



# *The Catholic Light*

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

**Weekly E-Newsletter**

**September 21, 2023**

**Support the ministries of our local church  
through the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal  
this weekend**

*We invite you to join us in answering*



EAST STROUDSBURG – April 8, 2023, is a day that Ellen Gomez of Bushkill will never forget.

With her family and friends looking on, the 57-year-old was baptized at the Church of Saint John in East Stroudsburg during the Easter Vigil Mass.

“I just feel good. I just feel like a new person,” Gomez told *The Catholic Light*.

Gomez grew up in the Bronx with her parents and five siblings before moving to the Poconos in 1995. While she attended church at a young age, Gomez said she never received the Sacrament of Baptism and always felt like something was missing in her life.

“I felt like I needed that blessing. I needed something. I never felt fully included,” she said.

After calling the Church of Saint John last year, staff members, including the parish deacon, made special accommodations to make sure Gomez could successfully complete RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) classes.

Because of generous gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal each year, the Diocesan Office for Parish Life is able to provide support and resources for parishes that have people participating in the RCIA Program.

As the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal launches in parishes this month, Ellen Gomez is just one of thousands of people who have benefitted from the generosity of parishioners in the past.

[Click Here to Read More About the Launch of the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal This Weekend](#)

[Click Here to Visit the New Website of the Diocesan Annual Appeal and Make a Gift/Pledge Now!](#)

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**Catholic Social Services helps change the lives  
of homeless veterans**



U.S. Navy veteran Joe Bates started serving his country a few years after high school. By the end of his career in 1986, he was writing work packages for fast-attack nuclear submarines.

During the ensuing decades, reality and economic pressures took their course, and Bates ended up homeless. Making ends meet – while trying to save money for an apartment – was just not possible.

“You have to have your first month, your last month, a security deposit and it all adds up,” he said.

After participating in a two-year program with the Veterans Administration, Bates found a new home in the former Saint Hedwig’s School in Kingston. The building, now owned by Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton, is known as Saint Hedwig’s Veterans Village.

The building has 12 apartments specifically designated for veterans who have a disability and were homeless at one time.

“It was exactly what I needed. It’s not too big. It’s not too small,” Bates said.

[Click Here to Read More About How Catholic Social Services Helps Homeless Veterans With Support from the Diocesan Annual Appeal](#)

## **"There is a lot of potential here"**

*Planning for new, permanent emergency shelter in Wilkes-Barre takes first step*



Planning for the new, permanent home of Mother Teresa's Haven, a shelter for homeless men operated by Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton, is now underway.

Agency leaders recently toured the space above Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen at 39 E. Jackson Street, which will soon be transformed into space that will be available for 20-24 men experiencing homelessness.

"I couldn't be more excited about being here, seeing the space and getting in," Harry Lyons, program director for Mother Teresa's Haven, said. "There is a lot of potential here."



In late April, the Wilkes-Barre zoning hearing board unanimously approved an application for a special exception to establish the shelter above the Kitchen.

“We have a very supportive community,” Joe Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, explained. “We met with the mayor. We met with the neighbors and met with King’s College. We have got all of this support but we need to make sure we keep talking to them.”

[Click Here to Read More About How Catholic Social Services Plans To Help Those in Need Because of Your Support of the Diocesan Annual Appeal](#)

## **Seminary provides men "intentional time to be with God"**



After a busy summer for many of our Diocesan seminarians – in which several attended World Youth Day in Portugal and two visited the Diocese of Sunyani in Ghana – a new semester of classes has just gotten underway.

Five seminarians are attending classes this fall at Saint Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore. Three are attending Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, one will be studying at Saint Andrew's College Seminary in S. Orange, N.J., and the final seminarian is serving his pastoral year at Saint Boniface and Saint Lawrence Parishes in Lycoming County.

At Saint Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Harrison Rapp of Dunmore has just entered his second year studying theology.

Since its founding in 1791, Saint Mary's Seminary has been supporting the formation of Holy men, including many from the Diocese of Scranton.

"It is really an intentional time to be with God and to just open your heart to the ways in which God wants to lead us," Rapp said.

[Click Here to Read More About How the Diocesan Annual Appeal Supports Seminarians and Efforts to Bring More Men to the Priesthood](#)

## Diocesan Annual Appeal plays critical role in Catholic education



A new academic year is underway for thousands of Catholic school students across the Diocese of Scranton.

As children and young adults return to their studies, they are returning to 19 schools that prioritize strong academic programs, a commitment to faith and a family-centered community where love and respect abound.

At Saint Jude School in Mountain Top, students, faculty and families work together to create a special environment.

“The kids that are in my class, that have been here since kindergarten, are all very close,” seventh grader Hannah Fauerbach said.

[Click Here to Read More About What Makes the Saint Jude School Community in Mountain Top Special and How Gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal Help That Effort](#)

## **Social Justice Grants help Parishes fulfill critical missions**





With the cost of groceries, fuel and other household expenses continuing to rise, Christine Ward has often found herself in need of a helping hand.

She is very thankful for the dedicated volunteers of Saint Paul Parish in Scranton's Green Ridge section, who operate a parish food pantry every Friday from the basement of Saint Clare Church.

"It is very important. We come twice a month and there is a lot of stuff that you can choose. They have a lot of choices," Ward said.

The pantry has seen its numbers skyrocket in recent years.

"People fall through the cracks every day that never thought they would fall between the cracks and sometimes we don't recognize, just in the general public around us, who those people are," food pantry volunteer Noreen Rowland said.

[Click Here to Read More About How Saint Paul Parish Uses a Social Justice Grant from the Diocesan Annual Appeal to Fulfill Its Mission](#)



# Thank You

for supporting the 2023  
Diocesan Annual Appeal

"I invite you to become the loving and compassionate Christ who multiplied loaves and fishes and fed the hungry multitudes. Thank you for supporting **Our Call To Serve** in your parish this weekend."

- Bishop Joseph C. Bambera



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