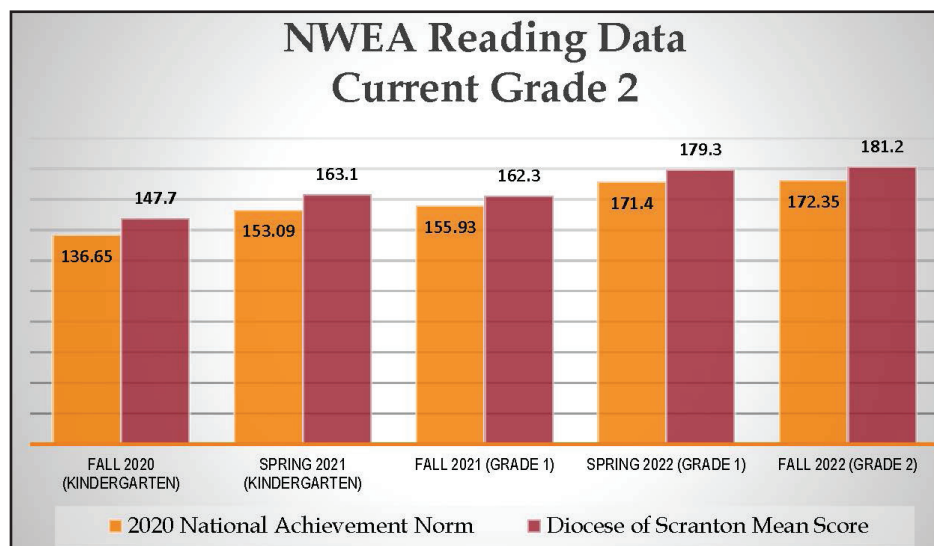
In-person learning returned as schools reopened in August 2020 with an option for virtual learning, if desired by the family. In-person learning continued full-time again in August 2021 in all schools and virtual learning was reserved for those quarantined due to COVID-19.

“As we navigated the pandemic years, we recognized the importance of working as a team. The continued academic growth and progress that we see in our data today is the direct result of the tireless efforts of our administrators, teachers, students, and school families who all, despite the setbacks of the pandemic, did not lose sight of the importance of education. I am humbled and blessed to work with such an amazingly talented and devoted group.”

ASSESSMENT DATA SHOWS CONTINUED GROWTH

In the fall of 2019, right before the height of concern over COVID-19, students in the Diocese of Scranton began taking NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) Assessments.

The assessments provide educators with valuable data on each student by allowing teachers the ability to measure a student’s growth over time. The data provides critical information that helps educators understand



each student’s skills and abilities.

“NWEA data helps me pinpoint specific skills within my content area that I may need to focus on for a particular student,” Debbie Smith, a seventh and eighth grade Literature teacher at Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green, said. “NWEA reporting also illustrates trends and areas of strengths of students to help me build upon their skills. This is invaluable in the way I tailor my instruction.”

NWEA Assessments allow educators to track the growth of students as they progress each year by grade. Scores

can also be compared to a “national achievement norm.” With several years of NWEA Assessment data now available, the Diocese of Scranton is able to analyze the growth and achievements for students as they have progressed over the course of the pandemic.

While each school can produce its own individualized data, for this overall analysis, all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton will be brought together as one entity.

In math, Diocesan Catholic school second graders, who would have been in

Kindergarten in 2020, showed continuous growth in assessments from the fall 2020, through spring and fall 2021, followed by both spring and fall 2022. Likewise, similar results were achieved in reading – although there was a very small drop (less than one point) in overall assessment scores between spring 2021 and fall 2021.

In all assessments taken by current second graders, Diocesan students scored above the NWEA’s national achievement norm.

Similar results showing consistent growth in reading and math can be seen across all other grade levels. In some instances, for example, fifth, sixth and seventh grades, there was a slight dip in scores between the 2021 spring and fall assessments, but that is very typical for the fall as students are returning from summer break. Each grade level assessment scores quickly rebounded by spring 2022.

WHY HAVE DIOCESAN SCHOOLS NOT EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT LEARNING LOSS?

Holly Bradley, who has taught second grade for the last three years at Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport, was not surprised by the consistent growth seen in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System.

She consistently uses NWEA Assessments to individualize instruction to the students in her classroom and knows many of her fellow Catholic school educators do the same.

“I can challenge the kids that need to be challenged and the kids that need reinforcement of certain skills, I can do that to make sure that they succeed,” Bradley explained.

Alisia McNamee, principal of both Saint John Neumann Elementary and Jr./Sr. High School, believes one of the main reasons why Diocesan data shows continued growth, is that in the early days of virtual learning her school made an intentional decision to introduce new information instead of simply doing review of previously learned material.

“We intentionally did not choose to do reinforcement for the fourth quarter. We felt confident that our students were prepared and able to move on with learning new information,” she explained.

McNamee said her teachers did significant planning to make sure everyone succeeded.

“To do a simple review for an eight-week period would have been a huge disservice to our students. That was simply not sufficient for us,” she added. “Our students were ready and needed to move forward.”

AN EXAMPLE OF EXCELLENCE

When students returned to Saint Clare/ Saint Paul School in Scranton in August 2020, they traded Google classroom and Zoom meetings for six foot social distancing and mandatory masking.

Third grade teacher, Rhonda Wassil, had another challenge. Her classroom needed to move to the school auditorium because there were too many children to ensure six foot spacing in her regular classroom.

Wassil embraced the change and the additional space – setting up six different math groups based on the NWEA assessment data – so that students could be properly challenged in areas like geometry, currency and even pre-algebra.

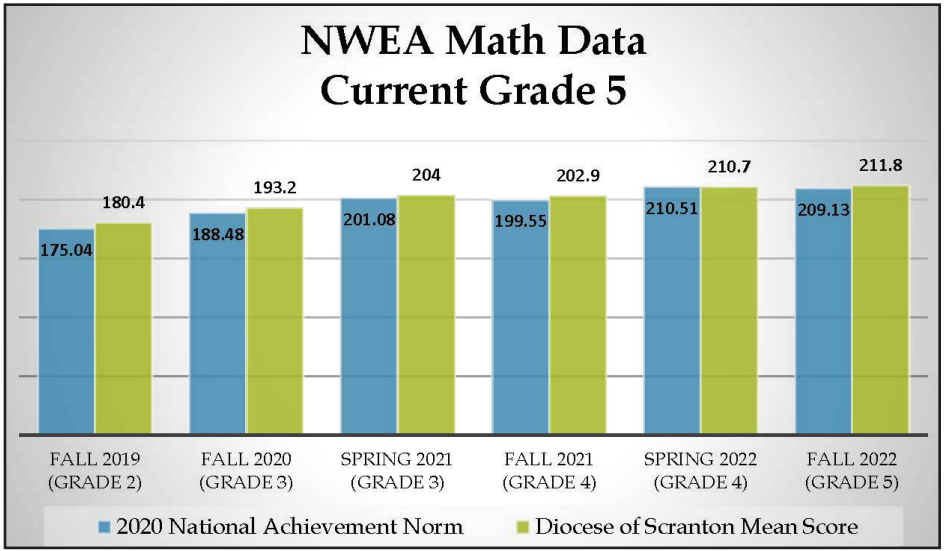
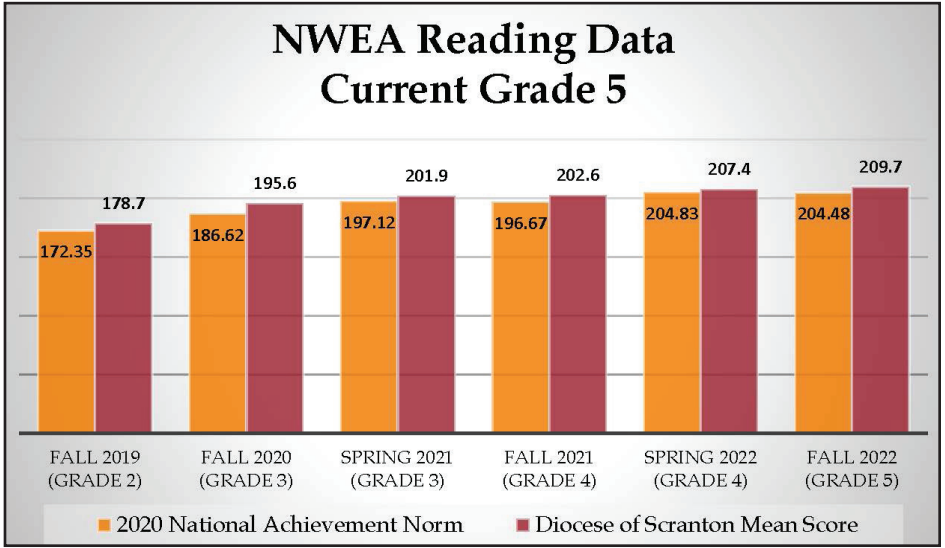
“I had children working at different levels,” Wassil explained. “Within each station, I had all the differentiated levels there. Once they mastered a station, they had the opportunity to move on.”

Kara Ware, principal of Saint Clare/ Saint Paul School, was particularly impressed by how engaged the students became in the math stations. She praised Wassil for taking NWEA data to shake-up what was taking place in her classroom.

“It was the kind of environment that any administrator would hope and pray to have in one of your classrooms,” Ware said. “The proof was in the pudding because by the time we got to the winter NWEA Assessments for 2021, the data went right through the roof. The kids’ scores went right through the roof.”

Besides focusing on the essentials of education, Wassil also wanted to make sure the students didn’t miss other important learning experiences. Her third grade class traditionally goes to the Philadelphia Zoo for a field trip after doing a science project about endangered animals.

Sensing the students’ disappointment in not being able to take the trip, Wassil



took action once again.

“Through Google slides, I created a whole trip to Philadelphia. They not only got to go to the Philadelphia Zoo virtually, they were able to go to Betty Ross’ house, Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell and there were activities for them to do in this presentation, that they could interact with and submit back to me,” she said. “They had a ball!”

TEACHERS ONE OF THE ‘HEROES’ OF THE PANDEMIC

Brittany Haynos-Krupski, principal of All Saints Academy in Scranton, said teachers deserve most of the credit and recognition for the continued growth of Catholic school students.

“My faculty was amazing. They said, ‘we’re going to do this’ and they took on

the task that no other has done before,” she said.

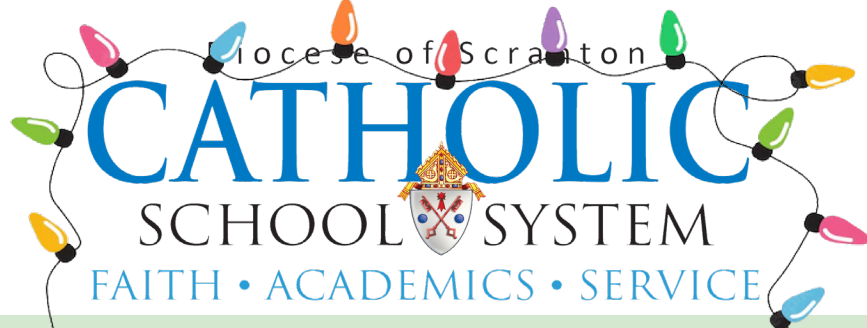
Working overtime to plan, send home lessons and interact with families, Haynos-Krupski said her teachers were on top of every angle that needed to be addressed.

“Realistically, the students never missed even a day,” she said.

Amy Layaou, a first grade teacher at Our Lady of Peace School, said she doesn’t view herself as a ‘hero’ of the pandemic. She said teachers simply adapted to the challenges of the pandemic to ensure student learning continued.

“We should recognize the efforts of the students, parents and other family members as we all worked together to fulfill the common goal of education,” Layaou explained.

Continued on Page 17



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.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, recently celebrated Mass with students from three Diocesan Schools. As he visits each school this academic year, he will be sharing stories about his summer trip to Ghana. One lesson he learned on his trip was, "It doesn't matter what we have or don't have, we are all loved by God as we were created in his image and likeness."



Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston



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



Students at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** collected more than 2,600 canned goods as well as monetary donations to benefit the Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen in preparation of Thanksgiving.



The fifth grade class at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter**, along with their teacher, Mrs. Toomey, and under the music direction of Mr. Delescavage, prepared and celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving.



Students from **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** collected 1,644 socks for the Visiting Nurses Association. The socks will be given out with Meals on Wheels deliveries during the Christmas season.



Sheiana Tutler, Jaden Nixon and Angelo Fernandez, seniors at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport**, light candles on their wreath to celebrate the start of the Advent season.



While studying Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, eighth grade literature students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** were tasked in a STREAM challenge with building a natural nest that could support the weight of a plastic raven and an egg filled with weights.



Gavin McAlarney, a fourth grade student at **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**, recently won a writing contest sponsored by WVIA, the local PBS affiliate.



The students, faculty and families of **Saint Clare/ Saint Paul School in Scranton** are holding a mitten drive to help the less fortunate. "Mollie's Mittens" is being held in memory of Mollie Conway, a member of the school community.



Students from **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** collected non-perishable food items to donate to the local food bank for Thanksgiving so that people would have a little extra to eat.



Saint Nicholas visited the children of **Holy Rosary School in Duryea**, filling their shoes with Christmas treats.

Catholic schools show continued growth during pandemic

Continued from Page 15

Layaou's principal, Ann D'Arienzo, said she could never say enough about how her staff met the challenges of the pandemic to ensure educational growth continued.

"They are the ones that did the planning, did the work, pushed out the instruction, analyzed the

NWEA data and worked in their own professional learning communities," she said.

Because of the success of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton, many schools are currently seeing an increase in enrollment.

"It didn't take long for the word to get out on the street, what was occurring here at this particular school,"

Ware explained. "If you are transferring into Saint Clare/ Saint Paul School, you might be a grade level behind in mathematics, reading, or both, but because of the NWEA Assessments we are going to meet you where you are and get you where you need to be."

"Because of NWEA, no one knows your kids the way we do," D'Arienzo added.

Cathedral hosts large celebration in honor of Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

SCRANTON – It has been nearly five centuries since God sent Mary as his messenger – appearing before Blessed Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian – but the importance of that apparition continues to inspire generations.

On Sunday, Dec. 11, hundreds of people filled the Cathedral of Saint Peter to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Cathedral celebration, organized by the parishes of Saint John Neumann and Saint Paul of the Cross in South Scranton, was moved downtown to draw even more people from across the city.

“It was an amazing event. We had a very big crowd come out,” Adriano Torres explained. “If we want to grow this community, it is so important to do events like this.”

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant for the Mass, which was followed by a festival across the street at the Diocesan Pastoral Center.



Giovanny Crespo participates in the Presentation of Juan Diego during the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Dec. 11, 2022.

“It is with the deepest gratitude that we thank the bishop for celebrating this Mass with us and for the people of the Cathedral who let us use their wonderful church,” Father Jonathan

Kuhar, pastor of the South Scranton parishes, said.

The annual Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego on December 9, 10 and 12, 1531 in Tepeyac, near present-day Mexico City. The Blessed Mother’s appearance is believed to have resulted in millions of conversions to Catholicism.

Deysi Fuentes attended the Cathedral Mass and celebration with her family, including several children.

“We have to teach our youth our traditions. We guide them in faith towards God,” she explained. “It is a way to show our children where we come from and our traditions that enrich our countries.”

Fuentes pointed out that a milestone anniversary for Our Lady of Guadalupe is quickly approaching.

“We are nine years away from celebrating the 500th anniversary of the first time she appeared to Juan Diego,” Fuentes said.

While the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is especially important to Hispanics, Father Kuhar reminds everyone that she



Hundreds of people gathered for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Dec. 11, 2022. (Photos/Mike Melisky)



is the Patroness of the Americas, and we should all celebrate her.

“She is our patroness, all of us – North (America), South (America) and Central America – and it is a wonderful thing that we get to celebrate her all together in Scranton,” he said.

In addition to the Cathedral Mass in Scranton, Bishop Bambera also celebrated Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Monday, Dec. 12 at Saint Nicholas Parish in Wilkes-Barre. Prior to the Mass, the faithful spent two hours processing through the streets of the Diamond City with a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Parishes in East Stroudsburg, Meshoppen, Jermyn and Hazleton also held Feast Day celebrations.

“At a time when they needed a savior, Mary brought to them the Good News,” Father Kuhar added.

Guadalupe Torch arrives at Saint Matthew Parish



Parishioners of Saint Matthew Parish escort the Guadalupe Torch through the streets of East Stroudsburg on Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022. Each year, the torch begins its journey in Mexico City and ends in New York.

EAST STROUDSBURG – In what has become an important community tradition, the Guadalupe Torch arrived in the Poconos on Sunday, Dec. 4, just days before the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The torch, officially known as Carrera Antorcha Guadalupeana, begins its journey each year in Mexico City, crosses the border into the United States and ends in New York City.

For the last several years, parishioners from Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg have welcomed the torch into the Diocese of Scranton as part of its long journey.

“It’s a special event. Everybody is included,” parishioner Karla Carrasco, said.

Carrasco said the torch has special significance, connecting families who have relatives on both sides of the United States-Mexico border, that cannot be together for one reason or another.

“All of those people that touch it and bear it and all those families from Mexico who aren’t able to be with their families here in the United States, they are able to touch the torch and know that their loved ones touched it in Mexico,” she explained.

Stephanie Albuja came back from college just to see the Guadalupe Torch arrive locally

this year. She participated in a procession with the torch through the streets that ended at Saint Matthew Parish.

“I think it’s very important to have events like this in public because it attracts other people that aren’t from the parish or are from other churches and they can all come and celebrate with us,” Albuja said.

Keyla Carrasco emphasized the torch procession is not just for the Hispanic community.

“It is incredible seeing everyone gathered together, different colors, different races,” she explained. “It is something that touches everybody when they see the replica of the Blessed Virgin Mary that accompanies the torch.”

Carrasco said she grows in her faith each year by participating in the torch procession.

“You see you’re not alone in your faith,” she explained.

Miguel Vaca, who came to the Poconos nearly 30 years ago, is happy to see more people getting involved in the procession each year.

“We have not only Mexican people, but we have people from Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and all those countries that speak Spanish,” Vaca said. “We get together and we experience the love that we give to the Virgin Mary and the love that the Virgin Mary gives to us.”

Catedral acoge gran celebración en honor a la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

SCRANTON – Han pasado casi cinco siglos desde que Dios envió a María como su mensajera, apareciendo ante el Beato Juan Diego, un indio azteca, pero la importancia de esa aparición sigue inspirando a generaciones.

El domingo 11 de diciembre, cientos de personas llenaron la Catedral de San Pedro para celebrar la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. La celebración de la Catedral, organizada por las parroquias de Saint John Neumann y Saint Paul of the Cross en South Scranton, se trasladó al centro para atraer a más personas de toda la ciudad.

“Fue un evento increíble. Salíó una multitud muy grande”, explicó Adriano Torres. “Si queremos hacer crecer esta comunidad, es muy importante hacer eventos como este”.

El Reverendísimo Joseph C. Bambera, Obispo de Scranton, fue el celebrante principal de la Misa, a la que siguió un festival al otro lado de la calle en el Centro Pastoral Diocesano.

“Es con la más profunda gratitud que agradecemos al obispo por celebrar esta misa con nosotros y a la gente de la Catedral que nos permitió usar su maravillosa iglesia”, dijo el padre Jonathan Kuhar, párroco de las parroquias de South Scranton.



Cientos de personas se reunieron para la Misa de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en la Catedral de San Pedro en Scranton el 11 de diciembre de 2022. (Fotos/Mike Melisky)

La Fiesta anual de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe conmemora la aparición de la Virgen María a Juan Diego el 9, 10 y 12 de diciembre de 1531 en Tepeyac, cerca de la actual Ciudad de México. Se cree que la aparición de la Santísima Madre resultó en millones de conversiones al catolicismo.

Deysi Fuentes asistió a la Misa y celebración de la Catedral con su familia, incluidos varios niños.

“Tenemos que enseñar a nuestra juventud nuestras tradiciones. Los guiamos en la fe hacia Dios”, explicó. “Es una manera de mostrar a nuestros niños de dónde venimos y nuestras tradiciones que enriquecen a nuestros países”.

Fuentes señaló que se acerca

rápido un aniversario histórico para Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

“Estamos a nueve años de celebrar el 500 aniversario de la primera vez que se apareció a Juan Diego”, dijo Fuentes.

Si bien la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe es especialmente importante para los hispanos, el Padre Kuhar les recuerda a todos que ella es la Patrona de las Américas y que todos debemos celebrarla.

“Ella es nuestra patrona, todos nosotros, Norte (América), Sur (América) y Centroamérica, y es algo maravilloso que podamos celebrarla todos juntos en Scranton”, dijo.

Además de la Misa en la Catedral de Scranton, el obispo Bambera también celebró la Misa por la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe el lunes 12 de diciembre en la Parroquia de San Nicolás en Wilkes-Barre. Antes de la Misa, los fieles pasaron dos horas en procesión por las calles de la Ciudad Diamante con una estatua de la Santísima Virgen María.

Las parroquias de East Stroudsburg, Meshoppen, Jermyn y Hazleton también celebraron el Día de la Fiesta.

“En un momento en que necesitaban un salvador, María les trajo la Buena Nueva”, agregó el Padre Kuhar.

Llega la Antorcha Guadalupana en la Parroquia de San Mateo



Los feligreses de la parroquia de Saint Matthew escoltan a la Antorcha Guadalupana por las calles de East Stroudsburg el domingo 4 de diciembre de 2022. Cada año, la antorcha comienza su viaje en la Ciudad de México y termina en Nueva York.

EAST STROUDSBURG – En lo que se ha convertido en una importante tradición comunitaria, la Antorcha Guadalupana llegó a Poconos el domingo 4 de diciembre, solo unos días antes de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

La antorcha, conocida oficialmente como Carrera Antorcha Guadalupana, inicia su recorrido cada año en la Ciudad de México, cruza la frontera con Estados Unidos y termina en la Ciudad de Nueva York.

Durante los últimos años, los feligreses de la parroquia de Saint Matthew en East Stroudsburg han recibido la antorcha en la Diócesis de Scranton como parte de su largo viaje.

“Es un evento especial. Todos están incluidos”, dijo la feligresa Karla Carrasco.

Carrasco dijo que la antorcha tiene un significado especial, conectando familias que tienen parientes en ambos lados de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México, que no pueden estar juntos por una u otra razón.

“Todas esas personas que la tocan y la llevan y todas esas familias de México que no pueden estar con sus familias aquí en los Estados Unidos, pueden tocar la antorcha y saber que sus seres queridos la tocaron en México.” Ella explicó.

Stephanie Albuja regresó de la

universidad solo para ver llegar la Antorcha Guadalupana a nivel local este año. Participó en una procesión con la antorcha por las calles que terminó en la Parroquia San Mateo.

“Creo que es muy importante tener eventos como este en público porque atrae a otras personas que no son de la parroquia o son de otras iglesias y todos pueden venir y celebrar con nosotros”, dijo Albuja.

Keyla Carrasco enfatizó que la procesión de antorchas no es solo para la comunidad hispana.

“Es increíble ver a todos reunidos, diferentes colores, diferentes razas”, explicó. “Es algo que conmueve a todo el mundo cuando ve la réplica de la Santísima Virgen María que acompaña a la antorcha”.

Carrasco dijo que crece en su fe cada año al participar en la procesión de antorchas.

“Ves que no estás solo en tu fe”, explicó.

Miguel Vaca, quien llegó a Poconos hace casi 30 años, está feliz de ver a más personas involucrarse en la procesión cada año.

“No solo tenemos gente mexicana, tenemos gente de Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela y todos esos países que hablan español”, dijo Vaca. “Nos reunimos y experimentamos el amor que le damos a la Virgen María y el amor que la Virgen María nos da a nosotros”.



Los chinillos lideran el baile en un festival después de la Misa en el Centro Pastoral Diocesano en Scranton.

Supreme Court appears ready to support web designer in free speech case

WASHINGTON (CNS) - In a case examining the scope of free speech protected by the First Amendment, the Supreme Court Dec. 5 ultimately seemed to favor a broad view of free speech.

In this case, the speech involved what a graphic designer who creates websites should not have to say.

Colorado designer Lorie Smith, who runs a web design company, has said she should not be required to create wedding websites for same-sex couples based on her Christian beliefs about marriage.

Colorado state law forbids

businesses from discriminating based on sexual orientation. Smith contends her First Amendment right to free speech exempts her.

But she lost her case in the lower court when the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the state has a compelling interest to protect its citizens "from the harms of discrimination." The attorney representing Smith, specifically argued that companies whose work centers around expression have First Amendment protections from being compelled to say things that go against their personal beliefs.

Peoples Security Bank & Trust contributes to Diocesan Scholarship Foundation



Pictured, from left: Thomas Tulaney, President & COO, Peoples Security Bank & Trust; Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education & Superintendent of Catholic Schools; and Jim Bebla, Diocesan Secretary for Development.

SCRANTON – On Nov. 29, 2022, Peoples Security Bank & Trust made a significant contribution to the Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation in support of need-based tuition assistance for students attending a Diocesan Catholic school. The donation is part of the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program operated by Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development.

Peoples Security Bank & Trust presented the Diocesan Scholarship Foundation with a \$25,000 gift through the EITC program. Over the last five years, Peoples Security Bank & Trust has generously donated \$127,500 to Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton.

"We appreciate the continued generous support of Peoples Security Bank & Trust. This commitment has a significant impact in the lives of our Catholic school families," Jim Bebla, Diocesan Secretary for Development, said at the check presentation.

Church must take seriously the problems, needs of workers, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - All workers should feel welcomed by the church and know that their needs and problems are taken seriously, Pope Francis said.

In fact, labor and employment are experiencing "a phase of transformation that needs to be accompanied," he told members of Italy's Movement of Christian Workers during an audience at the Vatican Dec. 9.

"Social inequalities, forms of slavery and exploitation, family poverty due to the lack of work or poorly paid work are realities that must be listened to in our church communities. They are more or less forms of exploitation - let us call things by their real name," he said.

The movement, which was celebrating the 50th anniversary of its official establishment, promotes the church's teachings and Christian values in society, in the world of work and in government policies.

Pope Francis asked members to make a special commitment to bringing the concerns and problems of workers to the many levels of the church community.

"It is important that workers feel at home in parishes, associations, groups and movements; that their problems are taken seriously, that their call for solidarity can be heard," the pope told them.

Pope asks governments to grant clemency to prisoners

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Pope Francis is writing to all the heads of state around the world, asking them to consider granting some prisoners clemency at Christmas.

The Vatican press office said Dec. 12 that the pope is asking government leaders to consider freeing or reducing the sentences of men and women they believe would benefit from such a gesture of mercy "so that this time marked by tensions, injustices and conflicts may be opened to the grace that comes from the Lord."

Pope Francis has made a special effort to maintain regular contact with prisoners, to meet them in Rome and on his trips around the world.



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Follow Diocese of Scranton on Facebook for live launch event and further details.

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As Dallas charter turns 20, abuse has become issue for much of society

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Twenty years ago, in 2002, the revelations of clergy sexual abuse and its cover-up in the Archdiocese of Boston were the metaphorical bombshell that fell on the Catholic Church in the United States.

The U.S. bishops, when they met that June in Dallas, approved the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” a comprehensive set of procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy.

Its one-strike-and-you’re-out policy did just that — permanently removing from public ministry those priests against whom abuse allegations were substantiated.

Twenty years later, at their assembly in Baltimore Nov. 14-17, the bishops acknowledged the charter’s anniversary and said that they have made steps in addressing clergy sexual abuse and would continue to listen, care for and walk with survivors.

Over the past 20 years, the fallout from the Boston revelations has touched nearly every diocese. Dozens of dioceses have filed for bankruptcy protection to reach a

group settlement on claims filed by abuse survivors. Many of those dioceses, though, have now emerged from bankruptcy.

The most recent diocese to announce it would file for bankruptcy protection was the Diocese of Santa Rosa, California, which said Dec. 5 it would file for Chapter 11 protection between Dec. 31 and March 1.

The problem of sexual abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults is not of course just the sole province of the Catholic Church.

The Boy Scouts of America had to declare bankruptcy in 2020 after accusations of abuse roiled the organization.

Abuse has seeped into sports, in particular gymnastics. Former physician Larry Nassar is expected to spend the rest of his life in prison following his conviction five years ago on multiple charges of abuse of young gymnasts. This year, youth hockey was in the headlines about abuse cases.

On Nov. 11, a doctor who spent two decades providing medical care to youth hockey teams in Michigan

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People



and Minnesota was charged in multiple sex assault cases.

High-ranking churchmen in other parts of the world have either had to face accusations of abuse or have admitted to abusive acts. In August of this year, the Southern Baptist Convention acknowledged a federal investigation had begun into how it treated abuse accusations. And this just scratches the surface.

In an interview earlier this year with Catholic News Service, Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory of Washington recalled when he was president of the U.S. bishops’ conference in 2002,

when the Boston scandal broke, and his first of 13 visits to the Vatican regarding the charter.

“I was told that this was an American problem. And then it was suggested that it was an English-speaking problem,” he said.

“Well, now it doesn’t just speak English. It speaks Polish, it speaks German, it speaks Spanish,” he said, referring to abuse crises that have emerged in other countries. “The world has come to a much clearer awareness that this is an issue that has touched the church globally. Praise be God, Pope Francis has taken a much more direct, active and, I hope, effective response to these issues.”

The U.S. bishops have revised the original charter three times since its adoption — in 2005, 2011 and 2018.

In 2019, Pope Francis issued the “motu proprio” “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” (“You are the light of the

world”), which revises and clarifies norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable for protecting abusers worldwide.

At a June meeting that year, the U.S. bishops passed three new bishop accountability reforms, and they establish a third-party reporting system for allegations of violations by bishops.

The abuse crisis has few, if any winners. A survivor may feel cheered at having his or her story acknowledged and believed, but it hardly wipes away the original abuse.

“We have suffered serious loss of credibility” as bishops, Cardinal Gregory said in a second CNS interview. “We have many wonderfully generous, honest, open, transparent and believable bishops. But it only takes one or two to undermine all of the hard work they have done.”

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The Catholic Light

— 2023 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE —

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It is said that we stand on the shoulder of giants.

Sir Isaac Newton gave the phrase its popularity in the 17th century in a letter he wrote to Robert Hooke, the famous English polymath. In this letter by which he agreed to collaborate with Hooke, he spoke briefly about the notion of how we benefit from the work and energy of those that have gone before us in the pursuit of deeper knowledge and discovery.

I remember well this becoming a mantra for me when my best friend's mother — my second mother — used this phrase as a reminder that I stand on the shoulders of so many influential (though unknown to the rest of the world) men and women who have formed me into the man, into the priest, that I am now.

Several days ago, one of those giants died. Miriam Heverline, who for 30 years directed our Diocesan Office for Missionary Education, fell asleep in Christ after a life of 90 years well lived. Miriam was an intimidating woman, not at all feared or unapproachable, but she truly made one timid in her zero-tolerance for any person who wasn't "mission-minded," a term she coined — or at the very least had ownership of — in her tireless work as an evangelizer for the Missions.

Miriam was small in stature. That's something for me to say, as I am a rather short individual myself. Father Mike Kloton, one of my predecessors in this office, recently said to me that Miriam and I saw eye to eye...I say nay-nay. I towered over her four-foot-something frame. While I towered over her in terms of physical height, she towered over me and others as a giant.

In the course of her life, Miriam accomplished much. One of her unfinished works is an autobiography entitled, "I was picked up by an elephant..." This book was to serve as her memoir,

not as a self-aggrandizing story, but as another tool for missionary education. She may have been short in stature, but she was a force of missionary zeal and helped to direct the hearts and souls of many to see in the poor and marginalized the face of Jesus. It's upon her shoulders that I stand, and many others do as well.

That said, Miriam would redirect our attention from herself to the Missionary Himself, Jesus Christ. She would remind us of the words of our Lord, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Mt 28:19-20)

Miriam went to many nations, not all, but her most important "going" was here in Scranton. She inspired so many to look beyond our own backyards and see beyond the world we know. Miriam pointed to the lost and broken, the poor and alone, the outcast and the sinner, the sick and the poor in spirit, the tall and the short. And upon her shoulders we stand.

Requiescat in pace. Let us go forth.



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Papal Intention for December 2022

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We pray that volunteer non-profit organizations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.

Despite ‘firm opposition’ by bishops, Biden signs Respect for Marriage Act

WASHINGTON (CNS) – On Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2022, President Joe Biden signed the Respect for Marriage Act after it passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 258-169.

The bill legalizes same-sex marriage into law.

The president praised Congress for a measure the U.S. Catholic bishops and other religious leaders have said does not clearly protect the religious freedom of churches and individuals who believe in traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

Prior to the House vote, the chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth said he was “gravely disappointed.”

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, said Dec. 1 that the measure “fails to include clear, comprehensive and affirmative conscience protections for religious organizations and individuals who

uphold the sanctity of traditional marriage that are needed.”

Decades of social and legal developments “have torn sexuality, childbearing, and marriage from each other in the public consciousness,” Bishop Barron said in a statement released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“Much of society has lost sight of the purpose of marriage and now equates it with adults’ companionship,” he said.

“We affirm our respect for the dignity of all engaged in this debate and acknowledge differing perspectives in our civil society,” Bishop Barron added, “but the impact of this bill will only contribute to the diminishment of the sacredness and integrity of marriage in our society.”

The bill codifies the Supreme Court’s 2015 ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that found a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. It also protects interracial marriage.

Confirmation conferred at Jessup parish



The recent Solemnity of Christ the King provided the setting at Queen of Angels Parish in Jessup when a young parishioner, Nicholas Paul Graziano, received the Sacrament of Confirmation in Saint Michael Church. The newly confirmed Nicholas Paul is pictured with his sponsor, Paul McDonough, and Father Gerard McGlone, pastor of Queen of Angels.

CTV: CATHOLIC TELEVISION								330 Wyoming Ave. Scranton, PA 18503 (570) 207-2219		
DECEMBER SCHEDULE										
	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY			
12:00: AM	DAILY MASS	SUNDAY MASS (Encore)	DAILY MASS (Encore)							
1:00 AM	FR SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	(1:10AM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	THE JOURNEY HOME (Encore)	MOTHER ANGELICA LIVE CLASSICS	EWTN LIVE (Encore)	THE WORLD OVER (Encore)	EWTN NEWS IN DEPTH			
1:30 AM		EWTN GALLERY	EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Encore)							
2:00 AM	LIVING DIVINE MERCY		EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY			
2:30 AM	PARABLE		EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY			
3:00 AM	SPECIALS	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOG	SPECIALS	GOSPEL GLIMPSES	LIFE ON THE ROCK	PHILOSOPHER'S BENCH	SETTING CAPTIVES FREE			
3:30AM		DEFENDING LIFE		PAPAL AUDIENCE(3:15)	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY (Call in thurs)		AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY			
4:00 AM	EWTN LIVE (Encore)	CHURCH UNIVERSAL	THE CREED	REFLECTIONS (4:15)	BOB AND PENNY LORD	WEB OF FAITH 2.0	SAVORING OUR FAITH			
4:30 AM		SUNDAY BEST WITH FR GROESCHEL	THEY MIGHT BE SAINTS	THE HERESIES	STONES AND PEARLS	BATTLE READY	ICONS			
5:00 AM	THE REFORMATION	EWTN BOOKMARK	THE PHILOSOPHER'S BENCH	DOMINICAN SISTERS	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY	EWTN SPECIALS	FROM THE HEART WITH MOTHER ANGELICA			
5:30 AM	AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED	CATHOLIC VIEW FOR WOMEN	LIFE IS WORTH LIVING	BEHOLD THE MAN			CATHOLICS COME HOME			
6:00 AM	ANGELUS WITH POPE FRANCIS	EWTN ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS								
6:30 AM	THE HERESIES	G.K. CHESTERTON	CHURCH AND THE POOR	THE MIRACLE HUNTER	SAINTS VS SCOUNDRELS	THE CHOICES WE FACE	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE			
7:00 AM	THE CHAPLET OF ST. MICHAEL					STATIONS OF THE CROSS	CHAPLET OF ST. MICHAEL			
7:30 AM	HOLY LAND ROSARY									
7:50 AM	THE HOLY LAND ROSARY	LITANY OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY	LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME	ADVENT REFLECTIONS	LITANY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD	LITANY OF SACRED HEART	LITANY OF DIVINE CHILD			
8:00 AM	SUNDAY MASS (Live)	DAILY MASS (Live)								
9:00 AM	(9:20AM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	HOLY ROSARY WITH THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD								
9:30 AM	EWTN ROSARY FRANCISCANS	SUNDAY BEST WITH FR. GROESCHEL	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (ENCORE)	EWTN LIVE (ENCORE)	THE WORLD OVER (Encore)	ADV. CATECHISM/LUKAS			
10:00 AM	SUNDAY MASS ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL	RELIGIOUS CATALOG		MOTHER ANGELICA LIVE	LIVE WITH PASSION	FOCUS	EVENING PRAYER ST. PETERS CATHEDRAL	THE FRIAR		
10:30 AM		CHOICES WE FACE	OFOD/LIVE WITH PASSION/SPECIALS	ST ANN'S WEEKLY NOVENA	MUSIC AND THE SPOKEN WORD	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY	MY CATHOLIC FAMILY		
11:00 AM	EWTN NEWS IN-DEPTH	EVENING PRAYER ST. PETERS CATHEDRAL	KNOWING MARY THROUGH THE BIBLE	GOSPEL OF JOHN	MATTHEW'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS	LUKE: MEEK SCRIBE OF CHRIST	BOB & PENNY LORD PRESENT			
11:30 AM										
12:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS (Encore)	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, LIVE AT 12:10 p.m.						EWTN DAILY MASS (Encore)		
12:30PM		"DIOCESAN DATEBOOK" airs before and after Mass.								
1:00 PM	(1:20PM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	WOMEN OF GRACE						EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE		
1:30 PM	IN CONCERT	AT HOME WITH JIM & JOY	PRO LIFE WEEKLY	AT HOME WITH JIM & JOY	CHOICES WE FACE/OFOD	MARRIAGE...FOR BETTER FOREVER	DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MERCY			
2:00 PM		CALLED TO COMMUNION	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION	FR. SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	THE JOURNEY HOME	LIFE ON THE ROCK	EWTN ON LOCATION			
2:30 PM										
3:00 PM	THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY IN SONG									
3:20 PM	LIVE ADORATION FROM EWTN CHAPEL									
3:30 PM	THE ROSARY FROM LOURDES	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, (Encore)						ROSARY FROM LOURDES		
4:00 PM	VATICANO	THE HOLY ROSARY						SUNDAY VIGIL MASS ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL		
4:30 PM	SAVORING OUR FAITH	LUCY & FRIENDS	ADVENTURE CATECHISM/ LUKAS STORYTELLER	TRUTH IN THE HEART	CAT CHAT	THE ROAMIN' CATHOLIC				
5:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS AND EVENING PRAYER LIVE FROM ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL	EWTN BOOKMARK	THE CHOICES WE FACE	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE	WEB OF FAITH 2.0	THEY MIGHT BE SAINTS	GRAB YOUR CATECHISM			
5:30 PM		SPECIALS						THE CREED		
6:00 PM		EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Live)						THE MIRACLE HUNTER		
6:30 PM		SUNDAY PASSIONIST MASS	LIFE IS WORTH LIVING	THE HERESIES	LIVING DIVINE MERCY	VATICANO	SETTING CAPTIVES FREE	WALSINGHAM STORIES		
7:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, (Encore)						DAILY MASS		
7:30PM		THE HOLY ROSARY								
8:00 PM		DIOCESAN DATEBOOK								
8:00 PM	(8:20) LITANY OF SACRED HEART	THE JOURNEY HOME (Live)	OFOD OR SPECIALS (CAN BE 90 MINUTES)	EWTN LIVE	THE WORLD OVER (Live)	EWTN NEWS IN DEPTH	EWTN CINEMA			
8:30 PM	CATHOLICS COME HOME	MUSIC AND THE SPOKEN WORD								
9:00 PM	LIFE ON THE ROCK	EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Encore)								
9:30 PM	HOLY ROSARY W MOTHER ANGELICA	WEEKLY NOVENA TO ST. ANN	EVENING PRAYER ST. PETERS CATHEDRAL	FOCUS	LIVE WITH PASSION	WEEKLY NOVENA TO ST. ANN		HOLY ROSARY WITH MOTHER ANGELICA		
10:00PM	EWTN SPECIALS	THE WORLD OVER LIVE (ENCORE)	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (ENCORE)	FR. SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	PRO-LIFE WEEKLY	LIFE ON THE ROCK	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY			
10:30 PM					CATHOLIC SPHERE	ICONS SPOTLIGHT				
11:00PM	THE PHILOSOPHER'S BENCH	WOMEN OF GRACE						DEFENDING LIFE		
11:30PM	ADVENT REFLECTIONS	BATTLE READY	BEHOLD THE MAN	CROSSING THE GOAL	REAL LIFE CATHOLIC	CARPENTER'S SHOP	EWTN BOOKMARK			

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Notice Regarding Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor

It is the policy of the Diocese of Scranton to report any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement. If you are a victim of sexual abuse committed by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton, you are encouraged to immediately report the matter to law enforcement. If any priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton has cause or reason to suspect that a minor has been subjected to any form of abuse, including child sexual abuse, the matter will be reported to law enforcement.

It is also the policy of the Diocese to adhere to all civil and state regulations. To this end, the Diocese is equally committed to adhering to the norms of the *Code of Canon Law* and to upholding the tenets of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which includes supporting victims of sexual abuse in their pursuit of emotional and spiritual well-being. As such, information regarding an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor should also be reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mary Beth Pacuska at (570) 862-7551.

Aviso al Respetto de Reportar el Abuso Sexual de Un Menor de Edad

Es la norma de la Diócesis de Scranton reportar cualquier alegación de abuso sexual de un menor de edad a las autoridades. Si usted es una víctima de abuso sexual cometido por un sacerdote, diácono, religioso o empleado laico, o voluntario de la Diócesis de Scranton, usted está obligado a reportar el asunto inmediatamente a las autoridades de la ley.

Si algún sacerdote, diácono, religioso, empleado laico o voluntario de la Diócesis de Scranton tiene sospecha de que un menor de edad ha sido sujeto a cualquier forma de abuso, incluyendo abuso sexual de menor de edad, el asunto será reportado a las autoridades de la ley.

Es la norma de la Diócesis defender todas las regulaciones civiles y del estado. Al fin de que la Diócesis esté comprometida igualmente a defender las normas del Código de Derecho Canónico y defender los principios de la Carta Para la Protección de Niños y Jóvenes (Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos), lo cual incluye apoyar a las víctimas de abuso sexual en pos del bienestar emocional y espiritual.

Por eso, información respecto a una alegación del asunto sexual de un menor de edad, debe ser reportada a la Coordinadora Diocesana de Asistencia para Las Víctimas, Mary Beth Pacuska, a (570) 862-7551.

For more news and information visit dioceseofscranton.org

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Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation

Start the New Year off fresh by enrolling in a new learning session through the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation. Cycle 1 classes run Jan. 9 – Feb. 12, 2023 (Registration closes Jan. 4).

Courses include many options in English and Spanish, such as: Basic Catechist Formation; Disabilities in Parish Life: An Overview; Introduction to Scripture; Music in Liturgy; Prayer and Worship with Adolescents; Survey

of Catholic Doctrine; RCIA: A Process of Conversion, Catechesis and Community; Who Is Mary of Nazareth and Why Do We Care?

Visit <https://vlfccf.udayton.edu/calendar/> to view the calendar of courses and to register.

Chosen: Finding Our Identity in Christ

January 27-29, 2023, at Holy Family Center in Nanticoke

Calling all young women ages 21 – 40!

The Chosen retreat is designed with the intention to help young women begin to root their identity in Christ and find a community of other women pursuing their faith.

The retreat starts at 8 p.m.

on Friday, Jan. 27, and wraps up with 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Jan. 29. The weekend will include Mass, guided personal prayer, talks from speakers, small group discussion, rest/fellowship, and ending Saturday night with prayer teams and Adoration.

Loved ones, spouses and children are welcome to join together for the closing Mass on Sunday morning. Please email Kylie Ballinger (kballingstjc@gmail.com) or Shannon Kowalski (skowalski@dioceseofscranton.org) for more information.

Save the Dates!

The International Student Leadership Institute (ISLI) for high school students will be held Feb. 17-19, 2023, at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center in Dalton.

Young Adult Bible Study, presented by Ascension Press, will be offered on Tuesdays, beginning Feb. 7, 2023, from 6 to 8 p.m. in Scranton.

Series features in-depth study of Scripture with Jeff Cavins. Young adults, ages 18-40, are welcome.

More information will be forthcoming for both events.



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Prayer Requests for Priests

The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule is as follows:

December 15, Father Sean Carpenter; December 16, Father Eugene Carr; December 17, Father Edward Casey; December 18, Father John Chmil; December 19, Father Richard Cirba; December 20, Father Brian J.T. Clarke; December 21, Father Brian J. W. Clarke; December 22, Father Charles Connor; December 23, Father William Corcoran; December 24, Father David Cramer; December 25, Father William Culnane; December 26, Father Wilfredo Cusicanqui; December 27, Father Richard Czachor, V.E.; December 28, Father Vincent Dang; December 29, Father Mark DeCelles; December 30, Sulpician Father Daniel Doherty; December 31, Father John Doris; January 1, Pope Francis; January 2, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; January 3, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; January 4, Saint Peter Priestly Fraternity Father Anthony Dorsa; January 5, Jesuit Father James Duffy; January 6, Father Cyril Edwards, V.E.; January 7, Father Joseph Elston; January 8, Monsignor John Esseff; January 9, Father Joseph Evanko; January 10, Monsignor William Feldcamp; January 11, Father Neftali Feliz-Sena; January 12, Father Samuel Ferretti; January 13, Father Michael Finn; January 14, Father Richard Fox; January 15, Saint Peter Priestly Fraternity Father Thomas Fritschen; January 16, Father Martin Gaiardo; January 17, Father J. Duane Gavitt; January 18, Father Anthony Generose, J.V.

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Catholic Happenings Around the Scranton Diocese

Weekly Eucharistic Adoration — DEC. 16, hosted by St. Thomas More Parish in Lake Ariel; exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is held every Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Chapel of St. Thomas More Church, 105 Gravity Road, Lake Ariel. Weekly adoration of the Eucharistic Lord includes recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet during the 3 p.m. hour, evening prayers at 5:30 p.m., concluding with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 6 p.m. All faithful are welcome.

Weekend Pierogi & Soup Sale — DEC. 17 & 18, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Parish, 1309 West Locust St., West Scranton; pierogi and variety of soups are sold following Masses every weekend on Saturday at 4 p.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m. Soups include Manhattan clam chowder and beef vegetable. Cost per order: pierogi, \$8/dozen; soups, \$8/quart.

Advent Sunday Evening Offering: "The True Meaning of Christmas" — DEC. 18, presented by the Youth Ministry of Holy Cross Parish in Olyphant; Advent gathering of prayer and meditation in joyful preparation for Christmas begins at 6 p.m. Program also includes music and a Living Nativity performance by the children of the parish. All are welcome free of charge; free-will offerings will be accepted.

Advent Lessons & Carols — DEC. 18, presented by St. Jude Parish and St. Jude School in Mountain Top; program begins at 4 p.m. in St. Jude Church, 420 South Mountain Blvd., Mountain Top. Advent presentation is a liturgical celebration of Scripture readings and carols focusing on the mysteries of the Incarnation and Nativity of the Lord. For more information, contact Tracie Machalick at (570) 474-6315 or tmach@stjc.org.

Advent Deanery Penance Service — DEC. 19, hosted by St. John the Evangelist Parish in Pittston; Sacrament of Reconciliation (confessions) will be available beginning at 7 p.m. in St. John the Evangelist Church, 35 William St., Pittston, with several priests of the Greater Pittston Deanery presiding. All are welcome.

Tuesday Novena Devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua — DEC. 20, hosted by Our Lady of Hope Parish, 40 Park Ave., Wilkes-Barre; conclusion of the nine-week Saint Anthony Novena devotion held on Tuesday evening, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the parish church. Novena theme: "Life & Spirituality of St. Katharine Drexel: Patron Saint of Racial Injustice and Philanthropists." All faithful are welcome; for more information, call (570) 824-7832.

Twelve Days of Christmas Cash Raffle — DEC. 25-JAN. 5, sponsored by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Hanover Twp.; cash prizes will be drawn daily on Facebook. Each ticket costs \$20 for chance to win \$10,000 in cash prizes. For more information

& tickets, call (570) 823-6242 or visit: www.exhc.org.

Night of Eucharistic Adoration — JAN. 5, sponsored by the Diocesan Offices for Parish Life and Vocations; exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be hosted at St. Maria Goretti Church, 42 Redwood Drive, Laffin, beginning at 7 p.m. Adoration program includes a guest speaker, Sacrament of Reconciliation and social; live music provided by Joel Kankiewicz. All faithful are welcome.

Bereavement Support Group Sessions — JAN. 11, 18, 25 & FEB. 1, series of weekly gatherings addressing topics dealing with the grief process to enable participants find healing; Bereavement Support Group hosts seasonal meetings on Wednesday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 330 Wyoming Ave., Scranton (across from St. Peter's Cathedral). Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Cathedral Parish office at (570) 344-7231.

"Nazareth Group" Day of Discernment — JAN. 28, hosted by the Capuchin Sisters of Nazareth in Tunkhannock; Discernment Day

program presented by the Nazareth Group for girls in grades 9-12 will be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Capuchin Sisters' Mother of God Convent, 215 Wellwood Drive, Tunkhannock. Reservations are required at least one week in advance; contact Sister Angela of the Capuchin Sisters at (570) 836-2737.

10th Annual "Be Cool for Our School" Polar Plunge — JAN. 28, fundraiser to benefit Marian Catholic High School in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County; held at Mauch Chunk Lake in Jim Thorpe. Registration for "plungers" and spectators held from 10 to 11:30 a.m.; fee is \$35 per person. Polar plunge begins at noon. For more information or to pre-register, email mchspolarplunge@gmail.com, or call Kathy Goff at (610) 704-8037.

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*Christ bringing
LOVE to a
lonely world.*

*Christ bringing
HOPE to a
despairing world.*

*Christ bringing
FORGIVENESS
to a sinful world.*

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

May you know the power, wonder, strength, and joy of God's Love first made visible in a tiny child cradled in His mother's arms.



Knights' 'Coats for Kids' Christmas drive



Knights of Columbus Council 7622 of Jermyn continued their annual tradition of sponsoring a "Coats for Kids" drive for the Christmas season. With the help of donations from the community, the Knights were able to purchase more than 70 winter coats for children in need and distribute them through area charitable agencies, including Catholic Social Services (CSS) in Carbondale. Shown displaying some of the new coats for underprivileged kids this winter are, from left: Eileen Roman, CSS of Carbondale; K of C Council Deputy Grand Knight Mario Fitzgerald; Cathy Eltz and Kara Gnall, both of Carbondale CSS.

Blue Army Vigil Jan. 6 at Oblates

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 **Jan. 6** at Saint Joseph's Oblate Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laflin (Pittston).

Devotions begin Friday evening at 8 p.m. with recitation 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 and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 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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Entered Eternal Life:
November 18, 2022



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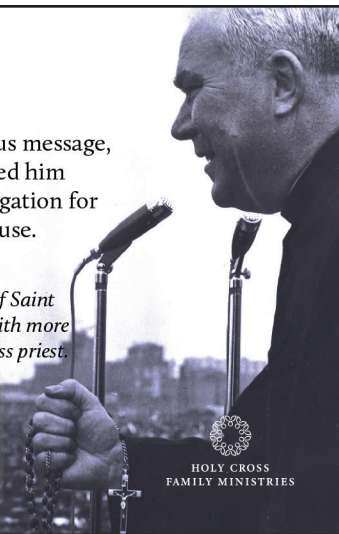


The Rosary Priest

Sainthood candidate Father Patrick Peyton is most known for his famous message, "The family that prays together stays together." Pope Francis has declared him Venerable and a possible medical miracle is under review by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. Please join us in prayer to advance his Cause. The world needs a Saint for Family Prayer!

Father Peyton has a connection to Scranton! He served as a sexton at the Cathedral of Saint Peter. Father Peyton later traveled the world conducting hundreds of Rosary Rallies with more than 28 million people in attendance. Through it all, he remained a humble Holy Cross priest.

**Bring your written prayer requests asking for Father Peyton's
intercession to the Rosary after the 12:10 pm Mass on Wednesday,
January 4, 2023, at the Cathedral of St. Peter, Scranton.**



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Christmas**



*May you have
the gift of Faith,
the blessing of Hope,
and the peace of His Love
at Christmas and always*

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*Wishing you Peace and Happiness this Christmas
and throughout the New Year!*



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Christmas*

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*Wishing you a Blessed
and
Joyous Holiday Season!*



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- John 4:8



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