

# The Catholic Light

## DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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*Contemplate the greatness of God's  
love in the simplicity of a crèche*

### BISHOP BAMBERA'S 2023 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Eight hundred years ago as the Church celebrated the latter days of Advent and prepared to commemorate the birth of Jesus, a cherished tradition in our lives as Christians was born.

Traveling from Rome to Assisi after having just received approval from the Pope for his brotherhood, Saint Francis stopped along the way in the little Italian town of Greccio. Having visited the Holy Land, the caves in Greccio reminded Francis of the countryside of Bethlehem. So, he asked a local man named John to help him celebrate with the faithful of the town the holy night of Christmas by replicating the original scene in Bethlehem.

Saint Francis' biographers described in detail what then took place in Greccio: "On December 25, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up the holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox, and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio,



**The Nativity scene is revealed in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 9, 2023. The creche is a reproduction of the scene in Greccio, Italy, where Saint Francis of Assisi staged the first Nativity scene in 1223. The baby Jesus will be placed in the manger Dec. 24. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)**

there were no statues – just a manger, an ox, and a donkey; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present."

That Christmas night, eight centuries ago, began the tradition of the Nativity scene that we maintain in our churches and in our homes. For all its familiarity and the tendency that we may have to diminish its significance in the face of so many other competing symbols and traditions associated with Christmas, we would do well to pause at some point in this sacred season to reflect upon the message that lies at the heart of this treasured scene.

Like the faithful people of Greccio, Italy, look beyond the statues or figurines and imagine yourself in Bethlehem in a cave, with

animals, straw, dirt, and a promise provided by a newborn baby boy.

In God's plan to save His people, Jesus didn't set Himself apart from the ordinariness of human life.

No, Jesus immersed Himself in the human condition of our world, for all its beauty and peace, its brokenness and pain, its sin and suffering. And He did so for a reason: In coming into our lives as a baby born in a manger – hardly a sign of power, self-sufficiency or pride – God lowered Himself so that we could walk with Him and He could stand beside us, not above or far from us, to lead us on the pathway to His promise of life and peace.

*Continued on Page 3*





## DIOCESE OF SCRANTON MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with Our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

## POLICY STATEMENT

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

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## Friday, December 15, 2023

### The Miracle of Bethlehem, 11:00 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. 19 at 10:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.; Tuesday, Dec. 26 at 8:00 p.m.

## Sunday, December 24, 2023

### 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: Monday, 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.

### Advent Reflections, 9:30 p.m.

On the fourth week of Advent, Fr. Bernardino Maria of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal speaks on God's sense of urgency, his timing and his plan from St. Catherine's in Newry.

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

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

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

The traditional "Midnight Mass" of Christmas live from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

## Monday, December 25, 2023

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

Midnight Mass and Procession to the Grotto of the Nativity from the Church of St. Catherine in Bethlehem, presided over by the Patriarch of Jerusalem of the Latins.

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

Live from the center balcony of the Vatican, Pope Francis delivers his Christmas blessing to the city of Rome and the world.

Encore: Sunday, Dec. 25 at 3:00 p.m. and 11:30 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.



# Contemplar la grandeza del amor de Dios en la sencillez de una guardería

## *Mensaje de Navidad del obispo Bambera para 2023*

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

Hace ochocientos años, mientras la Iglesia celebraba los últimos días de Adviento y se preparaba para conmemorar el nacimiento de Jesús, nació una tradición muy apreciada en nuestras vidas como cristianos.

Viajando de Roma a Asís, después de haber recibido la aprobación del Papa para su fraternidad, San Francisco se detuvo en el camino en la pequeña ciudad italiana de Greccio. Después de haber visitado Tierra Santa, las cuevas de Greccio le recordaron a Francisco el campo de Belén. Entonces, le pidió a un lugareño llamado John que lo ayudara a celebrar con los fieles del pueblo la noche santa de Navidad replicando la escena original de Belén.

Los biógrafos de San Francisco detallaron lo que ocurrió entonces en Greccio: “El 25 de diciembre, llegaron a Greccio frailes de diversas partes, junto con gente de las granjas de la zona, que trajeron flores y antorchas para iluminar la noche santa. Cuando Francisco llegó, encontró un pesebre lleno de heno, un buey y un asno. Todos los presentes experimentaron una alegría nueva e indescriptible ante la presencia de la escena navideña. Luego, el sacerdote celebró solemnemente la Eucaristía sobre el pesebre, mostrando el vínculo entre la Encarnación del Hijo de Dios y la Eucaristía. En Greccio no había estatuas: sólo un pesebre, un buey y un burro; el belén fue representado y experimentado por todos los presentes”.

Aquella noche de Navidad, hace ocho siglos, comenzó la tradición del Belén que mantenemos en nuestras iglesias y en nuestros hogares. A pesar de toda su familiaridad y la tendencia que podemos tener a disminuir su importancia frente a tantos otros símbolos y tradiciones asociados con la Navidad, haríamos bien en hacer una pausa en algún momento de esta temporada sagrada para reflexionar sobre el mensaje que se esconde en nosotros, en el corazón de esta preciosa escena.

Al igual que el pueblo fiel de Greccio, Italia, mira más allá de las estatuas o figurillas e imagínate en Belén, en una cueva, con animales, paja, tierra y la promesa de un bebé recién nacido.

En el plan de Dios para salvar a su pueblo, Jesús no se apartó de lo ordinario de la vida humana. No, Jesús se sumergió en la condición humana de nuestro mundo, a pesar de toda su belleza y paz, su quebrantamiento y dolor, su pecado y sufrimiento. Y lo hizo por una razón: al venir a nuestras vidas como un bebé nacido en un pesebre –difícilmente un signo de poder, autosuficiencia u orgullo– Dios se abajó para que pudiéramos caminar con Él y Él pudiera estar a nuestro lado, ni encima ni lejos de nosotros, para guiarnos por el camino hacia su promesa de vida y paz.

Sin embargo, con demasiada frecuencia nos apresuramos a abandonar la cueva de Belén y recorrer otros caminos para lograr significado y propósito en nuestras vidas. Dejamos de lado el mensaje de salvación proclamado a través de los tiempos por la vida, el amor, la misericordia y el perdón de Jesús. Somos reacios a atender su invitación a seguir sus pasos. Entonces nos preguntamos por qué nuestras vidas son tan inestables y la paz en nuestros corazones, nuestros hogares y nuestro mundo parece tan difícil de alcanzar. Nos preguntamos por qué Dios no puede proporcionarnos una salida al sufrimiento y al dolor en Israel, Ucrania, en demasiados lugares del mundo, en nuestras fronteras, en nuestros vecindarios, en nuestras familias y en nuestros corazones.

Hermanos y hermanas, la buena noticia y la bendición de la Navidad es que Dios ya nos ha provisto un camino a seguir con esperanza si somos lo suficientemente sabios y humildes para abrazar el mensaje de Belén y el nacimiento de su Hijo.

Que oremos durante estos preciados días por la paz en nuestro mundo atribulado, especialmente en Tierra Santa donde nació nuestro Príncipe de Paz. ¡Que abramos nuestro corazón a la gracia de Dios y al gran misterio de la salvación conquistado para nosotros a través de la sencilla historia iniciada en una cueva de Belén y que sigue siendo el verdadero y duradero motivo de esperanza del mundo!

Con gratitud por el privilegio de servir como su Obispo y con oraciones por una santa y bendecida Navidad para usted, su familia y todos sus seres queridos, estoy

Fielmente tuyo en Cristo,

Reverendísimo Joseph C. Bambera, DD, JCL  
Obispo de Scranton

# Bishop Bambera's 2023 Christmas Message

*Continued from Page 1*

All too often, however, we are quick to leave the cave of Bethlehem and travel other pathways to achieve meaning and



purpose in our lives. We set aside the message of salvation proclaimed throughout the ages by the life, love, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus. We're reluctant to heed his invitation to walk in his footsteps. Then we wonder why our lives are so unsettled and peace in our hearts, our homes and our world, appears to be so elusive. We wonder why God can't provide us with a way out of suffering and pain in Israel, Ukraine, far too many places throughout our world, at our borders, in our neighborhoods, in our families and in our hearts.

Brothers and sisters, the good news and blessing of Christmas is that God has already provided us a way forward with hope if we are wise and humble enough to embrace the message of Bethlehem and the birth of his Son.

May we pray during these cherished days for peace in our troubled world, especially in the Holy Land where our Prince of Peace was born. May we open our hearts to the grace of God and the great mystery of salvation won for us through the simple story begun in a cave in Bethlehem that continues to be the world's true and lasting reason for 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



# Pittston parishes host living nativity to celebrate the birth of Christ

PITTSTON – In an effort to emphasize that Christmas should center around the birth of Christ, the parishes of Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Joseph Mareello hosted a living nativity this year.

The event, complete with live animals, narration, and actors from the two parishes' religious education programs, took place on Dec. 3 in conjunction with the linked parish's annual tree lighting ceremony.

Confirmation students acted out the different parts of the living nativity and WBRE-TV reporter Gianna Galli participated as the narrator.

"We really wanted to celebrate the joy and birth of Christ in a special way as a parish family," Tommy Flynn, Director of Youth & Family Ministry, said. "I think they will remember that Christmas isn't all about the presents under the tree and Santa Claus, but they'll remember the real reason that Christ is why we celebrate Christmas and the birth of Him is why we're here."

Ava Argento, 13, a parishioner of Saint Joseph Mareello Parish, portrayed 'Mary' in the living nativity.

"I go to church a lot and I love acting so it was just really exciting to do this," she said.

The Pittston-area 8th grader said participating in the living nativity was special and she was encouraged by the large crowd that turned out.

"Christmas is about Christ and our Lord, and we should enjoy it with all of our families," Argento added.

Richard Rinish, 15, a parishioner of Saint John the Evangelist Parish, portrayed 'Joseph' and believes the living nativity helped bring home the true meaning of Christmas for many people.

"You actually got a visual representation instead of just reading about it," he said.

Father Joseph Elston, pastor of the two linked parishes, said the events depicted in the living nativity make our faith what it is.

"I want them to take away that this is a joyful season, that we should be thinking about one another, our families, and how wonderful our faith is," Father Elston said.



**Ava Argento, center, portrays Mary during a living nativity presentation at Saint Joseph Mareello Parish in Pittston on Dec. 3, 2023. (Photo/Dan Gallagher)**

"We should be thinking how beautiful this time of year is specifically because of what God gave to us in His Son."

"I think oftentimes we forget the real

reason for Advent – we're preparing for the birth of Christ – and I think a lot of times we get swept into everything else and forget about that," Flynn added.

## Nanticoke parish to present 'Miracle at Bethlehem' on Dec. 16 & 17

NANTICOKE – A beloved holiday tradition at Saint Faustina Kowalska Parish will continue this weekend as the play 'Miracle at Bethlehem' returns for a two-night showing.

The play, which depicts the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ, will be performed on Saturday, Dec. 16, and Sunday, Dec. 17, at 7 p.m. at the Saint Faustina Cultural Centre, 38 W. Church Street, Nanticoke. All are welcome to attend. A free will offering will be taken.

"The way the play is performed by the cast, they believe in it, and it draws everyone into the story," director Judy Minsavage said.

Father Brian Van Fossen, pastor, said the play helps the community relate to Jesus' birth in a new way, as opposed to simply reading about it in Scripture.

"When you see it actually lived out and you see people actually being part of that story, it really enters you into that story," Father Van Fossen explained. "Whether you can relate to

Joseph and Mary wandering the streets or whoever has a grasp on your imagination and allows you to realize that Jesus was real."

The presentation of the 'Miracle at Bethlehem' involves dozens of cast members and crew who handle lighting, sound and serve as ushers.

"The parish community works so hard at making sure the play is put forward and put forward in such a beautiful way," Father Van Fossen added.

In years past, the play was performed at the beginning of December, but this year, it is being held closer to Christmas itself to help the audience enter into the true meaning of the holiday.



**The 'Miracle at Bethlehem' is presented at the Saint Faustina Cultural Centre in Nanticoke on Dec. 4, 2021. The parish will once again present the beloved holiday tradition this year on Dec. 16 & 17. (Photos/Dan Gallagher)**



"Being closer to Christmas this year, I think the hustle and bustle of the Christmas holiday will be at its end and everyone will be ready to get into the real meaning (of the holiday) and how they really want to celebrate the birth of Christ," Minsavage said.

With Hallmark Christmas movies beginning in the summer and Christmas music on the radio beginning just after

Thanksgiving, Father Van Fossen believes the play, so close to Christmas, will help people to recognize the gift God gave to all of us.

"What this play allows us to do is break from that commercialism – to break from television and electronics – and to really 'smell the hay' and really allow those moments to really penetrate our lives," he said.



# Disconnecting from social media 'essential' to Christian life, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - To connect with God, Christians must disconnect from the "pollution of vain words and chatter" that reach them through social media and instead seek silence in the desert, Pope Francis said.

The desert is "the place of silence and essentials, where someone cannot afford to dwell on useless things, but needs to concentrate on what is indispensable in order to live," the pope said before praying the Angelus from his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square Dec. 10.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading from St. Mark, in which St. John the Baptist is described as "a voice of one crying out in the desert," the pope said that the saint's decision to preach in the desert is a reminder of the need to be "freed from the superfluous, to dig deeply within ourselves so as to hold on to what is truly important before God."

"Silence and sobriety - from words, from using things, from media and from social media" - are not just sacrifices offered to God, he said, but "essential elements of Christian life."

Pope Francis said that the power of St. John's preaching is linked to the silence he experienced in the desert, which allowed him to listen to the Holy Spirit.

"If someone does not know how to be quiet, it is unlikely they will have something good to say, while the more attentive the silence, the stronger the word," he said.

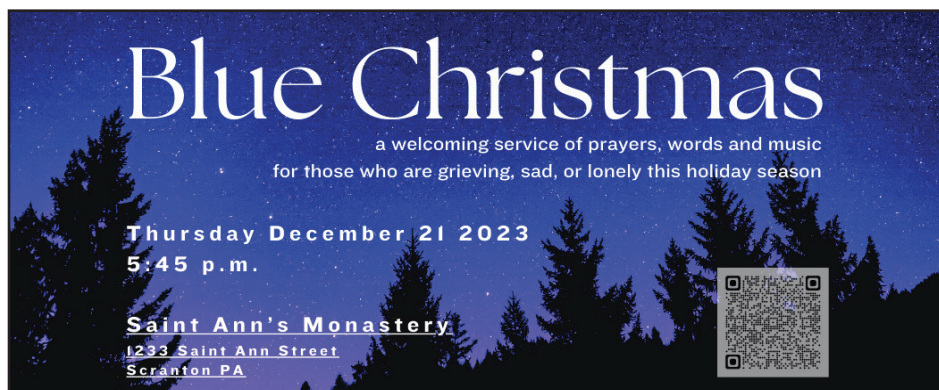
After praying the Angelus with some 25,000 visitors in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis praised the release of Armenian and Azerbaijani prisoners and expressed hope that peace will soon be achieved in the Southern Caucasus.

Pope Francis also asked that as Christmas approaches, concrete steps toward peace be taken to alleviate the pain of those suffering due to war.

"It is not easy; we know that. Certain conflicts have historically deep roots," he said. Yet the pope asked that "every effort be put toward addressing and removing the causes of conflict" while also "protecting civilians, hospitals, places of worship, freeing hostages and guaranteeing human rights."

"Let us not forget battered Ukraine, Palestine, Israel," he said.


## Catholic Mental Health chapter planning 'Blue Christmas' service in Scranton



**Blue Christmas**  
a welcoming service of prayers, words and music  
for those who are grieving, sad, or lonely this holiday season

**Thursday December 21 2023**  
5:45 p.m.

**Saint Ann's Monastery**  
1233 Saint Ann Street  
Scranton PA



SCRANTON - The NEPA Chapter of the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers is planning a "Blue Christmas" welcoming service of prayers and music for those experiencing grief, sadness or loneliness in anticipation of the upcoming Christmas season.

The "Blue Christmas" event will be offered on Thursday, Dec. 21, beginning

at 5:45 p.m. and hosted by the Basilica of Saint Ann, located on Saint Ann Street, West Scranton.

All are welcome to attend and be comforted by beauty, serenity and consolation in the midst of what can be a challenging time of year.

No registration is necessary.

# Yes, Christmas Eve is a Sunday. No, one Mass cannot satisfy *both* your Sunday and Christmas obligations



**By:**  
**Msgr. Dale Rupert**

**Diocesan Director  
of Worship**

Advent 2023 is the shortest that it can be, while last year, Advent 2022 was the longest. This year, there are only three full weeks of the liturgical season of Advent; last year there were four.

It all depends on what day of the week Christmas falls on in a given year. With Christmas this year being on a Monday, this makes the Fourth Sunday of Advent to be Christmas Eve as well.

December 24 is an important day liturgically, whether it falls on a Sunday or not. It is the day when we are at the threshold of the celebration of the Lord's birth.

The gospel this year is that of the Annunciation of the Lord by the angel Gabriel to Mary. This is the most important event in a series of events through a thousand years of preparation for the coming of the Messiah. When Mary says "yes" to the angel, Christ is conceived in her womb.

For Catholics, December 24 being a Sunday carries, of course, the obligation to attend Mass. Then Monday, the next day, December 25, also carries its own obligation to attend Mass.

There are then two separate obligations to be observed this year for Sunday and Monday, December 24 and 25; one attached to each day. They cannot both be fulfilled in attendance at one Mass.

This is a very rare occurrence in the liturgical calendar. It will not happen again until the year 2028. Hopefully these two back-to-back celebrations this year will help faithful Catholics to deepen the spirituality of the Christmas season!

## Christmas gift bags prepared for children in need



DUNMORE - Members of the Holy Name Society of Saints Anthony & Rocco Parish and the Saint Anthony's Playground Association in Dunmore recently assembled Christmas gift bags for children served by the Friends of the Poor in Scranton. The gift bags were distributed to the area students in their after-school programs just in time for the Christmas holiday.



# South, West Scranton parishes consolidate to form three new faith communities

SCRANTON — The beginning of the new liturgical year in the Catholic Church brought about new beginnings for six parishes in Scranton’s south and west sides.

Following a thorough period of discussion and consultation through the *Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process*, the parish communities of Saint John Neumann and Saint Paul of the Cross in South Scranton were consolidated on Nov. 26. The parish consolidations of Saint Ann Basilica and Saints Peter & Paul, West Scranton; and Saint Patrick and Saint Lucy, West Scranton, became official on Dec. 3.

Beginning in September, the four West Scranton parishes entered into two separate linkages, each shepherded by one pastor. The two South Scranton parishes linked in 2021.

Based on the *Vision 2030 Process* of examination of demographic changes in the communities, Mass attendance, sacramental participation, financial obligations and the availability of clergy, recommendations were proposed to create three parishes out of the previous six independent entities.

The consolidation of the two large South Scranton parishes has resulted in a new identity for the worship sites of Nativity of Our Lord Church, located at 633 Orchard St., and Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Church, 1217 Prospect Ave., as the former parishes are now united under the new name of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish.

“United as one community of faith there is so much we can do together,” Father Jonathan Kuhar, pastor of the new parish under the patronage of the renowned saint of modern times, proclaimed in the inaugural parish bulletin on the Feast of Christ the King. “Let us begin this work by imagining new ways of being community to each other and creative ways of doing the work of discipleship in the world.”

Sunday Mass times at the parish churches are as follows: Nativity of Our Lord, 9:30 and 11 a.m.; Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary, 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. (Spanish).

Sacred Hearts Church serves as the site for the weekday morning Masses, Tuesday thru Friday, at 8 a.m., and a Saturday Vigil Mass at 4 p.m. Nativity Church offers a Spanish-language liturgy on Thursday at 7 p.m., and their weekend Vigil Mass on Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

Father Kuhar implored the prayerful intercession of the new parish’s patroness and the blessed patrons of the two former parishes — Saint John Neumann and Saint Paul of the Cross.

Encouraging his new, united flock to act with urgency in carrying out the Lord’s work, the pastor shared the inspiring words of Mother Teresa, known as the “Saint of the Gutters” who visited the Diocese of Scranton on several occasions:

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We only have today. Let us begin.”

Saint Ann Basilica Parish now encompasses the nearby former Saints Peter & Paul Parish and its longtime worship site at 1309 West Locust St. in West Scranton.

As pastor of Saint Ann’s, Father Jim Paisley has guided the two parishes since they were linked in September. In assuming the pastoral reins, he becomes the first Scranton Diocesan priest to lead the parish after more than a century of pastorates filled by clergy from the Passionist Order of priests.

“The people of both parishes have been very understanding of the need for a consolidation,” Father Paisley said. “Although no one wants to see this kind of thing happen to their church, parishioners know that certain changes need to take place in order to secure a strong and vibrant (Catholic) future in West Scranton.”

He added that, since September, faithful from both Saint Ann’s and Saints Peter & Paul’s have collaborated and meshed well to work together on various events and endeavors, minister at the altar, serve in the choir, and attend Masses.

“They are forming a new parish family identity with each passing day,” Father Paisley noted. “We are blessed.”

The Basilica Church of Saint Ann, 1250 Saint Ann St., West Scranton, offers Sunday Masses at 8:30 & 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; and Monday Masses at 8 a.m., noon, 3:30 & 6 p.m. Weekday liturgies are also celebrated Tuesday thru Friday at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Saturday Masses are at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. (Sunday Vigil).

Saints Peter & Paul Church hosts a Sunday morning Mass at 11 a.m., and offers a Eucharistic liturgy on Monday at 9 a.m.

On a personal note, the new pastor acknowledged how members from the combined parishes have welcomed him with “open arms and loving hearts.”

“Both faith communities are kind and compassionate,” Father Paisley expressed, “and I am most grateful for their willingness to travel this journey of faith together.”

He further noted that the Passionist Community of Saint Ann’s Monastery and Basilica has been equally welcoming and supportive. “I am honored to share ministry of Saint Ann’s and Saints Peter and Paul’s with such a devoted Order of men.”

Under the spiritual leadership of their longtime pastor, Father Richard Fox, the consolidation of the Parish of Saint Patrick with Saint Lucy Parish adds to Saint Patrick’s a devout family of faithful and a third parish worship site.

“It’s been a smooth transition,” Father Fox remarked, concerning the other Catholic parish merger in Scranton’s West Side. He added that support staff and those involved in music ministry from both

parishes have successfully combined their time and talents.

Saint Patrick Parish now includes Saint Lucy Church, 949 Scranton St., West Scranton, along with the IHM Chapel, 1605 Oram St., which the parish has overseen for numerous years.

Sunday Masses are celebrated at 7, 8:30 & 11 a.m. in Saint Patrick Church, 1403 Jackson St., which also celebrates 8 a.m. morning Masses on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and a Saturday Vigil liturgy at 4 p.m.

Saint Lucy Church now hosts a Sunday morning Mass at 9 a.m.; the IHM Chapel offers 8 a.m. weekday Masses on Tuesday and Thursday, and a Vigil liturgy on Saturday at 5:30 p.m.

“We are blessed to bring together two very strong and proud parish communities,” Father Fox said of the new parish family. “Both churches, which are most venerable and rich in history, have been the sacred homes for a very long time to devout Catholics grounded in their faith.”



## BISHOP BAMBERA’S SCHEDULE

**December 17** - Mass for the Carmelite Sisters  
Carmelite Monastery, Clarks Summit, 9:30 a.m.

**December 21** - Advent Mass for Chancery Staff  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.

**December 24** - Christmas Eve Vigil Mass  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 4:00 p.m.

**December 25** - Midnight Mass  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, Midnight

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

**December 28** - Project Andrew Evening Prayer  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 5:00 p.m.

**January 2-6** - Region III Bishops’ Retreat

**January 7** - Mass for the Epiphany of the Lord  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.

**January 13** - Filipino Mass  
Immaculate Conception Church, Scranton, 6:00 p.m.





# THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT - THE GREATEST TREASURE WE HAVE

- *A Priesthood Perspective by Father David Bechtel* -  
*Pastor, Saint Joseph the Worker Parish, Williamsport*



I was raised both Catholic and Protestant. On Saturday, my mother took my brothers and me to Mass at a Catholic Church. On Sunday, my father took my brothers and me to a small Methodist church. I believe this helps me in my priesthood because I can see Catholicism from the outside as well as from within.

Enter the Blessed Sacrament.

Even before I could wax eloquently about the ins and outs of Transubstantiation, I always knew, even as a child, somehow, that there was something special about Catholicism. This “specialness” or “uniqueness” seemed to be lacking in the Protestant Church we attended.

I could not articulate what I was missing in the Protestant Church; I just knew something was off. There was something in the Catholic Church that wasn’t in the Protestant Church.

To be sure, the Protestant Church we attended had their version of Communion. The Church was comprised of good, decent, God-fearing, holy people. The pastor was a holy man, and one of the humblest pastors I knew. There is and was no doubt in my mind that the pastor was a man of God.

At the time I think they had Communion four times a year. I always liked it when they had Communion because it meant the sermon would be short! Even in their celebration of Communion, I knew something was lacking, something was off. As I learned the faith, I realized what it was that seemed off: They had no Blessed Sacrament. That was what I was missing.

Different people are drawn to different aspects of the Catholic Faith. Catholicism is known for liturgical pomp and ceremony, a.k.a. being “high Church.”

Many people, especially if they are converts, have a deep appreciation for the high Church Roman ritualism.

Catholicism is also known for its architecture, replete with beautiful stained-glass windows, paintings, and statues. As someone who grew up both Catholic and Protestant, truth be told, this aspect of Catholicism has never really spoken to me. I guess this is the influence of Protestantism on me. Do not get me wrong. The high Church Roman ceremony is nice. The architecture is nice. The paintings, statues and stained glass are nice. None of that is why I am Catholic, however. None of that keeps

me Catholic. That is my point in bringing that up.

There is one reason, and one reason only that I am Catholic – the Blessed Sacrament. There are any one of hundreds of reasons not to be Catholic. The only argument I need to be Catholic is the Blessed Sacrament.

The Blessed Sacrament made me Catholic, and the Blessed Sacrament keeps me Catholic. If it were not for the Blessed Sacrament, I would have left Catholicism long ago. The Blessed Sacrament is who and what we are; it is what we are about.

If you take the Blessed Sacrament out of Catholicism, you take Catholicism with it. The way I see it, our

faith, everything we are about, stands or falls with the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is our greatest treasure. The Blessed Sacrament is worth dying for. The treasure that the Blessed Sacrament is – what the Blessed Sacrament is to Catholicism, the worth of the Blessed Sacrament – cannot be understated.

To highlight our faith in the Blessed Sacrament during this Eucharistic Revival, Saint Joseph the Worker Parish has planned many activities. In October, we collaborated with other parishes for a 40 Hours Devotion. On Dec. 9, we hosted a retreat for our young adult group focusing on the Blessed Sacrament. In January,

we are having a presentation on Eucharistic miracles, and in May, our parish mission will focus on the Blessed Sacrament. We have also extended times for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the year, while the Solemnity of Corpus Christi will feature a Eucharistic procession between parishes. There are also more ideas being discussed, as we would like to do something during Lent, though the details are yet to be ironed out.

May the Holy Spirit give us all an even deeper and greater appreciation for our Catholic Faith, most especially the greatest treasure we have – the Most Blessed Sacrament.

## Day, weekend passes now an option for National Eucharistic Congress attendees

(OSV News) - Attendees of the National Eucharistic Congress July 17-21 in Indianapolis now have the option of purchasing single-day and weekend passes in order to make attendance more affordable and flexible, the bishop overseeing the congress announced Nov. 15.

Speaking at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ fall plenary assembly in Baltimore, Bishop Andrew

H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota, also said scholarship funds may help ease the costs for some attendees, via the bishops’ Solidarity Fund.

Standard passes for the five-day congress are \$299-\$375 for adults and \$99 for children ages 2-18 traveling with their family. The cost covers admission for congress events at Lucas Oil Stadium, which include general sessions, breakout sessions, liturgies, the vendor hall and unique congress tracks. The

cost does not include housing, transportation or meals related to the congress.

Registration is open for standard passes, which also include access to premium seating and digital access to congress content.

The single-day passes will range \$49-\$95 depending on the day, and weekend passes will be \$125. Registration for day and weekend passes will open in January.



# Diocese launches new initiative to promote vocations to the priesthood

LAFLIN – Nearly 200 people from across the Diocese of Scranton gathered together Nov. 18 to hear speakers Rhonda Gruenewald and Leticia Ramirez teach them how to foster vocations in our parishes.

Pastors first heard from Gruenewald at the annual Priest Convocation in October and were encouraged to invite parishioners to the Hundredfold Vocation Ministry workshops given in English and Spanish at Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Laflin.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, led parishioners in prayer before the sessions began for the day. Rev. Alex Roche, Diocesan Vocation Director, then celebrated Mass and offered a commissioning prayer for the future vocation promoters present at the event.

Gruenewald, a Houston-based convert to Catholicism and founder of Vocation Ministry, shared the story of how her priest asked her and her husband to be part of their parish's vocations committee. In turn, she said the nearly 200



**Nearly 200 people from parishes around the Diocese of Scranton attended a Hundredfold Vocation Ministry workshop on Nov. 18 at Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Laflin. (Photos/Kyra Krzywicki)**

parishioners in attendance at the workshop are now being called to do the same.

Once Gruenewald had established a foundation for vocation work in her parish, she was called to develop a plan to bring this ministry to the Diocese of Houston and now, after the release of her first book, *Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish*

Vocation Ministry, to dioceses across the country.

At the Diocese of Scranton's Hundredfold workshop, parishioners were given the tools to create an action plan for creating vocation-friendly parishes, discover programming opportunities offered by the Diocesan Vocations Office, and discuss possibilities for future



**Workshop attendees enjoy lunch in Saint Maria Goretti Parish Hall. Every parish in the Diocese of Scranton was asked to send representatives to the Hundredfold Vocation Ministry workshop.**

vocation initiatives.

Gruenewald suggested that parishes host holy hours for vocations, encourage youth in the parish to write cards to their pastor for his ordination anniversary, implement a Traveling Chalice program, adopt a seminarian in prayer, and much more to promote vocations at the parish level.

Parishioners were also

encouraged to promote Vocations Office events such as Quo Vadis Days, monthly XLT, and World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

To find out how you can help promote vocations in your parish and become part of this diocesan-wide ministry, please email [vocations@dioceseofscranton.org](mailto:vocations@dioceseofscranton.org) or visit [www.dioceseofscranton.org/vocations](http://www.dioceseofscranton.org/vocations).

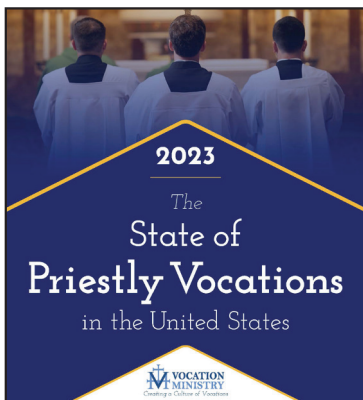
## *Trusted relationships with priests key to fostering vocations, study says*

LAFLIN - The 2023 “State of Priestly Vocations in the United States” report, published by Texas-based Vocation Ministry is an important resource that was highlighted during the Hundredfold Vocation Ministry workshops in November.

The study cites trusted relationships with parish priests as a deciding factor in cultivating vocations and reducing the priest-to-parishioner ratio as essential for making such encounters possible.

“We know the priest is the number one factor for a young man saying ‘yes’ to the priesthood,” Vocation Ministry founder Rhonda Gruenewald said.

The Vocations Ministry study



grouped the nation's Catholic dioceses into four tiers based on the size of their Catholic population, and then calculated how many replacement priests, seminarians and ordinations are needed in each diocese for

pastoral viability, based on current conditions.

Gruenewald, who has conducted training sessions for thousands of priests, catechists, Catholic school educators and laity in more than 50 dioceses, concluded that the 2021 vocation data showed only 33 dioceses ordained enough men to satisfy a “base need ordination rate,” while 17 were meeting their “base need seminarian rate.” Another 42 dioceses had no ordinations during that period.

She admits that the data “might be difficult for some to digest.”

Gruenewald stressed that Catholics have plenty of options

for countering the declines in priestly vocations - such as regular prayer, education about vocations and how to foster them, affirmation of current priests and seminarians, and youth ministry.

Vocations can happen if you believe. Let's get to work,” Gruenewald said upon the study's release.

### FOSTERING THE CALL

#### FACT

The main reason young people do not consider the priesthood or consecrated life is that they have never been personally asked. Yet almost ten percent of young adults have considered priesthood or religious life.

#### FACT

Men first consider the priesthood because a priest encouraged them to do so. Year over year, around 70 percent of those ordained report that it was a priest who invited them to consider the priesthood. This fact should not be overlooked. The overall role of priests in fostering vocations is significant.



# Lackawanna County parishes joining forces to create Mental Health Ministry Team

## Funding from 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal helps sponsor training/awareness events

MONTDALE – For years, faith leaders have talked about the importance of removing the stigma surrounding mental health challenges while emphasizing that those struggling with mental health are loved and valued by the church.

Two parishes in Lackawanna County are now taking action by starting a joint mental health ministry team which is providing free training and other resources.

Saint John Vianney Parish in Montdale and Saint Gregory Parish in Clarks Green recently launched an inter-parish Mental Health Ministry Team. The goal is to support each parish's awareness of, accompaniment with, and advocacy for persons with mental health challenges and those who care for them.

"With this model, we are able to pool our resources in offering the ministry, and are able to serve a wider audience, including the community members outside the walls of our churches," Jen Housel, Executive Director, Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers, and parishioner of Saint John Vianney parish, said.

On Nov. 11, the two parishes held a Mental Health First Aid Training Program which taught 13 people how to recognize signs of mental health or substance use challenges in adults, offer and provide initial help, and knowledge on how to guide a person toward appropriate care if necessary.

"It was better than any of us thought it could be," participant Ellen Aherne explained, describing the combination of small group activities and large group sessions. "I highly recommend it to any member of our diocese who has the opportunity to spend a Saturday learning how to better serve the mental health needs of their parishes."

In addition to having people from both parishes launching the Mental Health Ministry Team, there were also attendees from Our Lady of the Snows Parish, Clarks Summit; Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Dickson City; and Divine Mercy Parish, Scranton.

"As a person who once taught psychiatric nursing, I gained some valuable information and practical skills,"



**More than a dozen people participated in a Mental Health First Aid Training Program at Saint John Vianney Parish in Montdale on Nov. 11, 2023.**

Mary Ann Paulukonis, who serves as the Mental Health Ministry team leader at Saint Gregory Parish. "I was gratified that a couple participants decided to join our inter-parish team and a few others asked how to start a mental health ministry in their own parishes."

Beginning the week of Jan. 8, the parishes will begin offering The Sanctuary Course for Catholics in tandem for eight weeks to explore the realities of mental

health and illness, as well as the vital need for faith-based community conversations about these topics.

Statistics show one in four people will be affected by a mental health challenge at some point in their lives, yet the stigma surrounding mental illness silences many and prevents faith communities from responding compassionately and effectively.

The eight small group sessions will

be held at Saint John Vianney Parish on Mondays at 6:30 p.m. and Saint Gregory Parish on Fridays at 9:00 a.m.

Interested individuals can attend one session or all eight, at either church or both locations or via Zoom. Online registration at [catholicmhm.org/csdeaneryregistration](https://catholicmhm.org/csdeaneryregistration) is encouraged, but not required.

"Optimally, sessions are offered to and attended by those within the same general faith community. This allows those involved to deeply consider how their community currently responds to this issue/need and how they as a community may take action to do better," Housel stated. "The sessions include the opportunity to learn, to pray, and to share together."

There is no fee for the training. All costs are being covered by a Social Justice Grant from the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal.

"The Social Justice Grant funds allowed us to begin this mental health ministry programming on an ambitious scale and to offer multiple opportunities cost-free to those who could benefit from them," Housel added.

"Receiving the grants had the effect of propelling us forward at a faster rate than we might otherwise have proceeded," Paulukonis said.

## Please Answer "Our Call to Serve" and Support Catholic Ministries and Programs

☒ **Yes! Bishop Bambera can count on me to support Catholic ministries and programs (check one):**

☐ \$10

☐ \$25

☐ \$50


☐ \$100

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Gift Enclosed ☐ Bill Me Later ☐ Single Payment in Full

☐ Credit Card (see below) ☐ Online: **AnnualAppeal.org**

☐ Monthly \_\_\_\_ # of Payments ☐ Parish \_\_\_\_\_



Total Amount Pledged \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Enclosed Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**You may pay using your credit card by carefully completing the following:**

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Check One ☐  ☐  Number \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

**One-Time Payment:** Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** **Monthly Payments:** Amount to be deducted each month \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ months, starting in \_\_\_\_\_ (number of months) (month)

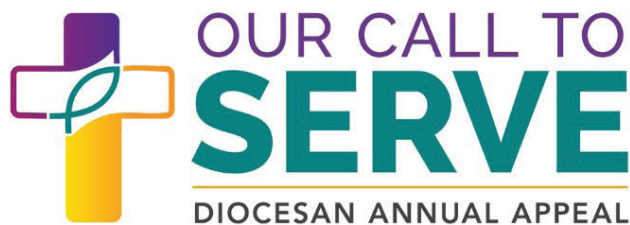
Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please credit my gift to (Parish Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Parish City) \_\_\_\_\_

**Cut and mail this Pledge Card to: 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503**





We have received hundreds of prayer requests and Bishop Bambera will be praying for all intentions at the **12:15 p.m. Mass** on Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024, The Epiphany of the Lord, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

## THERE ARE MANY NEEDS IN OUR CHURCH.

*There is pain and worry. There is hunger. There is fear.  
There is sickness, and there is sadness.*

Just as we are praying for you, please pray for each other.  
You can submit your prayer intentions now at [AnnualAppeal.org](https://AnnualAppeal.org)

**Your gift to the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal  
can be the answer to someone's prayers.**



	<i>Progress to Parish Goal</i>
All Saints Parish - Plymouth.....	\$13,771.00 / \$37,000.00 (37%)
Annunciation Parish - Hazleton.....	\$16,239.00 / \$33,000.00 (49%)
Ascension Parish - Forest City.....	\$14,245.00 / \$25,000.00 (57%)
Blessed Sacrament Parish - Throop.....	\$16,910.00 / \$16,000.00 (106%)
BVM Queen of Peace Parish - Hawley.....	\$42,615.00 / \$76,000.00 (56%)
Christ the King Parish - Archbald.....	\$42,851.85 / \$67,000.00 (64%)
Corpus Christi Parish - West Pittston.....	\$32,855.00 / \$30,000.00 (110%)
Divine Mercy Parish - Scranton.....	\$39,317.00 / \$63,000.00 (62%)
Epiphany Parish - Sayre.....	\$52,798.00 / \$85,000.00 (62%)
Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish - Hanover Twp..	\$13,270.00 / \$15,000.00 (88%)
Gate of Heaven Parish - Dallas.....	\$25,800.00 / \$47,000.00 (55%)
Good Shepherd Parish - Drums.....	\$10,415.00 / \$24,000.00 (43%)
Holy Child Parish - Mansfield.....	\$21,154.00 / \$28,000.00 (76%)
Holy Cross Parish - Olyphant.....	\$29,602.00 / \$47,000.00 (63%)
Holy Family Parish - Luzerne.....	\$13,945.00 / \$40,000.00 (35%)
Holy Name of Jesus Parish - West Hazleton.....	\$7,110.00 / \$21,000.00 (34%)
Holy Name of Mary Parish - Montrose.....	\$16,280.00 / \$16,000.00 (102%)
Holy Rosary Parish - Hazleton.....	\$13,665.00 / \$17,000.00 (80%)
Holy Spirit Parish - Mocanaqua.....	\$9,060.00 / \$28,000.00 (32%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Williamsport.....	\$14,369.00 / \$26,000.00 (55%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Scranton.....	\$29,767.00 / \$40,000.00 (74%)
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish - Dushore.....	\$28,075.00 / \$38,000.00 (74%)
Mary, Mother of God Parish - Scranton.....	\$46,347.50 / \$56,000.00 (83%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Cresco.....	\$27,740.20 / \$49,000.00 (57%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Susquehanna.....	\$8,428.00 / \$30,000.00 (28%)
Most Precious Blood Parish - Hazleton.....	\$15,920.95 / \$36,000.00 (44%)
Nativity of Our Lord Parish - Duryea.....	\$36,805.00 / \$40,000.00 (92%)
Nativity of the BVM Parish - Tunkhannock.....	\$22,738.00 / \$32,000.00 (71%)
Our Lady Help of Christians Parish - Dorrance.....	\$16,155.00 / \$18,000.00 (90%)
Our Lady of Fatima Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$15,805.00 / \$30,000.00 (53%)
Our Lady of Hope Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$22,175.00 / \$35,000.00 (63%)
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish - Montoursville.....	\$23,657.00 / \$41,000.00 (58%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Carbondale..	\$6,375.00 / \$23,000.00 (28%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Dunmore.....	\$32,916.50 / \$56,000.00 (59%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Lake Silkworth..	\$11,787.00 / \$19,000.00 (62%)
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish - Wyalusing...	\$9,170.00 / \$10,000.00 (92%)
Our Lady of the Abingtons Parish - Dalton.....	\$7,185.00 / \$16,000.00 (45%)
Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish - Pittston.....	\$9,190.00 / \$16,000.00 (57%)
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception - Freeland..	\$11,971.00 / \$26,000.00 (46%)
Our Lady of the Snows Parish - Clarks Summit....	\$54,420.00 / \$87,000.00 (63%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Harveys Lake.....	\$18,989.60 / \$37,000.00 (51%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Tannersville.....	\$36,266.00 / \$52,000.00 (70%)
Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish - Brodheadsville..	\$51,871.30 / \$58,000.00 (89%)
Prince of Peace Parish - Old Forge.....	\$11,975.00 / \$28,000.00 (43%)
Queen of Angels Parish - Jessup.....	\$11,017.00 / \$26,000.00 (42%)
Queen of Heaven Parish - Hazleton.....	\$17,490.00 / \$29,000.00 (60%)
Queen of the Apostles Parish - Avoca.....	\$16,296.75 / \$23,000.00 (71%)
Resurrection Parish - Muncy.....	\$13,015.00 / \$33,000.00 (39%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Dupont.....	\$13,815.45 / \$30,000.00 (46%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Peckville.....	\$40,029.77 / \$41,000.00 (98%)
Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Parish - Jermyn...	\$9,741.40 / \$21,000.00 (46%)
SS Anthony & Rocco Parish - Dunmore.....	\$28,840.00 / \$47,000.00 (61%)
SS Cyril & Methodius Parish - Hazleton.....	\$33,403.50 / \$43,000.00 (78%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Plains.....	\$46,439.00 / \$50,000.00 (93%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Scranton.....	\$9,160.00 / \$13,000.00 (70%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Towanda.....	\$32,545.00 / \$31,000.00 (105%)
St. Andrew Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$6,330.00 / \$17,000.00 (37%)

	<i>Progress to Parish Goal</i>
St. Ann Basilica - Scranton.....	\$15,165.00 / \$30,000.00 (51%)
St. Ann Parish - Shohola.....	\$10,605.00 / \$20,000.00 (53%)
St. Ann Parish - Williamsport.....	\$29,270.00 / \$59,000.00 (50%)
St. Barbara Parish - Exeter.....	\$16,683.00 / \$31,000.00 (54%)
St. Boniface Parish - Williamsport.....	\$40,345.00 / \$60,000.00 (67%)
St. Brigid Parish - Friendsville.....	\$30,230.00 / \$22,000.00 (138%)
St. Catherine of Siena Parish - Moscow.....	\$67,667.75 / \$63,000.00 (107%)
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish - Swoyersville..	\$38,742.52 / \$44,000.00 (88%)
St. Elizabeth Parish - Bear Creek.....	\$13,150.00 / \$24,000.00 (55%)
St. Eulalia Parish - Roaring Brook Township....	\$20,089.96 / \$40,000.00 (50%)
St. Faustina Kowalska Parish - Nanticoke.....	\$33,447.94 / \$47,000.00 (71%)
St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish - Carverton.....	\$17,864.64 / \$13,000.00 (137%)
St. Gregory Parish - Clarks Green.....	\$69,421.40 / \$74,000.00 (94%)
St. Ignatius Loyola Parish - Kingston.....	\$50,009.45 / \$77,000.00 (65%)
St. John Bosco Parish - Conyngham.....	\$50,607.15 / \$58,000.00 (87%)
St. John Neumann Parish - Lords Valley.....	\$14,275.00 / \$28,000.00 (51%)
St. John Neumann Parish - Scranton.....	\$15,823.00 / \$52,000.00 (30%)
St. John Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$29,913.00 / \$57,000.00 (52%)
St. John the Baptist Parish - Larksville.....	\$15,235.00 / \$21,000.00 (73%)
St. John the Evangelist Parish - Honesdale....	\$47,532.00 / \$64,000.00 (74%)
St. John the Evangelist Parish - Pittston.....	\$35,064.00 / \$54,000.00 (65%)
St. John Vianney Parish - Montdale.....	\$21,620.00 / \$30,000.00 (72%)
St. Joseph Mareello Parish - Pittston.....	\$22,643.00 / \$27,000.00 (84%)
St. Joseph Parish - Matamoras.....	\$25,773.00 / \$37,000.00 (70%)
St. Joseph the Worker Parish - Williamsport....	\$31,130.00 / \$75,000.00 (42%)
St. Jude Parish - Mountain Top.....	\$64,506.00 / \$79,000.00 (82%)
St. Katharine Drexel Parish - Pleasant Mount..	\$15,585.00 / \$13,000.00 (120%)
St. Lawrence Parish - S. Williamsport.....	\$19,640.00 / \$26,000.00 (76%)
St. Leo Parish - Ashley.....	\$14,870.00 / \$33,000.00 (45%)
St. Lucy Parish - Scranton.....	\$4,125.00 / \$19,000.00 (22%)
St. Luke Parish - Jersey Shore.....	\$8,010.00 / \$16,000.00 (50%)
St. Luke Parish - Stroudsburg.....	\$71,466.00 / \$114,000.00 (63%)
St. Maria Goretti Parish - Laflin.....	\$18,725.00 / \$42,000.00 (45%)
St. Mary of the Lake Parish - Lake Winola.....	\$5,615.00 / \$12,000.00 (47%)
St. Mary Parish - Waymart.....	\$21,820.00 / \$17,000.00 (128%)
St. Matthew Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$43,304.00 / \$60,000.00 (72%)
St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish - Pocono Pines....	\$12,617.00 / \$24,000.00 (53%)
St. Michael Parish - Canton.....	\$7,243.00 / \$12,000.00 (60%)
St. Michael Parish - Scranton.....	\$3,854.00 / \$9,000.00 (43%)
St. Monica Parish - West Wyoming.....	\$21,700.00 / \$31,000.00 (70%)
St. Nicholas Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$35,210.00 / \$52,000.00 (68%)
St. Patrick Parish - Milford.....	\$28,145.00 / \$33,000.00 (85%)
St. Patrick Parish - Nicholson.....	\$6,775.00 / \$9,000.00 (75%)
St. Patrick Parish - Scranton.....	\$16,503.00 / \$42,000.00 (39%)
St. Patrick Parish - White Haven.....	\$5,735.00 / \$16,000.00 (36%)
St. Paul of the Cross Parish - Scranton.....	\$15,547.00 / \$52,000.00 (30%)
St. Paul Parish - Scranton.....	\$37,730.00 / \$66,000.00 (57%)
St. Peter Parish - Wellsboro.....	\$22,340.00 / \$43,000.00 (52%)
St. Peter's Cathedral - Scranton.....	\$80,957.00 / \$71,000.00 (114%)
St. Rita Parish - Gouldsboro.....	\$7,892.00 / \$14,000.00 (56%)
St. Robert Bellarmine Parish - Wilkes-Barre....	\$19,700.00 / \$34,000.00 (58%)
St. Rose of Lima Parish - Carbondale.....	\$36,074.00 / \$62,000.00 (58%)
St. Therese Parish - Shavertown.....	\$55,815.00 / \$71,000.00 (79%)
St. Thomas More Parish - Lake Ariel.....	\$30,775.00 / \$49,000.00 (63%)
St. Thomas the Apostle Parish - Elkland.....	\$3,500.00 / \$13,000.00 (27%)
St. Vincent de Paul Parish - Milford.....	\$39,345.00 / \$35,000.00 (112%)
Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Dickson City	\$42,920.75 / \$55,000.00 (78%)



# Diocese of Scranton to hold 'Mass for Life' Jan. 21 at Cathedral of Saint Peter



Mass for  
**LIFE**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024**

5:00PM | CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER, SCRANTON

CELEBRANT: MOST REV. JOSEPH C. BAMBERA  
BISHOP OF SCRANTON

**All are welcome to join us as we pray  
for a greater respect of all human life.**

**Please consider bringing an unopened package of  
diapers to be donated to local mothers in need.**

SCRANTON — Just two days after the 2024 March for Life takes place in Washington, D.C., the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton will join together for the annual 'Mass for Life' at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant and homilist at the Mass, which is being celebrated for a greater respect of all human life, from conception to natural death, and every moment in between.

While pro-life supporters from parishes and organizations in the Diocese of Scranton are

expected to join the March for Life in Washington that same week, the 'Mass for Life' is an opportunity for all people in the Diocese of Scranton to pray that every life is celebrated, valued and protected.

People attending the 'Mass for Life' are encouraged to bring a new pack of diapers to be donated to local organizations that assist mothers in need.

CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton will broadcast the 'Mass for Life' live and will make a livestream available on the Diocese of Scranton website and all Diocesan social media platforms.

# Calling all women to the 'Bold & Beloved Retreat'

DALTON — As a mother of three children, Kara Kardell understands that life is busy.

Calling herself a "sinner, striving for sainthood," she is inviting all women in the Diocese of Scranton to take a step back from the craziness to realize God's loving call in their lives.

"If the God of the universe, the savior of the world loves you, it should change everything!" Kardell said. "Does it? My hope is that people leave fully loved, healed, and transformed."

The Diocesan Office for Parish Life is excited to announce the 'Bold & Beloved Women's Retreat' will be held Jan. 26-28, 2024, at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center in Dalton.

The weekend retreat will feature reflections and discussions on the teachings of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, led by Kardell and Fred Shellabarger, founders of Draw Near, a movement that draws people close to Christ and one another.

It will be an intimate weekend of personal and communal spiritual growth, surrounded by prayer, music, and sacrament.

"I find (Saint) Therese to be one of the most beautiful and relatable souls, and a true friend to all who love her," Kardell said. "Pope Benedict XV said her example holds the 'secret of sanctity for all the faithful throughout the entire world ... she knew how to show others the truest way to salvation.'"

For Shellabarger, saying there is something special about Saint Thérèse is an understatement.

"There is a good reason that popes for the last century have encouraged a devotion to her. Even Pope Francis has dedicated considerable effort toward her spirituality over the last year," he said. "I have heard many say this young saint, a cloistered nun, is unrelatable. Yet, as a husband and father, I find Saint Thérèse to be the most relatable of all the saints. Her

Women's Retreat

## Bold and Beloved

Inspired by the teaching of St. Thérèse of Lisieux

January 26-28, 2024

Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center  
1000 Seminary Rd, Dalton, PA 18414

**Kara Kardell**  
Sinner striving for sainthood.  
Wife and mother of 3.

**Fred Shellabarger**  
Husband. Father. Spiritual Arsonist.  
Big Kid Who Loves Jesus.

Little Way is one of the simplest and most immediately applicable approaches to the Christian life."

Shellabarger isn't shy in admitting that Saint Thérèse has changed his life.

"If spending some time journeying with her can change my life, I have every confidence that even greater work can be done in the hearts and minds of others," he added. "As a man, blessed to serve attendees at this women's retreat through music and prayer, I can't help but feel a bit like the woman at the well as it relates to Saint Thérèse. So, I would say, come and learn from this great saint who helped me to find meaning and purpose in suffering; patience in my daily struggles, beauty in humility, and peace in learning to see myself as God sees me."

The weekend retreat will begin with check-in between 4:00-6:45 p.m. on Jan. 26 and will conclude between 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. on Jan. 28.

The cost of the retreat is \$75 for a student (ages 18-23), \$125 for a shared room and \$175 for a single room.

The weekend retreat is made possible, in part, by gifts to the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal.

"The underlying themes that will shine through in retreat

moments and downtime are prayer and healing. More specifically, my keynote talks will focus on the love of God, how to hear God's voice in prayer, and the power of suffering," Kardell explained. "The retreat will end with God's purpose for each person's life and a brief introduction to the charismatic gifts God gives each individual to live out their unique call. There is a talk, or theme, to meet each person's needs and where they are on the journey, but there is also an invitation for each person to be drawn closer to God in their walk with Him."

All women in the Diocese of Scranton are being asked to prayerfully consider giving God this special weekend in their lives. Each woman is also encouraged to invite someone to accompany them, whether it be a mother, grandmother, aunt, niece, cousin, sister, daughter, granddaughter, friend, neighbor, colleague, or fellow parishioner.

To register for the 'Bold & Beloved Retreat,' visit the Diocese of Scranton website at [dioceseofscranton.org](http://dioceseofscranton.org) or visit [tinyurl.com/BoldandBeloved](http://tinyurl.com/BoldandBeloved).

Anyone with questions, or who would like to help promote this retreat, is asked to contact Marianne Guarnieri at [mguarnieri@dioceseofscranton.org](mailto:mguarnieri@dioceseofscranton.org).



# Ecumenical Service Jan. 24 to celebrate Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

SCRANTON – Faithful throughout the Diocese of Scranton will join with members of various Christian congregations of northeastern Pennsylvania for an Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God on Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, at 12:10 p.m. in the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

The event highlights the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which has been celebrated each January since its inception in 1908.

The theme for the 2024 celebration is: “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as leader of prayer for the traditional ecumenical prayer service. Bishop Bambera is once again serving as Chairman of the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Guest homilist for this year’s prayer service is Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes, Rector of Saint Luke Episcopal Church, Scranton, and President of the Scranton Multifaith Ministerium.

Students from Holy Rosary School in Duryea will provide the music for the religious gathering, under the direction of David Tighe.

The Ecumenical prayer service will be broadcast live at 12:10 p.m. on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. It will also be made available on the Scranton Diocese website and across all diocesan social media platforms.

As the universal Catholic Church, including local dioceses, immerses itself deeply into the call for a new evangelization proclaimed by Pope Francis through the 2023 Synod on Synodality, both ecumenism and interreligious dialogue have been given prominence in the discussion.

In the Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality, the Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches, it is stated: “The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.”

According to Monsignor Vincent Grimalia, Diocesan Coordinator for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs,



the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity provides not only an opportunity for prayer for Christianity, but a time to learn more about various Christian churches and communities while offering motivation and commitment for year-long participation in ecumenical activities.

“It is an opportunity to renew and re-energize our commitment to Christian



unity,” Monsignor Grimalia said. “In a world with so much disunity, there is a need to overcome divisions and polarization and work to get nations and various ethnic, cultural and language groups to work together.”

Saint John Paul II, in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, quotes from the Second Vatican council.

He wrote, “*This statement of the Decree Unitatis Redintegratio is to be read in the context of the complete teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The Council expresses the Church’s decision to take up the ecumenical task of working for Christian unity and to propose it with conviction and vigour: “This sacred Synod exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to participate actively in the work of ecumenism.”*”

Saint John Paul reflects on the necessity of prayer and dialogue among elements of ecumenism and reminds everyone of its importance because Jesus prayed for unity of his followers.

He continued, “*All this is extremely important and of fundamental significance for ecumenical activity. Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of ‘appendix’ which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does; it must be like the fruit borne by a healthy and flourishing tree which grows to its full stature.*”

## Ecumenism and the ‘Synod on Synodality’ synthesis report

The Synod on Synodality’s first session at the Vatican has concluded, with its results wrapped up in a 41-page synthesis report for the entire church to digest, reflect on and give feedback about ahead of the synod’s final session in Rome next October.

Ecumenical work is included in the “On the Road Towards Christian Unity” section. The section below is offered for reflection:

### Convergences

a) This session of the Synodal Assembly opened with a profound ecumenical gesture. The “Together” prayer vigil saw the presence of numerous other leaders and representatives of different Christian communions alongside Pope Francis, a clear and credible sign of the will to walk together in the spirit of unity of faith and exchange of gifts. This highly significant event also allowed us to recognize that we are in an ecumenical kairos and to reaffirm that what unites us is greater than what divides us. For in common we have “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, among all and in all” (Eph. 4:5-6).

b) Baptism, which is at the root of the principle of synodality, also constitutes the foundation of ecumenism. Through it, all Christians participate in the *sensus fidei* and for this reason they should be listened to carefully, regardless of their tradition, as the Synod Assembly did in its discernment process. There can be no synodality without an ecumenical dimension.

c) Ecumenism is first and foremost a matter of spiritual renewal that also requires processes for repentance and healing of memory. The Assembly was moved to hear testimonies of Christians of different ecclesial traditions who share friendship, prayer and above all a commitment to the service of those experiencing poverty. Dedication to the least of these cements bonds and helps us focus on what already unites all believers in Christ. Therefore, it is important that ecumenism is practised first and foremost in daily life. In theological and institutional dialogue, the patient weaving of mutual understanding continues in an atmosphere of growing trust and openness.

d) In not a few regions of the world there is an “ecumenism of blood,” stemming from Christians of different affiliations who give their lives for faith in Jesus Christ. The testimony of their martyrdom is more eloquent than any words. Unity comes from the Cross of the Lord.

e) Collaboration among all Christians is crucial in addressing the pastoral challenges of our time. In secularized societies, this enables the voice of the Gospel to have greater force. In contexts of poverty, it impels people to join forces in the service of justice, peace and the dignity of the least. In all instances, it is a resource for healing the culture of hatred, division and war that pits groups, peoples and nations against each other.

f) Marriages between Christians who belong to different Churches or ecclesial communities (inter-church marriages) may constitute realities in which the wisdom of communion can mature, and it is possible to evangelize each other.”



# In challenging times, find hope in the example and presence of Mary

## *Bishop Bambera celebrates Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in parishes around Diocese*

SCRANTON — As he celebrated Masses for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in both Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, told parishioners it is Mary's journey of faith that can help each of us embrace the power and presence of God.

"Following her election by God to be the mother of the Savior, Mary immediately journeyed to visit Elizabeth. But her willingness to follow God's invitation didn't end with that encounter. She journeyed to Bethlehem where her son was born and then to Egypt to keep him safe for his mission. She journeyed to Cana where Jesus performed the first sign revealing his glory and then she followed Jesus all the way to the cross. And after Jesus' resurrection, Mary journeyed with his disciples to receive the Spirit and to build the Church — the redeemed People of God," Bishop Bambera said.

The bishop said Mary's journey continued well beyond the earliest days of the Church.

"She journeyed all the way to Tepeyac to accompany Juan Diego. And she continues to this very day — to journey throughout our world, assisted by your prayers and devotions. She journeys to homes and prison cells, to hospital rooms, schools, rest homes, and even to our borders with those seeking refuge, safety, and peace," he continued.

It is the appearance nearly five centuries ago, Dec. 9, 10, and 12, 1531 in Tepeyac, near present-day Mexico City, when God sent Mary as his messenger appearing before Blessed Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian, that brings out hundreds of people to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in parishes all around the Diocese of Scranton. The Blessed Mother's appearance is believed to have resulted in millions of conversions to Catholicism.

The Cathedral of Saint Peter was nearly filled on Dec. 10 for a Mass organized by Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in South Scranton.

On Dec. 12, hundreds of others participated in a procession through the streets of Wilkes-Barre, ending with Mass



**A statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is carried into the Cathedral of Saint Peter during the entrance procession of the Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (Photos/Mike Melisky)**



**Following the distribution of Holy Communion, the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary received her crown.**

celebrated at Saint Nicholas Church.

"She brings all of our communities together, especially with people coming from different countries," Karla Andrade of Saint Theresa of Calcutta Parish said.

While the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is especially important to members of the Latino and Hispanic populations, she is the Patroness of the Americas, and we should all celebrate her.

"I feel so happy to be part of this celebration," Wenceslao De La Cruz of Scranton said following Mass on Dec. 10 at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

"It is something that is truly embedded

into our communities, our homes, it is a huge celebration," Jenny Gonzalez of Scranton said. "It's a day when a lot of people gather together. They will pray and show a lot of gratitude but it's also a day when they genuinely ask Our Lady of Guadalupe for something special for their families."

Gonzalez really enjoyed watching all the young people take part in the Mass and reception which followed at the Diocesan Pastoral Center which featured music and dancing.

"It is really an important day not only for our community but also for our diocese," she added.



**Bishop Bambera receives the tilma from Juan Diego, played by a parishioner from Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish, that bears the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.**



**Following Mass, hundreds attended a reception at the Diocesan Pastoral Center which featured food, music and cultural dancing.**



**The Cathedral was at standing-room only during the celebration of Mass.**

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



# En tiempos difíciles, encuentre esperanza en el ejemplo y la presencia de María

## Obispo Bambara celebra Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en parroquias alrededor de la Diócesis

SCRANTON – Mientras celebraba Misas para la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe tanto en Scranton como en Wilkes-Barre, el Reverendísimo Joseph C. Bambara, Obispo de Scranton, dijo a los feligreses que es el viaje de fe de María el que puede ayudarnos a cada uno de nosotros a abrazar el poder y la presencia de Dios.

“Después de su elección por Dios para ser madre del Salvador, María viajó inmediatamente para visitar a Isabel. Pero su disposición a seguir la invitación de Dios no terminó con ese encuentro. Viajó a Belén donde nació su hijo y luego a Egipto para mantenerlo a salvo para su misión. Ella viajó a Caná donde Jesús realizó la primera señal que revelaba su gloria y luego siguió a Jesús hasta la cruz. Y después de la resurrección de Jesús, María viajó con sus discípulos para recibir el Espíritu y construir la Iglesia, el Pueblo de Dios redimido”, dijo el obispo Bambara.

El obispo dijo que el viaje de María continuó mucho más allá de los primeros días de la Iglesia.

“Ella viajó hasta el Tepeyac para acompañar a Juan Diego. Y ella continúa hasta el día de hoy, viajando por nuestro mundo, asistida por vuestras oraciones y devociones. Viaja a hogares y celdas de prisión, a habitaciones de hospitales, escuelas, casas de reposo e incluso a nuestras fronteras con quienes buscan refugio, seguridad y paz”, continuó.

Es la aparición hace casi cinco siglos, el 9, 10 y 12 de diciembre de 1531 en el Tepeyac, cerca de la actual Ciudad de México, cuando Dios envió a María como su mensajera apareciendo ante el Beato Juan Diego, un indio azteca, lo que hace surgir cientos de personas. de personas para celebrar la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en parroquias de toda la Diócesis de Scranton. Se cree que la aparición de la Santísima Madre provocó millones de conversiones al catolicismo.

La Catedral de San Pedro estuvo casi llena el 10 de diciembre para una misa organizada por la parroquia de Santa Teresa de Calcuta en South Scranton.



**La procesión de entrada a la Misa de la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en la Catedral de San Pedro el 10 de diciembre contó con la participación de varias jóvenes honrando a la Santísima Virgen María.**



**Durante la Presentación de las Ofrendas, las familias llevaron al altar varios obsequios, los cuales fueron recibidos por Mons. Bambara.**

El 12 de diciembre, cientos de personas participaron en una procesión por las calles de Wilkes-Barre, que finalizó con una misa celebrada en la iglesia de San Nicolás.

“Ella reúne a todas nuestras comunidades, especialmente a personas que vienen de diferentes países”, dijo Karla Andrade de la parroquia Santa Teresa de Calcuta.

Si bien la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe es especialmente importante para los miembros de las poblaciones latina

y hispana, ella es la Patrona de las Américas y todos deberíamos celebrarla.

“Me siento muy feliz de ser parte de esta celebración”, dijo Wenceslao De La Cruz de Scranton después de la Misa del 10 de diciembre en la Catedral de San Pedro.

“Es algo que está verdaderamente arraigado en nuestras comunidades, nuestros hogares, es una gran celebración”, dijo Jenny González de Scranton. “Es un día en el que se reúne mucha gente. Orarán y mostrarán mucha gratitud, pero también es un día en el que genuinamente le piden a



**Después de la distribución de la Sagrada Comunión, el obispo Joseph C. Bambara bendijo la estatua de la Santísima Virgen María que fue traída a la Catedral por varios feligreses.**



**Después de la Misa, cientos de personas asistieron a una recepción en el Centro Pastoral Diocesano que contó con comida, música y bailes culturales.**

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe algo especial para sus familias”.

González realmente disfrutó viendo a todos los jóvenes participar en la Misa y la recepción que siguió en el Centro Pastoral Diocesano que contó con música y baile.

“Es realmente un día importante no sólo para nuestra comunidad sino también para nuestra diócesis”, añadió.

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



# Teens describe NCYC 2023 in Indianapolis as 'awesome' - and so much more

INDIANAPOLIS – The 2023 National Catholic Youth Conference had a deep impact on dozens of local high school teens from parishes across the Diocese of Scranton.

For three days – this year Nov. 16-18 in Indianapolis – their faith was enriched through speakers, uplifting music, Eucharistic Adoration, group prayer, the opportunity for the Sacrament of Penance and Daily Mass.

Their faith also is emboldened in witnessing and worshipping with thousands of their Catholic peers, leaving the youths encouraged by the fact that they are not alone in following Christ in the one true church.

“NCYC was truly incredible. I came in, not expecting it to be half of what it was,” Hannah Rocco from Saint Eulalia Parish in Roaring Brook Township, said. “Adoration with 13,000 kids was truly incredible!”

The Diocese of Scranton sent a total of 92 pilgrims – young adults and chaperones – to this year’s conference.

“It was such an awesome experience,” Hayden Schwabe from Saint Jude Parish in Mountain Top, said. “You don’t have to worry about hiding your faith or being



**The Most Rev. Joseph A. Espallat, Auxiliary Bishop of New York, leads Eucharistic Adoration at Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 17, 2023.**



**Teens from Saint Eulalia Parish and Saint Catherine of Siena Parish participate in a Civil Dialogue breakout session.**

scared about putting your hands up in the air to take in the Holy Spirit because other people are doing it.”

For Max Mohutsky of Saint Jude Parish, this year’s NCYC was his first.

“Obviously I didn’t really know what to expect so I was leaning on what people told me from the past, but it was great once I was there,” he said. “I learned a lot more about God and I met new people and had a great time.”

This was the second NCYC for Shaylee Kimmick of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville.

“I came two years ago, and it was a lot

more overwhelming this time because there were so many more people,” Kimmick said. “During the opening ceremony, the archbishop said, ‘You’re not a problem to be solved, you’re a mystery to be revealed,’ and that really stuck with me!”

In a prayer service at the opening session of NCYC, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson spoke to the teens about this year’s NCYC theme “Fully Alive.” He quoted his favorite line from Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si,” saying, “Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.”

“We heard that beautiful reading about creation from the Book of Genesis,” Archbishop Thompson said. “But the ultimate part of that creation is when God created humanity, when God created us. We are part of that creation that’s been given life by the Spirit breathing into us, by the Word taking root in us, claiming us as his own.”

Kimmick is looking forward to bringing that message home and sharing her experiences with other teens in her Monroe County parish.

“I’m going to talk to people about my experience and try to

help them feel more connected in their faith and help them grow,” she said.

Betty Clark of Saint Eulalia Parish described her experience as “simply amazing.”

“The spirit, the energy that everyone had and that we all could feel during the sessions, and when we were talking to other people, we really were ‘fully alive.’ It was crazy. I loved it,” the North Pocono teenager said.

In describing what she was taking away from NCYC, Clark referenced the importance of the National Eucharistic Revival that is underway – and the National Eucharistic Congress which will be held in the same city and stadium July 17-21 next year.

“I think that a lot of time we forget how present Jesus is in the Eucharist and I think that is what the priests and bishops are trying to do with the Eucharistic Revival. I think that I was really impacted by that, and I think it’s going to really help me worship Jesus in the Mass and when I see Him in the Eucharist in the future,” she explained.

During the two-hour closing Mass for NCYC, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Espallat of New York encouraged the teens to put “joy over fear.”

*Continued on Page 20*



**Roland McLaine of Saint Eulalia Parish, center, participates in a team building activity involving stacking milk crates on Nov. 18, 2023. (Photos/Eric Deabill)**



**NCYC participants from Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg, and Saint Luke Parish, Stroudsburg, pose for a picture outside Lucas Oil Stadium where nearly 13,000 teens gathered together each day.**



Diocese of Scranton

# CATHOLIC

SCHOOL SYSTEM

FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

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

The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, recently joined five school communities to celebrate Mass with students, faculty and staff. Bishop Bambera shared with all in attendance that they are called to be “the salt and light of the Earth” and are to flavor the Earth and God’s people with their love.



Saint John Neumann High School & Elementary School in Williamsport



Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton



La Salle Academy in Jessup



Holy Cross High School in Dunmore



Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston



# Holiday Service Projects

*During the holidays, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic Schools are sharing God's love with others throughout Northeastern and North Central Pennsylvania. Here are some examples of the charities generously supported by our school communities:*



**Holy Rosary School in Duryea** — Student Council filled 122 stockings with toys and delivered them to the children who are patients at the Janet Weis Children's Hospital in Danville.



**Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** — Students had a special dress-down day collection with all proceeds going to purchase gifts for veterans at the VA Hospital in Wilkes-Barre.



**Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** — Students are donating gifts to Toys for Tots.



**Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** — The school community is collecting mittens and gloves to be donated to the parish's food pantry.



**Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** — The school community is supporting the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots drive.



**Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** — Students partnered with the Community Intervention Center in Scranton to create bag lunches for those experiencing homelessness. Each bag also contained a hand-written note of encouragement from students.





**All Saints Academy in Scranton** — Students partnered with their local Knights of Columbus to host a food drive.



**Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** — 2,340 pairs of socks were collected for the Visiting Nurses Association and distributed through Meals on Wheels.



**Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** — Students collected toys for children in need.



**Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** — Student-athletes collected winter coats for the Family to Family program.



**Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** — Students collected money to sponsor Pittston's Shop with a Cop Christmas program.



**Epiphany School in Sayre** — Students collected 882 food items and monetary donations for the CHOW food pantry.



**Saint Agnes School in Towanda** — Students were bell ringers at a local store supporting the Salvation Army.



**Holy Family Academy in Hazleton** — "Students of Service" conducted a coat drive for Brandon's Forever Home.



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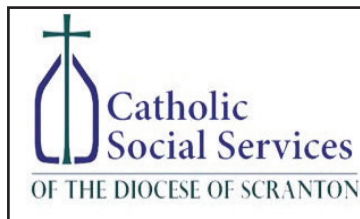
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## Catholic Social Services and other area non-profits to bring holiday cheer to the community

CARBONDALE — Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton provided early holiday cheer to many families in the greater-Carbonale area on Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023.

Through the agency's 'Gifts for Kids' program, a total of 140 pre-registered families were able to select gifts for their children ahead of Christmas in the lower level of Saint Rose of Lima Church.

In all, 359 children will benefit from the distribution held this week. More than 3,000 gifts



need of some holiday cheer in Lackawanna County.

There will be one more opportunity to receive gifts for the families who were not able to register for the Scranton event earlier this fall.

On Thursday, Dec. 21, beginning at 9:00 a.m., there will be a 'Gifts for Kids' Community Giveaway at The University of Scranton's Byron Recreational Complex, 1200 Ridge Row, Scranton.

No pre-registration is required for the Dec. 21 event. It is first come, first serve until all gifts are gone. Photo ID and proof of Lackawanna County residence (ID, mail, etc.) is required. Income is self-certified so no income documentation is required. Children through age 18 may receive a gift.

Catholic Social Services is very thankful for all of the parishioners who have supported our "Tween and Teen" Amazon Wish List so far.

If anyone would still like to support this effort, you can donate a new, unwrapped gift at any of the participating non-profits.

were distributed, in addition to winter coats, hats, gloves, scarfs and other various stocking stuffers. Gift wrap and bows were also made available to the families.

While the Dec. 13 distribution focused on the Carbonale area, Catholic Social Services has also partnered this year with Friends of the Poor, Catherine McAuley Center and the Salvation Army to distribute Christmas gifts in the greater Scranton area.

Earlier in the fall, the agencies held registration for 1,500 families to receive gifts. Those gifts, for the pre-registered families will be distributed at The University of Scranton on Dec. 18 and Dec. 20 and will benefit more than 3,000 children.

All of the agencies recognize that there are still families in



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For more information:

Call June Werner 800-982-4346 or email: [jwerner@bsstaaa.org](mailto:jwerner@bsstaaa.org)

## Students recount NCYC trip

*Continued from Page 16*

In explaining this, Bishop Espallat distinguished between a "worldly fear that creates panic and anxiety" and "a holy fear, or fear of the Lord, (that) is a source of peace and happiness."

"If we love God and know that we are loved by God, then why do we need to fear?" he asked those in attendance.

Bishop Espallat then laid out three simple points he wanted the young people at NCYC to take home with them.

"You've got to have faith," he said. "You've got to have fun while you do it. And you need family and friends and community along the way."

Before boarding a bus to make the trip back to northeastern Pennsylvania, George Sabatini of Saint Jude Parish said was proud that so many of his Catholic peers from across the country came together to celebrate their faith.

"It's just a great experience to strengthen your faith and to meet like-minded people," Sabatini said.



# Pope gives Philadelphia three new auxiliary bishops known for humble, 'zealous hearts'

PHILADELPHIA (OSV News) - The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is welcoming three new auxiliary bishops - all of whom, as Philadelphia priests, are already home.

The Vatican press office announced Dec. 8 that Pope Francis has appointed Father Keith J. Chylinski, Father Christopher R. Cooke and Father Efrén V. Esmilla as auxiliary bishops of Philadelphia.

At a press conference with the three new auxiliary bishops-designate, Philadelphia Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez announced that the episcopal ordination of the three bishops-designate would take place March 7, 2024, at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia.

In an earlier message posted to his social media

account, the archbishop said he was "overjoyed to share" news of the appointments on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

Speaking at the press conference, Archbishop Pérez told the auxiliary bishops-designate that it was "a great source of consolation ... that none of you did anything to be sitting here this morning; but the church in her generosity, guided by the Spirit, chose you. So let that be a consolation and a source of strength in your heart."

He added that upon receiving the news of the appointments from Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S., he felt that "everything that I hoped for was being granted. ... What an incredible joy."

With the Archdiocese of Philadelphia counting

some 1.5 million Catholics and 4 million total residents over 2,200 square miles, the archbishop said having a "full complement" of auxiliary bishops was "essential for a church of

our size and magnitude."

"My ministry as archbishop actually would be impossible without the dedicated service of our current and retired auxiliary bishops of Philadelphia," he said.

The archbishop also commended the appointees as "men of great faith, of great humility, of deep pastoral and administrative experience," adding they "have zealous hearts."

## Bishop Bambera's Statement on Appointment of Three New Auxiliary Bishops in Philadelphia

"On Dec. 8, 2023, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Francis announced the appointment of three new Auxiliary Bishops to serve the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and her people.

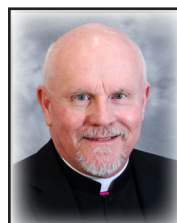
"On behalf of the priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful here in the Diocese of Scranton, I want to extend congratulations and prayerful best wishes to Bishops-elect Keith J. Chylinski, Christopher R. Cooke, and Efrén V. Esmilla.

"As these three men prepare for episcopal ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, I ask the good people of the Diocese of Scranton to keep each of them in their prayers."

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**MISSION MESSAGE**

**The True Gift of Christmas**

*By Deacon Edward Kelly  
Interim Director,  
Pontifical Mission Societies*



the elderly may feel the loneliness of having outlived most of their contemporaries; the poorest of the poor in mission territories may feel the loneliness of being displaced from their homes. Many in broken homes feel the loneliness of rejection. Probably, the ultimate loneliness comes to those who have lost a loved one to death.

But Christmas has a special message for the lonely: "They shall name Him Emmanuel, which means God is with us." In other words, you and I are never alone. Wherever you are, whatever has happened to you, whomever you've become, there is a God who loves you.

As I think back on that Christmas long ago, I didn't get what I asked for, but I received what I truly needed — my mother's love. I didn't know it then but that lesson has helped bring me to understand the true meaning of Christmas.

God loves us so much that He became one of us. From the crib to the cross, Jesus walked our walk and knows what each of us goes through. God is with us in this life and calls us to be with Him in Heaven in the next. That's the gift of Christmas.

On behalf of the Pontifical Mission Societies, and in the name of Pope Francis, I wish you a Blessed Nativity Season. Thank you for your prayers, sacrifices and assistance that make it possible for us to continue proclaiming the Good News that "Today in the City of David a Savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (Lk 2:11).

The Word was made Flesh and continues to dwell among us, and that makes all the difference. Merry Christmas!

Every Christmas season has a way of evoking memories of past Christmases.

My parents, like most parents, went to great lengths to make Christmas a very special time for my brother, six sisters, and me. I recall the Christmas that I was to receive a "special" Christmas gift — my first new bicycle. I remember how excited I was.

Christmas came but I didn't get what I asked for. There was no new bike under the tree. But there was something much more profound — a love letter from my mother: *Eddie, so sorry your bike didn't arrive. I'm sure it will come another day. Hope you understand. Love, Mom.*

Maybe my parents ran out of time or money. It must have been difficult for them attending to so many children, but the bike eventually came the following May on my birthday. Today, as I look back upon that Christmas, I remember my disappointment. The irony, however, is that the one Christmas gift I remember the most is my mother's letter and the lasting treasure of her love.

Like that disappointment that I experienced so many Christmases ago, I still experience Christmas letdowns when I think of children in mission countries where I have visited, for whom bikes or any toys are not priorities. Instead, they are fighting for survival. They are not asking or looking for toys, but for food, water and shelter.

Many of them, because of terrorism, violence and warfare, are driven from their homes and find themselves on the streets with no home to go to and cross borders just to survive. They take one day at a time just helping each other get through that day. The cries of the poor can be heard in so many mission places raising their voices to God with great faith.

In this season of gift giving, merriment and heightened spirits, there are so many realities in these mission territories that can dampen those spirits. Yet, right here in America, in the midst of so much affluence, this could be the loneliest time of the year.

Loneliness is, without question, one of life's most painful experiences. And in some form, at some time, every one of us has to deal with it.

The young may feel the loneliness of being misunderstood;

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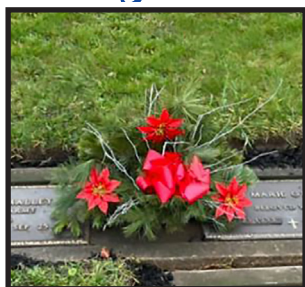
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**Papal Intention for December 2023**

*For Persons with Disabilities —*

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# Thousands receive helping hand at Thanksgiving thanks to the Friends of the Poor



**Volunteers with the Family-to-Family Food Basket Program distribute meals outside the Scranton Cultural Center on Nov. 22, 2023.**

SCRANTON — Thousands of people throughout the greater Scranton area were able to have a warm meal this Thanksgiving in their own homes thanks to the generosity of their neighbors.

On Wednesday, Nov. 22, 2023, volunteers with the Family-to-Family Food Basket Program handed out hundreds of food bags outside the Scranton Cultural Center beginning at 9 a.m.

“It has been a very busy day so far, but everything is going very, very well,” Linda Robeson, Director, Family-to-Family, explained. The food distribution wrapped up early because there was such high demand.

Families were provided all of the grocery items needed to prepare a traditional Thanksgiving meal, include a turkey, stuffing, potatoes, yams, and even pie.

“This is a full community effort,” Robeson explained.

Hundreds of volunteers from local schools and corporations volunteer to assemble all of the food bags and distribute them via “drive thru” or “walk up.”

“If we didn’t have the kids

here, we’d never get this done,” Robeson added.

The Family-to-Family Program was prepared to serve 3,500 families and still needs help to raise the \$250,000 to cover the food bill.

“We realize it’s a very tough time of year for everybody, but we have 30 days to pay the bill and then we have Christmas coming up so we’re still accepting donations. Any amount will help. If you can only afford five dollars, we are eternally grateful for that,” Robeson said.

Donations of any amount help toward the \$250,000 goal, and can be mailed to Family-to-Family, P.O. Box 13, Scranton, PA 18503, or given online at [friendsofthepoorscranton.com](http://friendsofthepoorscranton.com).

The Family to Family Food Basket Program followed the annual Thanksgiving Dinner of Adults and Elderly which was held on Nov. 21 at the Scranton Cultural Center. For the fourth year in a row, warm Thanksgiving meals were distributed take-out style from in front of the Scranton Cultural Center as well.



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# Advent Taizé Prayer set for Wilkes-Barre parish

WILKES-BARRE — Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary Parish will host an Advent Taizé Prayer service on Thursday, Dec. 14, at 6:30 p.m. in the upper church of Saint Nicholas Church, 226 South Washington St., Wilkes-Barre.

Taizé is a meditative style of communal prayer, featuring sung repetitive refrains to create a gentle rhythm that invites reflection and meditation.



The unique prayer service is offered to area faithful to enhance their Advent season of prayer and spiritual preparation for the

celebration of Christmas.

Music ministry for the prayer service will be provided by Rob Yenkowski, director of music at King's College, Wilkes-Barre, and the King's Cantores Christi Regis performance choir.

Faithful are invited to participate free of charge; a free-will offering be accepted.

For more information, call the parish office at (570) 823-7736.

## 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.

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## Bishop Hannan Class of '70 holds reunion in Scranton

Members of the Bishop Hannan High School graduation class of 1970 gathered for their 53rd reunion weekend this fall at the former high school building in downtown Scranton, which now serves as the Pastoral Center for the Diocese of Scranton. Following a light reception at their alma mater, the classmates were treated to a guided tour of the Diocesan Pastoral Center. All of the Bishop

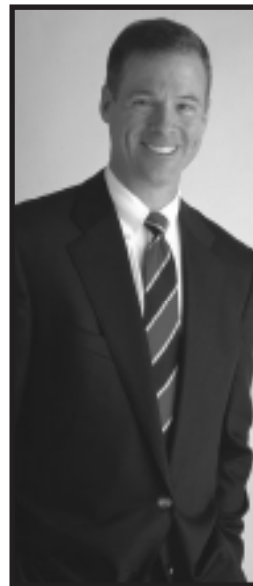


Hannan alumni in attendance agreed the new layout and repurposing of their old school was quite impressive. The following day, the Bishop Hannan graduates from 53 years ago participated in a reunion Mass at nearby Saint Paul Church, during which they remembered their 23 deceased classmates. After the liturgy, a dinner reception was enjoyed at Stirma's restaurant in North Scranton.

## LAOH Divisions' donations support needy



The Ladies Ancient Orders of Hibernians (LAOH), Division 5, Lackawanna County, recently led efforts to raise donations for the Saint Patrick's Food Pantry in West Scranton. Pictured in the top photo, from left: Michele McDade; Father Richard Fox, pastor of Saint Patrick Parish; Maureen Wallace and Amanda Gavin. Likewise, Division 4 of the Ladies AOH of Lackawanna County aided Catholic Social Services in the Diocese of Scranton by making a sizeable donation of food items and warm coats to be distributed to those in need.



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## Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

**Weekly Eucharistic Adoration** — DEC. 15, 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.

**Christmas Cookie Walk** — DEC. 16, hosted by St. Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church, 320 Vine St., Old Forge; the holiday cookie sale will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Patrons may fill a box of cookies for purchase from a various assortment of traditional

and ethnic Christmas cookies; cost: \$10 per pound. No pre-orders will be accepted.

**12th Annual Christmas Cookie Walk** — DEC. 16, hosted by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, 420 Main Road, Hanover Twp.; held from 10 a.m. to noon. Cost: \$10 for container of 20 cookies; \$40, large platter (80 cookies); and \$55, extra-large platter (120 cookies). Complimentary coffee, tea and cocoa will be provided. All orders must be placed in advance; call (570) 814-6444 or visit: [www.exhc.org](http://www.exhc.org).

**Monthly Meeting of the Lay Carmelites** — DEC. 16, hosted by Our Lady of the Mountains Lay Carmelite Community on the third Saturday of each month; gatherings are held from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Oblates of St. Joseph seminary/chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin. For more information, contact Chris at (570) 239-8094.

**"Peace in the Womb" Christmas Caroling** — DEC. 17, sponsored by the Order of Alhambra, local caravan Alhamar No. 4, a Catholic organization dedicated to assisting those with special needs; the Sunday pro-life presentation of Christmas carols begins at 2 p.m. near the offices of Planned Parenthood, 101 North Main St., Wilkes-Barre. Music will be provided by Ernie Pappa. For more information, contact Ada Magni of Alhamar at (570) 693-1338 or [amagni@earthlink.net](mailto:amagni@earthlink.net).

**Parish "Living Nativity" Performance** — DEC. 17, hosted by St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow; "Living Nativity" presentation recounting the Birth of Christ begins at 5 p.m. in the main church of St. Catherine of Siena, 220 Church St., Moscow. The live performance features the St. Catherine Children's Choir, under the direction of Christian Brown, and other children of the parish. Refreshments will be served in the parish hall following the program; event is free and open to the public.

**Sunday Pierogi & Soup Sale** — DEC. 17, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Church, 1309 West Locus St., West Scranton; packages of homemade pierogi sold every weekend before and after the parish's 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday. Cost: \$10 per dozen. Soups sold following the Sunday Mass include: beef vegetable, Italian Wedding, cream of broccoli, beef barley vegetable and pasta fagioli.

**Tuesday Eucharistic Adoration** — DEC. 19, hosted by St. Peter Parish in Wellsboro; weekly exposition & adoration of the Blessed Sacrament offered every Tuesday from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Church of St. Peter, 47 Central Ave., Wellsboro. All faithful are welcome to spend time in prayerful meditation and reflection in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord.

*Continued on page 27*

## Marian Devotion Rosary prayer service

Fostering prayerful devotion to Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary through recitation of the Holy Rosary, Marian Devotion Ministries in the Diocese of Scranton continues to host its 2023 Fatima Journey.

Prayer rallies and Rosary evenings are hosted throughout the Diocese and include the Rosary with chanted Scriptural mysteries,

Fatima prayers and hymns.

An upcoming Marian Devotion event is scheduled as follows:

**Christmas Rosary Carols & Prayers** — Dec. 18, at 6 p.m. at the Oblates of Saint Joseph Chapel, Route 315, Laffin.

For information, contact Ernie Pappa at (570) 241-8171 or email: [singtomary@aol.com](mailto:singtomary@aol.com).



# Catholic Happenings

**Tuesday Novena Devotion to Saint Anthony of Padua — DEC. 19**, hosted by Our Lady of Hope Parish, 40 Park Ave., Wilkes-Barre; Saint Anthony Novena devotion on Tuesday evening begins at 5:30 p.m. in the parish church. Novena theme: "The Holy Eucharist: The Real Presence of Christ." Novena services include blessing with the Saint Anthony relic.

**"Blue Christmas" Winter Solstice Night of Solace — DEC. 21**, hosted by St. Boniface Parish in Williamsport; begins at 7 p.m. in St. Boniface Church, 326 Washington Blvd., Williamsport. Prayerful event of music and reflection is offered to comfort hurting hearts and souls on the darkest night of the year; music ministry for the program will be led by the parish's Contemporary Choir. All are welcome.

**Twelve Days of Christmas Cash Raffle — DEC. 25-JAN. 5**, sponsored by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish in Hanover

Twp.; cash prizes will be drawn daily on Facebook. Each ticket costs \$20 for chances to win \$10,000 in cash prizes. For more information & tickets, call (570) 823-6242 or visit: [www.exhc.org](http://www.exhc.org).

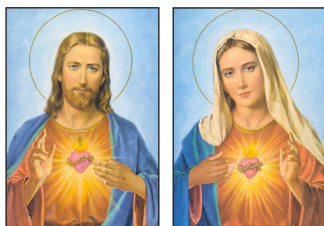
**Grief Support Group Sessions — JAN. 10, 17, 24 & 31**, series of weekly gatherings addressing topics dealing with the grief process to enable participants find healing; Bereavement Support Group hosts seasonal meetings on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 330 Wyoming Ave., Scranton. Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Cathedral Parish office at (570) 344-7231.

## Hazleton church offering Christmas Midnight Mass

HAZLETON — Annunciation Parish announces a traditional Christmas Midnight Mass will be celebrated Dec. 25 at Saint Gabriel Church, 122 S. Wyoming St., Hazleton. All faithful are welcome.

## Blue Army Reparation Vigil

The next monthly First Friday Reparation Vigil, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary and sponsored by the Blue Army, will be held **Jan. 5, 2024**, at Saint Joseph's Oblate Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin (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.

Music for the First Friday devotion is provided by Marian Devotion Ministries, led by Ernie Pappa.

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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.





## Parish students receive Advent Calendars



The Holy Name and Altar & Rosary Societies of Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish in Dunmore recently presented Advent Calendar gifts to all CCD students of the parish. Shown with some of the students proudly displaying their Advent presents are Filippini Sister Donna Cerminaro (left), Saints Anthony and Rocco director of religious education, and Filippini Sister Catherine Iacouzze.

## Prayer Requests for Priests

*The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule is as follows:*

December 14, Holy Cross Father Thomas O'Hara; December 15, Father Peter O'Rourke; December 16, Father James Paisley; December 17, Father Francis Pauselli; December 18, Father Jaime Perez Restrepo; December 19, Father Carmen Perry; December 20, Father Thomas Petro; December 21, Father William Petruska; December 22, Father Michael Piccola; December 23, Father William Pickard; December 24, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Jackson Pinhero; December 25, Father Joseph Pisaneschi; December 26, Father John Polednak, V.E.; December 27, Father Richard Polmounter; December 28, Father John Poplawski; December 29, Monsignor Patrick Pratico; December 30, Monsignor Joseph Quinn; December 31, Father Michael Quinnan; January 1, Pope Francis; January 2, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; January 3, Father Michael Rafferty; January 4, Father Philip Rayappan; January 5, Jesuit Father James Redington; January 6, Father Gregory Reichlen; January 7, Father August Ricciardi; January 8, Father Frederick Riegler; January 9, Jesuit Father Angelo Rizzo; January 10, Father Alex Roche; January 11, Jesuit Father Patrick Rogers; January 12, Father Alfredo Rosario Paulino; January 13, Monsignor Walter Rossi; January 14, Monsignor Dale Rupert; January 15, Father John Ruth; January 16, Holy Cross Father Brogan Ryan.



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**Merry  
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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For more information, contact:  
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Joyous Holiday Season!*



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&  
Happy New Year!*



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## ***Pope calls world leaders to end divisions to fight climate change***

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - The future of humanity depends on what people choose now, Pope Francis said in his message to global leaders at the World Climate Action Summit of the U.N. Climate Change Conference.

"Are we working for a culture of life or a culture of death?" he asked in his message. "To all of you I make this heartfelt appeal: Let us choose life! Let us choose the future!"

"The purpose of power is to serve. It is useless to cling to an authority that will one day be remembered for its inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so. History will be grateful to you," the pope wrote.

Excerpts from Pope Francis' full written message were read by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, Dec. 2 during the high-level segment with heads of state and government at

the climate conference, COP28, being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Nov. 30-Dec. 12.

Pope Francis was to have been the first pope to attend the U.N. climate conference Dec. 1-3, but canceled his trip Nov. 28 after coming down with a serious bronchial infection.

The Vatican published the pope's full speech Dec. 2, although Cardinal Parolin read only excerpts at the summit to respect the three-minute limit on national statements. The text was submitted in full to the conference.

"Sadly, I am unable to be present with you, as I had greatly desired," the pope's text said.

The destruction of the environment is "a sin" that not only "greatly endangers all human beings, especially the most vulnerable," he wrote, but it also "threatens to unleash a conflict between generations."

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