



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
300 WYOMING AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

January 2023

Dear Parishioners of Annunciation Parish,

For nearly 100 years, the Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph has been faithfully serving in the Diocese of Scranton, primarily through the administration of parishes and various other ministries. It has been a blessing to have these faithful priests and brothers serving Jesus in our midst since 1929!

For those that might be unaware, the Oblates serve worldwide with provinces in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and Mexico. There is, however, only one province located here in the United States, with Oblate communities located in both California and Pennsylvania.

Like many other religious communities, the Oblates are facing many pressures, including most significantly, a reduction in vocations. As a result, the Oblates have informed the Diocese of Scranton they will no longer be able to staff Annunciation Parish as of June 30, 2023. I understand that this news is bittersweet – because of the love and devotion that many of you have for your pastor, Fr. Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J., and your assistant pastor, Fr. Victor Leon, O.S.J.

This announcement will obviously necessitate a change in pastoral leadership for Annunciation Parish later this summer – but be assured that parish life and all the ministries of your parish serving both the Anglo and Hispanic communities will continue. The Diocese will follow its normal protocol for pastoral vacancies to find and announce a new pastor of Annunciation Parish once the standard discernment process takes place.

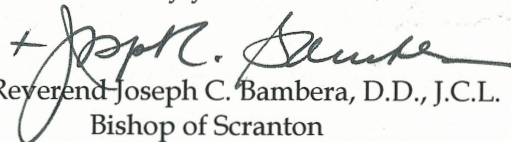
While saddened that the Oblates will be leaving the Hazleton-area, I want to stress that their service to the Diocese of Scranton will continue – centered at their religious house in Pittston. This change will actually allow the Oblates to better live out a unique element of their vocation – which involves living together in a community (of at least three confreres) in order to foster collaboration and mutual support.

Over the last several years, Annunciation Parish has proven itself a beacon of faith in the Mountain City. Through the generosity and support of the faithful and the entire Hazleton community, your parish has already completed the second phase of its restoration project and there is a continuing growth in Hispanic ministry. I know that with your prayers and hard work, this tremendous momentum will continue.

On a personal level, I hope you will join me in thanking Fr. Mariusz and Fr. Victor for the leadership they have provided to your parish community over the last 14 years. As they prepare to assume assignments elsewhere, please join me in praying for them and wishing them the best as this change takes place.

While change is never easy, I hope you will find comfort in the words of Saint Joseph Marello, founder of the Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph. He said, "He who is worried and full of anxiety in his work does an offense to God and does not say the Our Father from the heart. Let us accept purely and simply whatever God sends us, without being concerned or sad."

Faithfully yours in Christ,



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