

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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Fueling Vocations through Prayer

Four parish Vocation Centers being established in the Diocese of Scranton

LAFLIN – Each of us has a vocation to which God is calling us. When it comes to a young man considering the possibility of the priesthood, that discernment process most often takes place within a community.

As the Diocese of Scranton works to create a culture of vocations within its parishes, it has started the process of creating four parish vocation centers where men can regularly gather for fellowship and prayer.

“If most of our faith life is happening in parishes and local communities, then our vocation work should take place there as well,” Father Alex Roche, Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarians, said. “The vocation centers will be places where men can gather together for regular dinners, for Adoration and prayer, where

they might be able to do a retreat, shadow a priest or even spend an extended amount of time in.”

After several years of discussion and planning, the first Diocesan vocation center began at Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg. The second was created at Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Laflin. The others will be located at Christ the King Parish in Archbald and Annunciation Parish in Hazleton.

“One of the criteria for establishing a vocation center is that there is already thriving youth ministry or college ministry so that there are already ways in which young people are engaging with their faith,” Father Alex explained.

The location of each vocation center is strategic. Each center is in a different geographic region of the Diocese of



Christ the King Parish, Archbald



Annunciation Parish, Hazleton



Saint Maria Goretti Parish, Laflin



Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg

Scranton so that it can be close to a prospective candidate’s home.

“Five of our last six seminarians

have come from some interaction with a vocation center,” Father Alex added.

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‘Pro-Life: With Every Woman, For Every Child’ is theme for 2024 March for Life



Pro-life demonstrators carry a banner past the U.S. Supreme Court during the annual March for Life in Washington Jan. 20, 2023. (OSV News photo/Jonathan Ernst, Reuters)

WASHINGTON – In just over a week, on Jan. 19, thousands of pro-life advocates will take to the streets for the 2024 March for Life.

This year’s theme will be “Pro-Life: With Every Woman, For Every Child,” the group’s president has announced.

The March for Life first took place in Washington in 1974 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion nationwide the previous year. Pro-life advocates have gathered in Washington to march each year since then to protest the ruling, with a smaller-scale event during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

After the high court reversed *Roe* in 2022, marchers still gathered to protest abortion. Each year, the group selects a theme that it says fits the cultural moment. Jeanne

Mancini, March for Life president, said that following the court’s ruling in *Dobbs*, she wanted to highlight the work the pro-life movement does to support women facing difficult or unplanned pregnancies.

Mancini said the 2024 theme was selected due to what she called “the false narrative around abortion, whether it’s through mainstream media or the entertainment industry or academia, is that abortion is empowering and necessary.”

“We disagree,” she said. “Such fear-based messaging tries to convince women who are facing unexpected pregnancies that they’re alone, that they are incapable, that they are ill-equipped to handle motherhood. We who are here today know that is just not true.”

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DIOCESE OF SCRANTON MISSION STATEMENT

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

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Project Andrew Prayer & Dinner brings together seminarians and those interested in learning about religious life

SCRANTON - On Thursday, Dec. 28, 2023, seminarians from the Diocese of Scranton gathered with Bishop Bambera and other young men for Evening Prayer for the Feast of the Holy Innocents followed by a reception at the Cathedral Rectory.

The Project Andrew event gives priests from around the Diocese of Scranton the opportunity to invite individuals whom they might think have a priestly vocation - or have the qualities needed for a good priest - to have dinner with Bishop Bambera in a relaxed, "no pressure" atmosphere of discussion and dialogue about the life of a priest.

Please join us in praying for all of our priests, seminarians and those discerning a call to the priesthood or religious life.



Above: Seminarian Daniel O'Brien, center, participates in Evening Prayer at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Dec. 28, 2023.



Top Right: Seminarian Jan Carlo Perez leads part of Evening Prayer.



Right: Rev. Gregory Reichlen, pastor, Saint John the Apostle Parish, East Stroudsburg, leads part of Evening Prayer. (Photos/Mike Melisky)



Above Photos: Those participating in the Project Andrew Evening Prayer and Dinner enjoy food and fellowship in the Cathedral Rectory.



Bishop Bambera poses for a photo with all of the young men who took part in the Project Andrew Evening Prayer and Dinner on Dec. 28, 2023.

Diocesan Vocation Centers begin building grace-filled connections with young people

Continued from Page 1

VOCATION CENTERS ALREADY MAKING AN IMPACT

The Diocese of Scranton's first vocation center at Saint Matthew Parish quietly began taking shape without much fanfare in July 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Father Don Williams, pastor, said the parish began by offering young people the opportunity to gather for Evening Prayer, dinner, and conversation.

"The concept was to establish a regular routine," Father Don said. "That really took off with a few guys."

Because Saint Matthew Parish has a large rectory, the parish had enough space to create four private rooms for men who are seriously interested in taking a closer look at the priesthood or making a retreat. The rectory also has its own chapel and exercise room.

"The idea was to help them get a closer look at our life as Diocesan priests. They live with us, pray with us, share meals with us and shadow us in ministries," Father Don explained. "They really get a chance to look at what rectory life is like, what parish ministry life is like."

Three young men who are now Diocesan seminarians got their first glance at the priesthood by spending time in the

vocation center at Saint Matthew Parish.

"I often say to them that they got the chance, before seminary, to get a really close look at what this is all about," Father Don added. "They could go in with eyes wide open and they had a really good sense because they got to see the joys, the struggles, the disappointments, they got to see the reality of our life."

It is not just young men who are participating in discernment programs at Saint Matthew Parish. Religious Sisters have visited the parish to talk with young women. Those who are participating in the discernment groups have also taken trips to Marywood University.

"They've come together as a group of women to talk about discipleship, prayer, discernment and we help them have fun and community," Father Don added.

CENTERS HELPING YOUNG ADULTS FOCUS ON GOD'S CALL

At the second Diocesan vocation center established at Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Laffin there is no private space for overnight accommodations, so the focus has been on discernment groups and prayer.

"Twice a month, we gather as a group, usually about a half dozen guys and we have dinner," Father Alex said.

"So far, in the last couple of years, most of our seminarians have come out of groups like this. We also have monthly Adoration and the opportunity to come and meet and talk with the Vocation Director."

Father Ryan Glenn, who recently became pastor of Christ the King Parish in Archbald and Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish in Jermyn, will oversee the vocation center in Lackawanna County.

"The drive of our vocation centers is, how are we as parishes purposefully engaging people to ask the question, 'Where are you calling me God? How are you calling me to serve?'" Father Ryan said. "We're equipped to do that in a creative way responding to where young people are right now in 2024."

The rectory at Christ the King Parish, which is already equipped with a chapel and private rooms, will be able to accommodate individuals looking for an overnight opportunity for prayer and discernment. It is already being used to meet with young men for spiritual direction.

Christ the King Parish has begun offering monthly Eucharistic Adoration, where people are specifically encouraged to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and Father Ryan is working to intentionally build-up his parish's young adult ministry program. He is hoping to establish a monthly group of working young adults who want to gather for prayer, food and conversations regarding vocations.

Before taking on his first pastoral assignment in Lackawanna County, Father Ryan was Assistant Pastor at Saint Matthew Parish and helped with the formation of that vocation center. He was amazed by the response of people wanting to learn and discern more.

"It began as a pilot program," he said. "We socialized. We would pray. We would meet, do intentional discernment with young adults who are really trying to respond to God's call."

Even though the vocation center at Annunciation Parish in Hazleton is



The rectory at Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg has several private rooms where individuals looking to prayerfully discern their vocation can spend time or participate in a retreat. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

still taking shape, Father Neftali Feliz-Sena, Assistant Pastor, says he is already accompanying one person who is seriously considering the priesthood.

"We have room available in our rectory. We are thinking there will be three rooms available. There are several priests living in the rectory, so if we have two or three candidates who want to reflect on vocations, we'll still have enough room for them to stay a few days here," Father Neftali said.

With Hazleton's population being more than fifty-percent Hispanic, the vocation center in the Mountain City will be an ideal place for either English or Spanish-speaking discerners.

"We will be able to accommodate both. Our priests can speak both languages," Father Neftali added. "We would like to have the first Hispanic vocation. Hazleton is big and having a place where people can come and interact with us will be a big benefit."

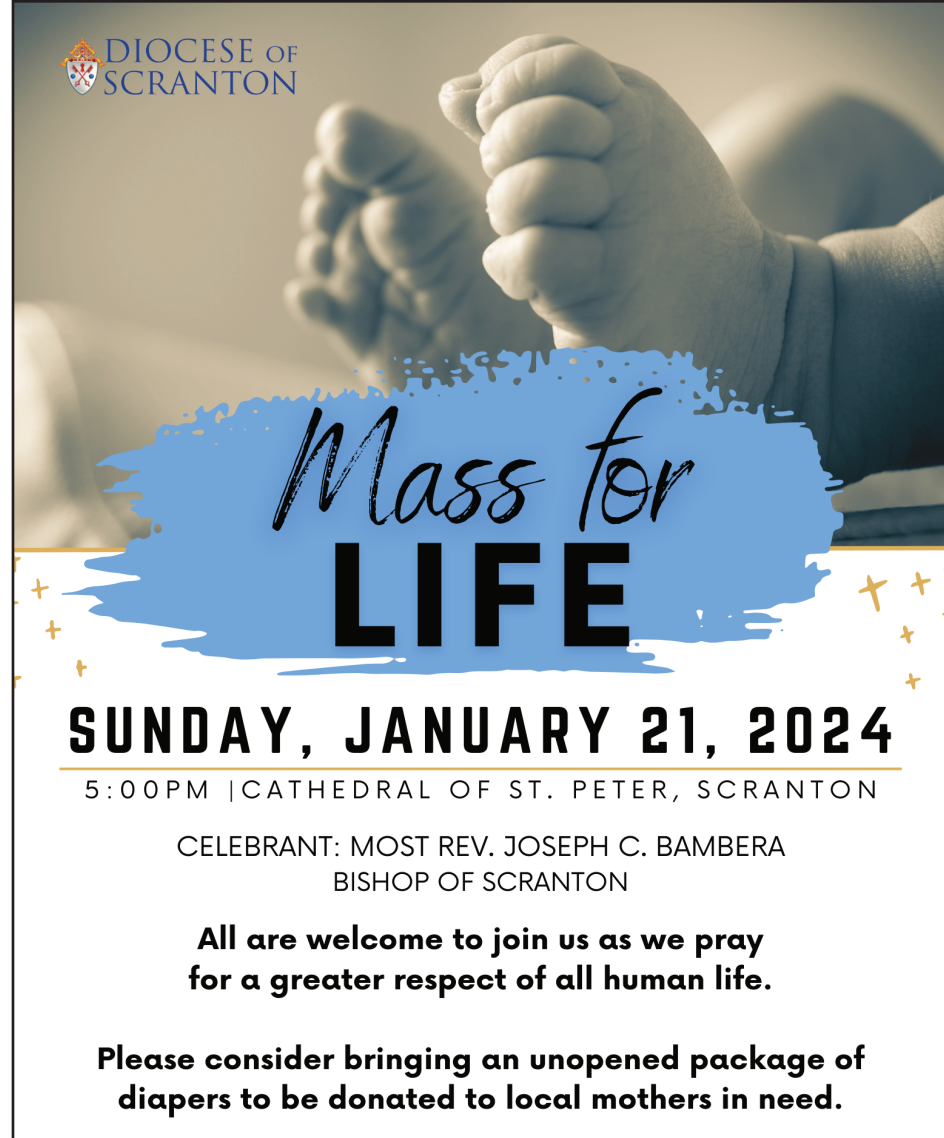
If you are interested in learning more about any of the vocation centers in the Diocese of Scranton or participating in the regular discernment groups that have been established, you can contact any of the priests in your parish, or the Diocesan Vocations Office at (570) 207-1452.



The rectory at Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg has a chapel that can be used by individuals who utilize the vocation center in the Poconos. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

Join us for the 'Mass for Life' on Jan. 21 at Cathedral of Saint Peter

DIOCESE of SCRANTON



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.**

the compassionate support they need to lovingly welcome the gift of their children.

We must do whatever we can in every sphere to ensure the flourishing of both mothers and their children throughout life's journey.

One of the most important ways we can act is through prayer.

That is why you are invited to join faithful from throughout the Diocese of Scranton in praying for a greater respect for all human life, from conception to natural death, and every moment in between later this month.

The 2024 Mass for Life will be held on Sunday, Jan. 21, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will be the principal celebrant and homilist for the 5 p.m. liturgy.

People attending the Mass for Life are encouraged to bring a new pack of diapers to be donated to local mothers in need either through Saint Joseph's Center Baby and Children's Pantry or Shepherd's Maternity House, a facility in East Stroudsburg, run by Catholic Social Services which provides educational, emotional, and material support to expectant mothers.

Washington prior to the march, which begins around 1 p.m. along Constitution Avenue.

According to organizers, Life Fest will feature "dynamic speakers and testimonies" and music by Sarah Kroger and Damascus Worship.

It will also include Mass celebrated by Knights of Columbus Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore; Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston; and Msgr. James Shea, president of the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota; as well as a Eucharistic healing procession.

Life Fest attendees also will have the opportunity to venerate first-class relics of the Ulma family, who were recently beatified in their native Poland.

For more information about Life Fest visit lifefestally.com.

SCRANTON - The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ended the nearly fifty-year nationwide reign of abortion on-demand that was ushered in by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.

In this monumental legal victory, the Supreme Court rightly concluded that there is nothing in the Constitution's text, history, American legal tradition, or the Court's precedents that prevents the government from protecting preborn children in the womb from the violence of abortion.

Dobbs returned the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives at the federal and state levels. And as we have seen, continuing work is needed to protect children, women, and families from the tragedy of abortion.

We must continue advocating for pro-life laws and policies, especially at the state and local levels.

Abortion is legal in more states than not, with many working to expand and enshrine abortion protections. In addition to our efforts to protect human life in law, we must also help women facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, offering them

2024 March for Life theme highlights work pro-life movement does to support women

Continued from Page 1

"We aren't saying that it's easy. But we are saying that it is right to choose life and we hold that choosing life is empowering, and that love saves lives," Mancini continued.

This year's March for Life will take place in both a presidential election year, and one that could bring additional ballot measures on abortion, possibly in states including Arizona and Florida.

The Sisters of Life and Knights of Columbus announced Dec. 21 that they will be teaming up for a second year to host Life Fest in conjunction with the National March for Life.

The event will be held Jan. 19 at the 10,000-seat D.C. Armory in southeast

Pennsylvania abortion totals rise once again in 2022

HARRISBURG - The number of abortions in Pennsylvania rose during 2022, according to recent figures released by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

In 2022, there were 34,838 abortions performed in Pennsylvania. That is 1,632 more abortions than 2021.

"The increase in abortions in Pennsylvania is truly alarming," Maria Gallagher, legislative director of the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, said. "Big Abortion is responsible for the rise. The abortion industry has been quite public in its effort to multiply abortions in PA."

"Every abortion represents the tragic loss of an innocent human life. In addition,

mothers are left to grieve children who are lost to abortion," Gallagher added.

INDUCED ABORTIONS IN 2022 BY COUNTY

Bradford	7
Lackawanna	447
Luzerne	779
Lycoming	137
Monroe	408
Pike	44
Sullivan	6
Susquehanna	27
Tioga	1
Wayne	53
Wyoming	22

Bishop Bambera's March for Life Letter 2024

My Dear Friends,

On June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision. This monumental ruling was due in no small part to the prayers and efforts of committed Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, those of other faith traditions, and some with no religious affiliation, who sought to protect the lives of the most vulnerable among us – unborn infants in the womb.

While the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has given us all hope by allowing for greater freedom at the state level to enact pro-life laws, many legislative battles continue to loom on the horizon. Of note, are concerns regarding the longstanding *Hyde* protections which limit government funding for abortion on annual appropriation bills. Throughout its history, the *Hyde Amendment* has saved over 2 million lives and is arguably the most impactful pro-life policy in our nation's history. Sadly, however, it can no longer be taken for granted. And on a more local level, the fight to protect human life is just as urgent as ever, given the increasing number of states that are intent upon passing pro-abortion legislation.

On Friday, January 19, 2024, marchers from throughout our country will converge on our nation's capital for the 51st annual March for Life. The theme for this year's march is "Pro Life: With Every Woman, For Every Child." While advocating for the right to life of the unborn, this year's march challenges the false narrative around abortion that suggests such a choice to be "empowering" for women. In selecting this year's theme, march organizers have emphasized that "women deserve to know all of their options, such as the love, compassion and free resources that are available to them through the vast pro-life safety net." The pro-life movement supports women "before, during and after pregnancy."

In the Diocese of Scranton, we are blessed with numerous opportunities to support women throughout the course of their pregnancies and beyond, from facilities like Providence Pregnancy Center in Scranton – to parish-based ministries such as Walking with Moms in Need – to Shepherds Maternity House in East Stroudsburg that provides a safe home and assistance for pregnant woman and mothers and their newborn babies – to Saint Joseph's Center – to ministries like Project Rachel that offer hope, healing and spiritual renewal to women and couples who suffer after participating in abortion. The need to ensure the ongoing presence of such ministries is vital.

Sadly, however, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, efforts to protect human life are being compromised more than we might realize. Plans are continuing to terminate Real Alternatives, a statewide contract maintained by federal and state funding, which has been in existence for over 27 years and has provided a critical lifeline to nearly 350,000 women who have suddenly found themselves in need when confronted with an unplanned pregnancy. The termination of this vital contract will almost certainly result in diminished funding for critical pregnancy and parenting support for mothers, including funding for Saint Joseph's Center and most notably, Shepherd's Maternity House in Stroudsburg, that receives over 80% of its annual funding through a grant from Real Alternatives.

Brothers and sisters, the work to preserve and protect human life did not come to an end with the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe*. While the current landscape requires our attention to legislative efforts on both the federal and state levels, the most important work that it demands is the changing of minds and hearts – our own and those of others. That occurs through prayer and through our efforts to walk with women and their children – to assist them during unplanned or difficult pregnancies – to be available to them for support and care once their children have been born – to love and accept them in the midst of challenges – and to respectfully advocate for life at every opportunity.

Consider participating in this year's March for Life in Washington, D.C. on Friday, January 19th ... Join with me for a special Mass for Life in Saint Peter's Cathedral, Scranton on Sunday, January 21st at 5:00 p.m. ... Mark your calendars now and plan to travel to Harrisburg with me and thousands of others from across the Commonwealth for the 3rd annual Pennsylvania March for Life on September 23rd.

As faithful disciples of Jesus, we have been given a noble task to respect and reverence every human life as made in the image and likeness of our Creator. May we live our faith with authenticity and so help to create a culture of life that not only makes abortion unthinkable but treasures every life – from the unborn to mothers in need – to the elderly, the sick, the poor, the disabled, the prisoner, the immigrant and all whose lives are in jeopardy.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ *Joseph C. Bambera*

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



Pro-life advocates gather for the 50th annual March for Life in Washington Jan. 20, 2023. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



Parishioners offer prayers during the Mass for Life on Jan. 19, 2023, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. This year's Mass for Life will take place on Jan. 21, 2024.

Bishop Bamberato celebrate Holy Hours in every deanery this Lent

SCRANTON - After gathering together hundreds, if not thousands, of faithful parishioners last year during Lent for a series of Holy Hours, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, is hoping for an even bigger showing this year!

Bishop Bambera plans to once again visit each of the 12 deaneries in the Diocese of Scranton to celebrate a Holy Hour this Lent.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which takes place this year on Wednesday, Feb. 14, and lasts for 40 days.

In conjunction with the National Eucharistic Revival that has been taking place in our country since Corpus Christi Sunday in 2022, each Holy Hour will feature exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Vespers, and a homily on the Most Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Hours this Lent will begin at Holy Family Parish in the Kingston deanery on Thursday, Feb. 15, and will end at Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in the Scranton deanery on Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

A three-year initiative of the U.S. bishops, the National Eucharistic Revival is nearing its midpoint. The first year focused on diocesan revival, inviting bishops, priests and diocesan leaders to deepen their relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist. The Year of Parish Revival began in June 2023, with emphasis on reaching Catholics in the pews.

The coming calendar year will include the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage that begins in mid-May and the National Eucharistic Congress in July, two large-scale efforts that lead into the revival's final year, the Year of Going Out on Mission, which ends on Pentecost 2025.

Revival leaders hope the 10th National Eucharistic Congress - the first national congress in 83 years - which will take place in Indianapolis July 17-21, 2024, can help cultivate a Eucharistic life in the tens of thousands of Catholics expected to attend.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc. and chairman of the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, said Revival leaders had a private audience with Pope Francis last June.

"He spoke very powerfully of both our National Eucharistic Revival and our congress," Bishop Cozzens said. "It was really an incredible moment for us!"

Every parishioner in the Diocese of Scranton is encouraged to make attending a Holy Hour a priority this Lent. The faithful do not have to attend the Holy Hour in their specific deanery if it does not fit into their schedule.

The full listing of 2024 Lenten Holy Hours is available in the graphic to the right as well as on the Diocese of Scranton website.



**EUCHARISTIC
REVIVAL**

2024 Lenten Holy Hours

Thursday, Feb. 15
Holy Family Parish, Luzerne

Tuesday, Feb. 20
Our Lady of Victory Parish, Tannersville

Wednesday, Feb. 21
Most Precious Blood Parish, Hazleton

Thursday, Feb. 22
Christ the King Parish, Archbald

Tuesday, Feb. 27
Saint Eulalia Parish, Roaring Brook Twp.

Wednesday, Feb. 28
Saint Joseph the Worker Parish, Williamsport

Thursday, Feb. 29
**Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish,
Tunkhannock**

Tuesday, March 5
Saint Joseph Mareello Parish, Pittston

Wednesday, March 6
Saint John Neumann Parish, Lords Valley

Thursday, March 7
Epiphany Parish, Sayre

Monday, March 18
Our Lady of Hope Parish, Wilkes-Barre

Wednesday, March 20
Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Scranton



SPEND A LITTLE TIME WITH OUR LORD, HE IS WAITING FOR YOU!

- *A Priesthood Perspective by Father Michael J. Boris* -
*Assistant Pastor, Saint Gregory Parish, Clarks Green & Our Lady of the Snows
Parish, Clarks Summit*



Being newly ordained to the priesthood, I cannot claim to have been around long enough to really develop a true appreciation for the gift of the Eucharist; the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, of Christ himself.

In fact, whether we are ordained or not, none of us have been around long enough to truly appreciate this magnificent gift.

This is the wonderful opportunity that is before us in this time of Eucharistic Revival. It is an opportunity to ponder anew the Real Presence that is among us.

The two cents I would like to offer regarding this Precious Gift is a small look into my own spirituality.

I would like to reflect briefly with you on what is known as a "Holy Hour."

The Holy Hour is taking the time to spend one, full hour in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. It is the opportunity to spend an extended period of time with God in the most Precious Gift that he has given us on this earth.

I am not entirely sure how long the concept of the Holy Hour has been around, but I know it was made popular in the last century by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. He strongly encouraged the Holy Hour to be prayed every day.



Faithful from Kingston Deanery gather for a Lenten Holy last year at Saint John the Baptist Parish in Larksville. In his reflection, Rev. Michael Boris reflects on the importance of spending time with our Eucharistic Lord.

During my time at King's College, I felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit asking me to consider making the Holy Hour part of my spirituality. Believe me, it was met with much resistance at first and only with a slow and laborious effort would it become what it is today.

I began by going to the college chapel a couple times a week and spending some time in adoration of Christ in the Eucharist. It was not always a full hour, but that was totally fine.

Time spent with the Lord in prayer is never time in vain, no matter how long it is or where it is. Yet, I felt called to eventually commit to the full hour every day.

It was not until seminary that I began to make a daily

effort to spend the entire hour. But often the hour would become 45 minutes or some other amount of time. Either way, the effort was being made. And, again, time spent in prayer is never in vain.

It was not until the recent past that I have finally developed the habit of doing the Holy Hour each day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament (certainly being a priest and living at a Church makes this a lot easier).

I share this passion for the Holy Hour because in truly amazing and profound ways, I have seen what joy and peace it has brought me over the years in my relationship with God. I am fully convinced that I would not be a priest if it were not for

my prayer life, especially with the Holy Hour.

Spending quiet time in prayer, especially in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, is the antidote to the chaotic pace of our times. Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian, and we cannot develop our relationship with God without it.

That does not mean every experience in prayer is amazing. It can often feel like a drudgery with clock-checking and antsy feet. But, again, I repeat the principle mentioned above; any time in prayer is good time spent with God, and never is it in vain. I do believe that visiting Christ in the Eucharist, even if it be for only five minutes, can have very profound impacts on peoples' lives.

Realize though that adoring Christ in the Eucharist is not the "end" or "goal" of the Eucharist.

Rather, it is taking and eating the Eucharist that is the goal. In other words, the goal is going to Mass!

Jesus Christ wants us to eat His Body and Blood so that we may have life and have it to the full extent. The Mass is where we encounter this Life. Praying during my daily Holy Hour, which often involves the rosary, Scripture, and other traditional forms of prayer, is what God has called me to do so that I may better love and appreciate his Precious Gift when I encounter him at Mass.

So, do I think we are all called to do a daily Holy Hour? No. But I do know we are all called to worship our Lord on this earth in the Blessed Sacrament.

Perhaps, during this Eucharistic Revival, to better understand and appreciate this Precious Gift, you will be intentional about spending time in Eucharistic Adoration, which many parishes have, or simply visiting a Church, or arriving early or staying after Mass to prepare well for that intimate moment of receiving Christ under your roof.

God longs to be with us in this intimate way in the Eucharist. Spend a little time with our Good Lord in your nearby Church ... He is waiting for you!

Ecumenical Service Jan. 24 to highlight 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, 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 the 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

Vince 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.”

Pope Francis: Bring Mary’s gratitude and hope into the new year

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - On New Year’s Eve, believers and non-believers alike give thanks for all they have received in the last 12 months and express their hopes for the coming year, but Christians are called to cultivate their gratitude and hope following the example of Mary, Pope Francis said.

“Faith enables us to live this hour in a way different than that of a worldly mindset,” the pope said during an evening prayer service in St. Peter’s Basilica Dec. 31. “Faith in Jesus Christ, the incarnated God, born of the Virgin Mary, gives a new way of feeling time and life.”

Pope Francis said that while many people express thanks and hope on New Year’s Eve, in reality, they often “lack the essential dimension which is that of relationship with the Other and with others, with God and with brothers and sisters.”

With a worldly mentality,

gratitude and hope are “flattened onto the self, onto one’s interests,” he said. “They don’t go beyond satisfaction and optimism.”

Pope Francis encouraged Christians to look to the example of Mary who, after giving birth to Jesus, had a mother’s gratitude in her heart for bearing the child of God.

“Mystery makes room for gratitude, which surfaces in the contemplation of gift, in gratuitousness, while it suffocates in the anxiety of having and appearing,” the pope said. “The church learns gratitude from the Virgin Mary.”

The pope also said that the hope of Mary and the church “is not optimism, it is something else: it is faith in a God faithful to his promises.”

“This faith takes the form of hope in the dimension of time,” he said. “Christians, like Mary, are

pilgrims of hope.”

Near the basilica’s main altar was an icon of the “Madonna Lactans,” or Nursing Madonna, from the Benedictine Abbey of Montevirgine in Mercogliano, Italy. The icon, in late Byzantine style, shows Mary nursing the infant Jesus. The pope prayed silently before the image before leaving the basilica.

The service culminated with the choir and the 6,500 people present in the basilica singing the “Te Deum” (“We praise you, oh God”) in thanksgiving for the blessings of the past year.

In his homily, Pope Francis noted that the coming year would involve intense preparation for the Holy Year 2025. Yet more than worrying about organizing logistics and events, the pope asked people to be witnesses to “ethical and spiritual quality of coexistence.”



LAS PARROQUIAS HISPANAS DEL ÁREA DE HAZLETON

INVITAN A LA FIESTA DE LA ALTAGRACIA

PROTECTORA DEL PUEBLO DOMINICANO

PRESIDE SU EXCIA. REVDM. JOSEPH BAMBERA
Obispo de Scranton

DOMINGO, ENERO 21, 2024

Holy Family Academy

Santa Misa 12:00 PM

Iniciamos con el Santo Rosario a las 11:30 AM y luego la Eucaristía Solemne

Acto Cultural después de la Misa
Con muchas sorpresas



Obispo Joseph C. Bambera

Holy Family Academy
601 N Laurel Street, Hazleton, PA 18201 (Laurel esquina 5ta)

Diocesan celebration honoring the gifts of persons with disabilities to be held Feb. 11 in Scranton

SCRANTON – In advance of National Disability Awareness Month in March, the Diocese of Scranton will hold its annual Mass for Persons with Disabilities on Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, at 10 a.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.


All people, including those with special abilities, have gifts to contribute to the life of the Church. The Diocese of Scranton embraces and welcomes the talents of all individuals in building up the Kingdom of God.

The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve

as principal celebrant and homilist at this special Mass.

The Mass is open to everyone. It will be broadcast live on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. The Mass will also be livestream on the Diocese of Scranton website, YouTube channel and links will be provided on all Diocesan social media platforms.

Partners in the annual Mass for Persons with Disabilities include Saint Joseph's Center in Scranton, The Arc of Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Order of the Alhambra.



Diocese of Scranton 

Mass for Persons With Disabilities

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2024
10:00AM

CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER
315 WYOMING AVE. SCRANTON, PA 18502

CELEBRANT: BISHOP JOSEPH C. BAMBERA

All are welcome to join us as we honor the many gifts those with physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities bring to the Church and the community.

For more info, contact
Shannon Kowalski at
(570)207-2213

Women's retreat to focus on teachings of Saint Therese of Lisieux

DALTON – In just about two weeks, women from across the Diocese of Scranton will gather to be inspired by the teachings of Saint Therese of Lisieux.

The Bold & Beloved Women's Retreat will take place Jan. 26-28 at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center in Dalton.

"I've found that many people do not find Saint Therese of Lisieux to be a relatable saint," retreat leader Kara Kardell said. "After all, she was a young, cloistered religious sister, so what could she possibly know about day-to-day life in the real world? Yet, I have found no more relatable, beautiful soul than Saint Therese of Lisieux."

Kardell and Fred Shellabarger, founders of *Draw Near*, a movement that draws people close to Christ and one another, are excited to share the saint's teachings with those who attend.

"She was a doctor of the Church, so we have a lot to learn from her doctrine of love and charity. She is also a great friend. Like the Book of Sirach says, 'a faithful friend is a sturdy shelter,'" Kardell added. "She will be that for you, like she is for so many. I invite all women to this retreat for a



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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

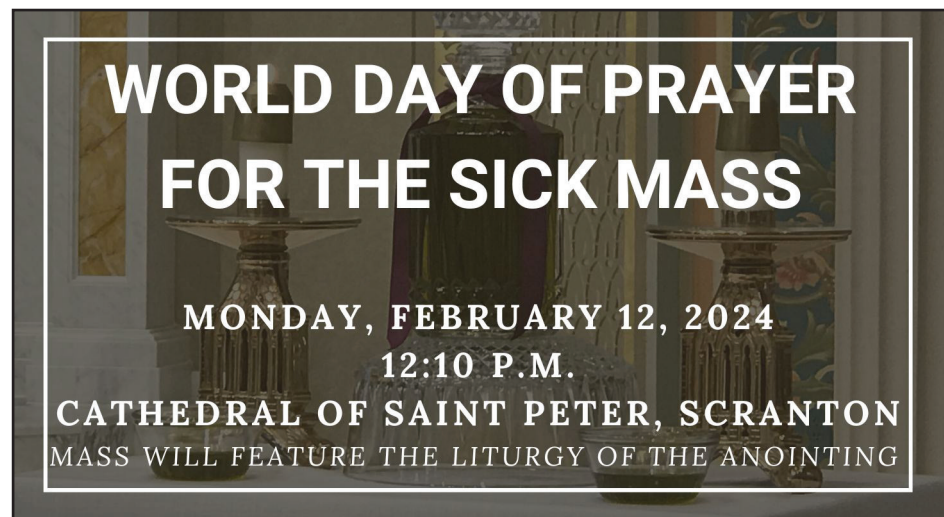



full weekend of growing more in love with God, experiencing His love, His mercy, His healing, but also to be boldly prepared for the purpose that He has uniquely created you for."

Check-in time for the Bold & Beloved Retreat is between 4-6:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 26 and check-out will occur at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 28.

The cost of the retreat is \$75 for students (age 18-23); \$125 for a shared room; and \$175 for a single room.

To register for the retreat, visit dioceseofscranton.org or call Marianne Guarnieri, Diocesan Director of Discipleship, at (570) 207-2213.



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE SICK MASS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024
12:10 P.M.

CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PETER, SCRANTON

MASS WILL FEATURE THE LITURGY OF THE ANOINTING

Diocesan Annual Appeal funding assists parish in serving new community meal

Saint Ann Parish in West Scranton begins monthly meal with Social Justice Grant funding

SCRANTON – Since November, parishioners of Saint Ann Parish in West Scranton have been warming hearts and filling stomachs on the second Sunday of each month.

They will do it again this weekend – Sunday, January 14 – as the parish holds its third free, sit-down community meal in the lower level of Saints Peter and Paul Church, 1309 West Locust Street, Scranton.

“We felt there was a need for this meal in the west side,” Deacon Peter Lemoncelli said. “In west side, there is no other church or organization that offers this type of free meal so we always thought there would be a need.”

With the help of a Parish Social Justice Grant from the 2023 Diocesan Annual Appeal, the parish was able to begin the monthly meals and is now looking to spread the word.

More than just providing a meal to those in need, organizers have quickly realized that many in the community were looking for companionship.

“We wanted it to be a chance for the people of the community to come together and to be able to socialize, especially for those who have no one,” Deacon Lemoncelli explained. “We have found



Saint Ann Parish volunteers who provided the first community meal on Sunday, Nov. 12, at Saints Peter and Paul Church.

that beyond needing a meal, many guests really look forward to the conversation and interaction with other people.”

One man who has attended the meal in both November and December is over one hundred years old.

“The people have said that they just want a chance to get out of their home and talk to someone. They either have no family left or their families live out of town, so it has really been a great benefit beyond providing food.”

The parish has three teams of volunteers who rotate in either preparing or purchasing meals.

You are Invited!
Free, sit-down community meal
January 14 from 1-2 p.m.
(Meals will be also held the Second Sunday of Every Month)

Lower Level of SS. Peter & Paul Church (Saint John Paul II Hall)
 1309 West Locust Street, Scranton

Call Parish to Reserve a Seat
 Rectory: (570) 342-5166



Members of the Saint Ann Parish Food Pantry committee who provided the second free community meal on Dec. 10.

In November, volunteers from the Legion of Mary, Ladies of the Basilica, and Cookie Committee of the parish prepared the monthly meal which featured a choice of soups, stroganoff, and desserts.

In December, the parish’s Food Pantry Committee offered a ham dinner with mashed potatoes and desserts.

This coming weekend, for the January meal, the meal hosted by the Knights of Columbus will include pasta and meatballs, salad, and dessert.

The community meals take place from 1:00-2:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month. Reservations are not required but

are available by calling the parish rectory at (570) 342-5166.

Between 10-15 people attended the first community meal in November. That number was close to 25 in December and organizers are hoping it will continue to grow this month and throughout the new year, serving those in West Scranton in need of food or fellowship.

“We have started out slow so each of the different groups get an idea of what it is like to put on the dinner and prepare the food. Now, our next challenge is to increase the number of people who come to the dinner,” Deacon Lemoncelli added.

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 Online: **AnnualAppeal.org**

Credit Card (see below) Monthly _____ # of Payments Parish _____

Monthly _____ # of Payments Parish _____

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

Name on Credit Card (please print) _____ Daytime Phone _____

Check One VISA MasterCard Number _____ CVV _____ Exp. Date _____

One-Time Payment: Amount \$ _____ **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) _____

Total Amount Pledged \$ _____

Enclosed Amount \$ _____

Balance to be Paid \$ _____

Please make checks payable to:
Diocesan Annual Appeal

Diocesan Annual Appeal currently at 75% of Goal

Your Appeal Gifts Support the Following Ministries:

- Catholic Communications
- Catholic Social Services
- Catholic Education
- Seminarian Education & Retired Clergy Support
- Parish Life Initiatives
- Social Justice Grants to Parishes
- Faith Formation Grants to Parishes

A Full Listing of Parish Gifts To Date (as of Jan. 5) Appears on the Next Page

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

	<i>Progress to Parish Goal</i>		<i>Progress to Parish Goal</i>
All Saints Parish - Plymouth.....	\$14,191.00 / \$37,000.00 (38%)	St. Ann Basilica - Scranton.....	\$21,075.00 / \$30,000.00 (70%)
Annunciation Parish - Hazleton.....	\$16,849.00 / \$33,000.00 (51%)	St. Ann Parish - Shohola.....	\$16,526.00 / \$20,000.00 (83%)
Ascension Parish - Forest City.....	\$16,580.00 / \$25,000.00 (66%)	St. Ann Parish - Williamsport.....	\$43,285.00 / \$59,000.00 (73%)
Blessed Sacrament Parish - Throop.....	\$17,425.00 / \$16,000.00 (109%)	St. Barbara Parish - Exeter.....	\$18,098.00 / \$31,000.00 (58%)
BVM Queen of Peace Parish - Hawley.....	\$56,530.00 / \$76,000.00 (74%)	St. Boniface Parish - Williamsport.....	\$42,445.00 / \$60,000.00 (71%)
Christ the King Parish - Archbald.....	\$52,046.85 / \$67,000.00 (78%)	St. Brigid Parish - Friendsville.....	\$32,000.00 / \$22,000.00 (145%)
Corpus Christi Parish - West Pittston.....	\$36,890.00 / \$30,000.00 (123%)	St. Catherine of Siena Parish - Moscow.....	\$73,007.75 / \$63,000.00 (116%)
Divine Mercy Parish - Scranton.....	\$45,067.00 / \$63,000.00 (72%)	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish - Swoyersville..	\$41,385.02 / \$44,000.00 (94%)
Epiphany Parish - Sayre.....	\$57,513.00 / \$85,000.00 (68%)	St. Elizabeth Parish - Bear Creek.....	\$13,715.00 / \$24,000.00 (57%)
Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish - Hanover Twp..	\$17,170.00 / \$15,000.00 (114%)	St. Eulalia Parish - Roaring Brook Township....	\$24,672.96 / \$40,000.00 (62%)
Gate of Heaven Parish - Dallas.....	\$27,250.00 / \$47,000.00 (58%)	St. Faustina Kowalska Parish - Nanticoke.....	\$30,016.94 / \$47,000.00 (64%)
Good Shepherd Parish - Drums.....	\$11,520.00 / \$24,000.00 (48%)	St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish - Carverton.....	\$20,504.64 / \$13,000.00 (158%)
Holy Child Parish - Mansfield.....	\$23,014.00 / \$28,000.00 (82%)	St. Gregory Parish - Clarks Green.....	\$76,626.40 / \$74,000.00 (104%)
Holy Cross Parish - Olyphant.....	\$31,696.00 / \$47,000.00 (67%)	St. Ignatius Loyola Parish - Kingston.....	\$56,434.45 / \$77,000.00 (73%)
Holy Family Parish - Luzerne.....	\$40,495.00 / \$40,000.00 (101%)	St. John Bosco Parish - Conyngham.....	\$62,342.15 / \$58,000.00 (107%)
Holy Name of Jesus Parish - West Hazleton.....	\$8,289.00 / \$21,000.00 (39%)	St. John Neumann Parish - Lords Valley.....	\$17,390.00 / \$28,000.00 (62%)
Holy Name of Mary Parish - Montrose.....	\$19,625.00 / \$16,000.00 (123%)	St. John Neumann Parish - Scranton.....	\$19,653.00 / \$52,000.00 (38%)
Holy Rosary Parish - Hazleton.....	\$14,485.00 / \$17,000.00 (85%)	St. John Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$30,158.00 / \$57,000.00 (53%)
Holy Spirit Parish - Mocanaqua.....	\$11,735.00 / \$28,000.00 (42%)	St. John the Baptist Parish - Larksville.....	\$16,005.00 / \$21,000.00 (76%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Williamsport.....	\$16,359.00 / \$26,000.00 (63%)	St. John the Evangelist Parish - Honesdale....	\$55,812.00 / \$64,000.00 (87%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Scranton.....	\$33,277.20 / \$40,000.00 (83%)	St. John the Evangelist Parish - Pittston.....	\$38,549.00 / \$54,000.00 (71%)
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish - Dushore.....	\$30,480.00 / \$38,000.00 (80%)	St. John Vianney Parish - Montdale.....	\$24,714.00 / \$30,000.00 (82%)
Mary, Mother of God Parish - Scranton.....	\$50,092.50 / \$56,000.00 (89%)	St. Joseph Marello Parish - Pittston.....	\$27,905.00 / \$27,000.00 (103%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Cresco.....	\$34,660.20 / \$49,000.00 (71%)	St. Joseph Parish - Matamoras.....	\$26,978.00 / \$37,000.00 (73%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Susquehanna.....	\$16,623.00 / \$30,000.00 (55%)	St. Joseph the Worker Parish - Williamsport....	\$63,435.00 / \$75,000.00 (85%)
Most Precious Blood Parish - Hazleton.....	\$28,266.71 / \$36,000.00 (79%)	St. Jude Parish - Mountain Top.....	\$73,521.00 / \$79,000.00 (93%)
Nativity of Our Lord Parish - Duryea.....	\$38,590.00 / \$40,000.00 (96%)	St. Katharine Drexel Parish - Pleasant Mount..	\$16,130.00 / \$13,000.00 (124%)
Nativity of the BVM Parish - Tunkhannock.....	\$24,963.00 / \$32,000.00 (78%)	St. Lawrence Parish - S. Williamsport.....	\$21,675.00 / \$26,000.00 (83%)
Our Lady Help of Christians Parish - Dorrance....	\$16,520.00 / \$18,000.00 (92%)	St. Leo Parish - Ashley.....	\$16,430.00 / \$33,000.00 (50%)
Our Lady of Fatima Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$17,795.00 / \$30,000.00 (59%)	St. Lucy Parish - Scranton.....	\$5,030.00 / \$19,000.00 (26%)
Our Lady of Hope Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$24,535.00 / \$35,000.00 (70%)	St. Luke Parish - Jersey Shore.....	\$8,295.20 / \$16,000.00 (52%)
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish - Montoursville.....	\$30,467.00 / \$41,000.00 (74%)	St. Luke Parish - Stroudsburg.....	\$108,551.00 / \$114,000.00 (95%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Carbondale..	\$7,230.00 / \$23,000.00 (31%)	St. Maria Goretti Parish - Laffin.....	\$20,390.00 / \$42,000.00 (49%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Dunmore.....	\$37,951.50 / \$56,000.00 (68%)	St. Mary of the Lake Parish - Lake Winola.....	\$7,610.00 / \$12,000.00 (63%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Lake Silkworth..	\$13,052.00 / \$19,000.00 (69%)	St. Mary Parish - Waymart.....	\$22,770.00 / \$17,000.00 (134%)
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish - Wyalusing...	\$10,205.00 / \$10,000.00 (102%)	St. Matthew Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$48,096.00 / \$60,000.00 (80%)
Our Lady of the Abingtons Parish - Dalton.....	\$8,140.00 / \$16,000.00 (51%)	St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish - Pocono Pines....	\$16,343.00 / \$24,000.00 (68%)
Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish - Pittston.....	\$10,320.00 / \$16,000.00 (65%)	St. Michael Parish - Canton.....	\$10,163.00 / \$12,000.00 (85%)
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception - Freeland..	\$12,446.00 / \$26,000.00 (48%)	St. Michael Parish - Scranton.....	\$5,527.00 / \$9,000.00 (61%)
Our Lady of the Snows Parish - Clarks Summit....	\$64,120.40 / \$87,000.00 (74%)	St. Monica Parish - West Wyoming.....	\$24,730.00 / \$31,000.00 (80%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Harveys Lake.....	\$21,359.60 / \$37,000.00 (58%)	St. Nicholas Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$52,570.00 / \$52,000.00 (101%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Tannersville.....	\$42,786.00 / \$52,000.00 (82%)	St. Patrick Parish - Milford.....	\$31,525.00 / \$33,000.00 (96%)
Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish - Brodheadsville..	\$57,026.30 / \$58,000.00 (98%)	St. Patrick Parish - Nicholson.....	\$7,325.00 / \$9,000.00 (81%)
Prince of Peace Parish - Old Forge.....	\$14,480.00 / \$28,000.00 (52%)	St. Patrick Parish - Scranton.....	\$19,668.00 / \$42,000.00 (47%)
Queen of Angels Parish - Jessup.....	\$14,177.00 / \$26,000.00 (55%)	St. Patrick Parish - White Haven.....	\$5,797.00 / \$16,000.00 (36%)
Queen of Heaven Parish - Hazleton.....	\$19,060.00 / \$29,000.00 (66%)	St. Paul of the Cross Parish - Scranton.....	\$16,147.00 / \$52,000.00 (31%)
Queen of the Apostles Parish - Avoca.....	\$17,771.75 / \$23,000.00 (77%)	St. Paul Parish - Scranton.....	\$39,075.00 / \$66,000.00 (59%)
Resurrection Parish - Muncy.....	\$25,620.00 / \$33,000.00 (78%)	St. Peter Parish - Wellsboro.....	\$26,035.00 / \$43,000.00 (61%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Dupont.....	\$15,027.45 / \$30,000.00 (50%)	St. Peter's Cathedral - Scranton.....	\$115,867.00 / \$71,000.00 (163%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Peckville.....	\$48,664.77 / \$41,000.00 (119%)	St. Rita Parish - Gouldsboro.....	\$10,032.00 / \$14,000.00 (72%)
Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Parish - Jermyn...	\$11,391.40 / \$21,000.00 (54%)	St. Robert Bellarmine Parish - Wilkes-Barre....	\$24,865.00 / \$34,000.00 (73%)
SS Anthony & Rocco Parish - Dunmore.....	\$30,955.00 / \$47,000.00 (66%)	St. Rose of Lima Parish - Carbondale.....	\$41,104.00 / \$62,000.00 (66%)
SS Cyril & Methodius Parish - Hazleton.....	\$36,768.50 / \$43,000.00 (86%)	St. Therese Parish - Shavertown.....	\$81,765.00 / \$71,000.00 (115%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Plains.....	\$50,759.00 / \$50,000.00 (102%)	St. Thomas More Parish - Lake Ariel.....	\$37,974.00 / \$49,000.00 (78%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Scranton.....	\$9,485.00 / \$13,000.00 (73%)	St. Thomas the Apostle Parish - Elkland.....	\$7,900.00 / \$13,000.00 (61%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Towanda.....	\$34,770.00 / \$31,000.00 (112%)	St. Vincent de Paul Parish - Milford.....	\$40,585.00 / \$35,000.00 (116%)
St. Andrew Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$6,915.00 / \$17,000.00 (41%)	Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Dickson City	\$45,445.75 / \$55,000.00 (83%)

In an unsettled world, we have 'opportunity to embrace the good news of Christmas,' Bishop Bambera says

SCRANTON – Hundreds of people filled the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Christmas Eve to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant and homilist for both the 4 p.m. and midnight Masses.

During his homily, Bishop Bambera acknowledged conflicts taking place in many parts of the world, including in the Holy Land and Ukraine.

“May the message of this day so permeate our hearts that peace will one day finally become a reality for all people,” Bishop Bambera said.

The bishop said that many people, unfortunately, look for God in the wrong place and self-righteously point fingers at others who are different than themselves.

“And then we wonder why our world is unsettled, our hearts uneasy, our families broken, and why countless numbers of souls are suffering in Israel, Ukraine, far too many places in our world, and in our own land,” Bishop Bambera continued.

Instead, the bishop said the “miracle of this day is that despite living in a world



The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, uses incense to bless the creche inside the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton during the Vigil Mass of Christmas on Dec. 24, 2023. During the blessing, he asked that all people who look upon the manger be reminded of the “humble birth of Jesus.” (Photo/Mike Melisky)

that’s been turned upside down, we are once again blessed with the opportunity to embrace the good news of Christmas – good news that proclaims God’s love and mercy to everyone who is humble and wise enough to know where to look to find it and how to keep it alive each day.”

Bishop Bambera began the Vigil Mass by blessing the large, beautiful creche which adorned the right-hand side of the

Cathedral sanctuary during the Christmas season.

“God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation, you have made manifest your love. When our need for a savior was great, you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives, He brings joy and peace, justice, mercy and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger. May it remind us of the humble

birth of Jesus and raise up our thoughts to Him, who is God with us, and savior of all,” the bishop said in his blessing.

As the Christmas season approached its conclusion, Bishop Bambera celebrated Mass for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Jan. 7, 2024, in which he reminded the faithful that Jesus did not remain in a manger forever.

“He went forth to embrace the work given to him by His Father: A mission grounded in humble service; unconditional and sacrificial love; and unlimited forgiveness and compassion,” the bishop explained. “These are the real gifts of Christmas – gifts available to all who open their hearts to Jesus’ presence – from those who worship with reverence and devotion; to the suffering poor who are unable to find their way to a church; to refugees and immigrants seeking a better life; to modern day victims of terrorism and war in the Middle East, Ukraine and beyond; to the magi of our time: every soul who seeks meaning, purpose, and a way forward in life through an encounter with the living God – including me and you.”

Pope’s Christmas message: Say ‘yes’ to the Prince of Peace, ‘no’ to war

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Celebrating the birth of Jesus, the prince of peace, should mean making a commitment to opposing all war, to cherishing human life, feeding the hungry and speaking up for those who have no voice, Pope Francis said.

“To say ‘yes’ to the Prince of Peace, then, means saying ‘no’ to war - and doing so with courage - saying no to every war, to the very mindset of war, an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly,” the pope said Dec. 25 as he read his Christmas message and offered his blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world).

As he stood on the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica with an estimated 70,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square, the pope began his message speaking of Bethlehem where celebrations

of Jesus’ birth are muted this year because of the Israeli-Hamas conflict.

But he also used his message to preach the hope of Christmas, which he said was found in God, who loved humanity so much that he sent his son to be born in a manger.

In the midst of darkness for whole nations or for individuals, he said, God sends his light.

“Let us exult in this gift of grace,” Pope Francis said. “Rejoice, you who have abandoned all hope, for God offers you his outstretched hand; he does not point a finger at you, but offers you his little baby hand, in order to set you free from your fears, to relieve you of your burdens and to show you that, in his eyes, you are more valuable than anything else.”

U.S. Cardinal James M. Harvey, archpriest of Rome’s Basilica of St. Paul



Pope Francis prays before giving his Christmas blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 25, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Outside the Walls, stood alongside Pope Francis on the balcony, announcing a plenary indulgence available for everyone present, listening by radio, watching on television or following “other means of communication.”

In his message, Pope Francis said Christmas is a call to push for peace and to educate oneself about the arms industry.

“People, who desire not weapons but bread, who struggle to make ends meet and desire only peace, have no idea how many public funds are being spent on arms,” he said. “Yet that is something they ought to know! It should be talked about and written about, so as to bring to light the interests and the profits that move the puppet-strings of war.”

War “is devastating the lives” of Israelis and Palestinians, he said.

“I embrace them all, particularly the Christian communities of Gaza and the entire Holy Land,” the pope said. He again condemned the “abominable attack” Hamas militants carried out in Israel Oct. 7 and repeated his “urgent appeal for the liberation of those still being held hostage.”

Christmas Gifts for Kids Program helped 6,151 children in December

SCRANTON – In the days leading up to Christmas, Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton helped brighten the holiday season for a total of 6,151 local children.

As part of the Gifts for Kids Program, the agency helped a total of 5,101 children in the greater Scranton area, 686 children in the Hazleton area and an additional 364 children in Carbondale.

“This is what we get into social work for,” Dominique Jordan, Catholic Social Services’ Carbondale Office supervisor, said at a toy distribution on Dec. 13. “It is great to see so much happiness.”

The basement of Saint Rose of Lima Parish looked like Santa’s workshop as thousands of toys were put out on display. Parents were able to select three gifts for each of their children.

“This is a big help,” Christina Staff of Carbondale said as she selected gifts for her four children, who range in age from seven months to ten years old. “With how the economy is going now-a-days, everything is so expensive. This is going to help us get our kids the toys they deserve to have for the year.”

On Dec. 16, staff and volunteers distributed gifts from the Catholic Social Services’ Family Center on South Church Street in Hazleton.

One mother, who benefited from the distribution, expressed her gratitude in a message to staff.

“I want to thank you for everything you have done ... this has been one of the most difficult years economically, emotionally and even physically for me,” the woman stated. “I know that at some point we all need (help) and I want to thank you for this (toy distribution) and more. I bless your life, the life of your family, the life of the people that work at the center, and everyone who in one way or another is part of this spectacular project.”



A volunteer helps parents shop for toys during the Gifts for Kids distribution at The University of Scranton on Dec. 21, 2023. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

On the week of Dec. 18-21, Catholic Social Services took part in three different toy distributions in Scranton along with three other community non-profits: Friends of the Poor, Catherine McAuley Center and the Salvation Army.

“It is really a great collaboration. It is really unique because it is four faith-based organizations in the area,” Meghan Loftus, President and CEO of Friends of the Poor, said. “The need is significantly greater than it has ever been.”

On Dec. 18 and 20, the four agencies distributed gifts to pre-registered families at the Byron Center at The University of Scranton. Registration took place in October and lasted only minutes.

“When we opened our registration this year for Gifts for Kids, it was completely filled, over 3,000 kids, in less than an hour,” Jollette Lyons, Catholic Social Services Director of Lackawanna County Offices, explained.

Because of the generosity of the community, the agencies were able to offer a general walk-up event on Dec. 21, which assisted nearly 2,400 children in a matter of hours.

“In the past, each of our agencies provided their own Christmas programming, but through conversations we determined if we could join together, we can serve more people by having less of an administrative burden,” Krista Murray, executive director of Catherine McAuley Center, added.

APPOINTMENTS

His Excellency, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, announces the following appointments, effective as indicated:

Reverend Sergio Leon Pamplona Henao, from ministry in the Diocese of Medellin, Colombia, currently in residence at Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg, to Parochial Vicar, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, West Hazleton, and Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton, effective January 8, 2024. Father will reside at Annunciation Parish, Hazleton.

Reverend Wilfredo Milan Mamani Cusicanqui, from Parochial Vicar, Holy Name of Jesus Parish, West Hazleton, and Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton, effective January 15, 2024. Father will return to ministry in the Diocese of Corocoro, Bolivia.



BISHOP BAMBERA’S SCHEDULE

January 13 - Filipino Community Mass

Immaculate Conception Church, Scranton, 6:00 p.m.

January 14 - Mass for Diocesan Annual Appeal Intentions

(Second Sunday in Ordinary Time)
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.

January 17-19 - Bishops’ Meeting

St. Louis, Missouri

January 21 - Our Lady of Alta Gracia Mass

Annunciation Parish, Hazleton, Noon

January 21 - Mass for Life

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 5:00 p.m.

January 24 - Christian Unity Prayer Service

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.

February 7 - School Mass for Holy Redeemer High School

Wilkes-Barre, 9:00 a.m.

February 8 - School Mass for Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School

Saint Mary of Mount Carmel Church, Dunmore
9:00 a.m.

February 11 - Mass for Persons with Disabilities

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.

February 12 - World Day of Prayer for the Sick Mass

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.

February 14 - Ash Wednesday Mass

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.

In the end, no matter its location – Scranton, Carbondale or Hazleton – the Christmas Gifts for Kids Program is about providing joy and love during the holiday season.

“It gives us a sense of satisfaction that our community comes together to help people who are less fortunate,” Trish Smith, a volunteer with Catholic Social Services, said. “It is all about sharing the love of Christ!”

Doctrinal dicastery explains how, when gay couples can be blessed

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - A Catholic priest can bless a gay or other unmarried couple as long as it is not a formal liturgical blessing and does not give the impression that the Catholic Church is blessing the union as if it were a marriage, the Vatican doctrinal office said.

The request for a blessing can express and nurture “openness to the transcendence, mercy and closeness to God in a thousand concrete circumstances of life, which is no small thing in the world in which we live. It is a seed of the Holy Spirit that must be nurtured, not hindered,” the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a formal declaration published Dec. 18.

The document, *Fiducia Supplicans* (“Supplicating Trust”) was subtitled, “On the pastoral meaning of blessings,” and was approved by Pope Francis during an audience with Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, Dec. 18.

In his introductory note, Cardinal Fernández said questions about a priest blessing a LGBTQ+ or other unmarried couple had been sent to the doctrinal office repeatedly over the past few years.

The need for a fuller explanation of blessings became clear, he wrote, after Pope Francis responded to the “dubia” or questions of several cardinals in a letter released in early October.

In his letter, the pope insisted marriage is an “exclusive, stable and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to conceiving children,” which is why the church “avoids all kinds of rites or sacramentals that could contradict this conviction and imply that it is recognizing as a marriage something that is not.”

At the same time, the pope said, “pastoral prudence must adequately discern if there are forms of blessing, solicited by one or various persons, that don’t transmit a mistaken concept of marriage.”

Cardinal Fernández said the declaration “remains firm on the traditional doctrine of the Church about marriage, not allowing any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to a liturgical rite that can create confusion,” but it also explores the “pastoral meaning of blessings” in a way that opens

“the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church’s perennial teaching on marriage.”

The church “remains firm” in teaching that marriage can be contracted only between one woman and one man, he said, and continues to insist that “rites and prayers that could create confusion” about a marriage and another form of relationship “are inadmissible.”

But in Catholic tradition blessings go well beyond the formal ritual used in marriage and other sacraments.

“Blessings are among the most widespread and evolving sacramentals. Indeed, they lead us to grasp God’s presence in all the events of life and remind us that, even in the use of created things, human beings are invited to seek God, to love him, and to serve him faithfully,” the declaration said. That is why people, meals, rosaries, homes, pets and myriad other things can be and are blessed on various occasions.

“From a strictly liturgical point of view,” the declaration said, “a blessing requires that what is blessed be conformed to God’s will, as expressed in the teachings of the Church,” which is why the then-doctrinal congregation in 2021 excluded the possibility of blessing gay couples.

But, the new document said, Catholics should “avoid the risk of reducing the meaning of blessings” to their formal, liturgical use because that “would lead us to expect the same moral conditions for a simple blessing that are called for in the reception of the sacraments.”

“Indeed, there is the danger that a pastoral gesture that is so beloved and widespread will be subjected to too many moral prerequisites, which, under the claim of control, could overshadow the unconditional power of God’s love that forms the basis for the gesture of blessing,” it said.

A person who asks for God’s blessing, the declaration said, “shows himself to be in need of God’s saving presence in his life and one who asks for a blessing from the Church recognizes the latter as a sacrament of the salvation that God offers.”

The church, it said, should be grateful

when people ask for a blessing and should see it as a sign that they know they need God’s help.

“When people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For, those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection,” it said.

At the same time, the declaration insisted that the Mass is not the proper setting for the less formal forms of blessing that could include the blessing of a gay couple, and it repeated that “it is not appropriate for a diocese, a bishops’

conference” or other church structure to issue a formal blessing prayer or ritual for unwed couples. The blessing also should not be given “in concurrence” with a civil marriage ceremony to avoid appearing as a sort of church blessing of the civil union.

However, it said, a priest or deacon could “join in the prayer of those persons who, although in a union that cannot be compared in any way to a marriage, desire to entrust themselves to the Lord and his mercy, to invoke his help and to be guided to a greater understanding of his plan of love and of truth.”

Statement of the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, on Declaration, *Fiducia Supplicans*

“With the approval of Pope Francis, the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith issued the Declaration, *Fiducia Supplicans*, on Monday, December 18, 2023. The Declaration clarifies that there are forms of blessings within the Church and recounted throughout the Sacred Scriptures, which are ‘poured out on others as a gesture of grace, protection, and goodness’ (18).

“The Diocese of Scranton is guided by the teachings of the Holy Father, and I invite all people of good will to join me in reading, praying, and reflecting upon the new Declaration, which carefully distinguishes between liturgical (sacramental) blessings and pastoral blessings, which may be spontaneous or personal.

“As evangelizers, we desire to bring the love and Good News of Jesus to every person, yet we know many people struggle to encounter God in their lives for one reason or another. Blessings, therefore, offer all people ‘an invitation to draw ever closer to the love of Christ.’ (44)

“The Declaration is very clear that the Church’s teaching on marriage has not changed – clearly upholding the sacrament of marriage as between a man and a woman – and is also specific regarding the possibility and context of blessings for couples in irregular situations and for couples of the same sex.

“As the Declaration states, ‘this blessing should never be imparted in concurrence with the ceremonies of a civil union, and not even in connection with them. Nor can it be performed with any clothing, gestures, or words that are proper to a wedding,’ adding, ‘such a blessing may instead find its place in other contexts, such as a visit to a shrine, a meeting with a priest, a prayer recited in a group, or during a pilgrimage’ (39-40).

“The pastoral sensitivity being shown by Pope Francis in this new Declaration is evident and most understandable as it states, ‘when people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection’ (25). To the contrary, the Declaration is intended ‘as a tribute to the faithful People of God, who worship the Lord with so many gestures of deep trust in his mercy and who, with this confidence, constantly come to seek a blessing from Mother Church.’

“May this Declaration enable all of us who seek to walk by faith to feel the closeness and compassion of God.”

New ECHO Apprentices bring gifts to parishes, schools and colleges

SCRANTON – After growing up and attending school in his native Ireland, Sean Savage’s faith journey has brought him to Saint Jude Parish in Mountain Top.

Savage is one of three new ECHO Apprentices from The University of Notre Dame that began serving local parishes and colleges in the Diocese of Scranton this August. Through an ongoing partnership with Notre Dame that started in 2021, the Diocese of Scranton has been assisting in developing the next generation of young adult leaders in the Catholic Church.

“I did a study abroad year at The Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and ended up, through a turn of events, transferring there for my senior year,” he said. “One of my friends entered into the ECHO program at Notre Dame, which is the program I’m now a part of, and she told me about it because I was looking to study more theology and be involved in more theology in practice.”

While at Saint Jude Parish, Savage is being mentored by its pastor, Father Joseph Evanko, and learning more about how to run a parish as well as work with – and minister to – adults and families.

“I am really interested in how to minister to adults as I have spent a lot of my life in ministry to young people, from elementary school children to college students,” Savage added. “Being involved in ministry has given me the opportunity to develop gifts such as listening, leadership, public speaking, and teamwork.”

The two other ECHO Apprentices that began their work this fall are Courtney Schmidt of Lake Forest, Ill., and Katherine Santarpia of Staten Island, N.Y.

Schmidt, who graduated from the honors program at Creighton University in May, hopes to gain a deeper appreciation for how her Catholic faith has shaped her life, and share that love with others.



Three new ECHO Apprentices from The University of Notre Dame began working in the Diocese of Scranton this August. Pictured inside the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, they are, from left: Courtney Schmidt, Sean Savage and Katherine Santarpia. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

The psychology and classical languages major is now working with students at King’s College and being mentored by Father Brogan Ryan, C.S.C.

“I was really formed in a college campus ministry setting. It was something that was really impactful in my own faith life when I was an undergrad, so being able to turn around, and pull students into that and invite students into a deeper self-reflection and awareness of finding God’s presence in the everyday is going to be really impactful for me,” Schmidt said.

In her first few months on campus, Schmidt has found herself working with Sisters in Faith, the women’s group on campus, as well as handling retreat preparations, helping to coordinate liturgies, and assisting with monthly campus ministry programming.

“It has been a whirlwind of meeting students which has been so wonderful,” she added. “I’m the first female campus minister they’ve had in a couple years, so I’ve been able to connect with all the students that are used to only being with Father Brogan and Brother Jimmy.”

Each ECHO Apprentice has committed to two years of service. They will initially spend nine months in the Diocese of Scranton working directly in their parish/college placement. Next summer, the three will return to Notre Dame for more

coursework, after which they will return for one more year at their assigned location.

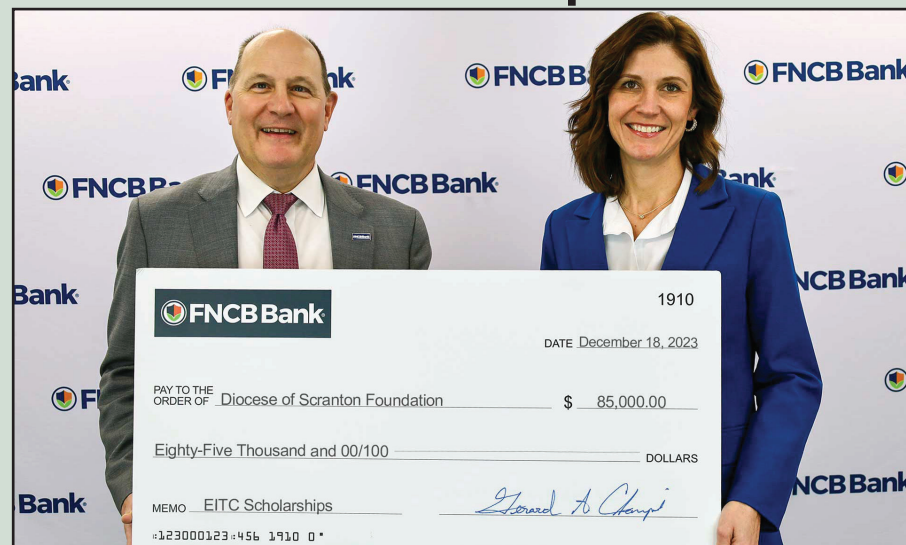
Santarpia, who graduated Magna cum laude from Bryn Mawr College with degrees in Spanish and political science, is working with the parish communities of Saint Ignatius Loyola, Kingston, and Holy Family, Luzerne, and is being mentored by Monsignor David Tressler.

“Everyone has been incredible, at the parishes and the Diocesan level. It has been meaningful to see how excited people are to have us here and how welcoming everyone has been,” Santarpia said.

While at Bryn Mawr College, Santarpia coordinated weekly Mass, Bible study and prayer meetings as part of the campus ministry program.

Continued on Page 25

FNCB Bank donates \$85,000 to Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation



Gerard Champi, FNCB Bank President & CEO, presents a check for \$85,000 to Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Superintendent of Catholic Schools, on Dec. 18, 2023.

DUNMORE - FNCB Bank, based locally since 1910, has allocated \$85,000 through the Pennsylvania Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program to the Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation. This donation aims to facilitate tuition assistance for students enrolled in pre-school, elementary, and high school programs throughout northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation annually extends tuition awards to over 1,000 families, a substantial portion of which is funded by contributions from FNCB Bank.

“This donation underscores FNCB Bank’s commitment to supporting education and the local community,” Gerard Champi, FNCB Bank President & CEO, said. “Our contribution aligns with the Diocese of Scranton’s objectives, and we are pleased to assist in providing educational opportunities to many deserving students across northeastern Pennsylvania.”

Since participating in the EITC initiative in 2010, FNCB has contributed over \$3,000,000 to local educational and scholarship organizations, underlining the bank’s sustained commitment to fostering educational opportunities in the region.

FNCB Bank’s commitment to the Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation is part of its broader Community Caring initiative that extends beyond financial contributions, encompassing volunteerism, donations, and outreach programs.



What: Rectory, Set, Cook! III: Collars + Scholars
Presented by: The Hawk Family Foundation

Introducing pastor chef-student chef partnerships in a one-two punch food fight vs. hunger AND homelessness!



All sponsorship dollars support Catholic Social Services' anti-hunger and anti-homelessness efforts! Half of all voting dollars also support the cause, and half return to the participating parish!



When: Debuts online on Fat Tuesday, Feb. 13, and runs through the six weeks of Lent.

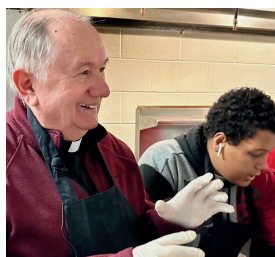
What's new: Our largest pastor chef roster yet with 30+ priests participating plus several Catholic young people!

Follow Diocese of Scranton on social media for details on the Fat Tuesday launch party, which also will celebrate the **first-ever Rectory, Set, Cook! charitable beer release!**



There's still time to get your pastor on the kitchen team!

For more information about how your parish can get involved, or to inquire about sponsorship opportunities, call Sandra Snyder at 570-591-5004 or email Sandra-Snyder@dioceseofscranton.org





Join Us in Celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2024

Since 1974, National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. It starts the last Sunday in January and runs all week, which in 2024 is January 28 – February 3. The theme for National Catholic Schools Week 2024 is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community." All schools in the Diocese of Scranton will observe this annual celebration week with Masses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our church, our communities, and our nation.



Students at **Holy Rosary School in Durysa** celebrated the Christmas holiday with a birthday party for Jesus.



As part of the 12 days of Christmas, the students at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** collected scarves, hats, and mittens for CHOP, a local child hunger outreach program.



The eighth grade class at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** presented The Living Nativity just before the start of Christmas break.



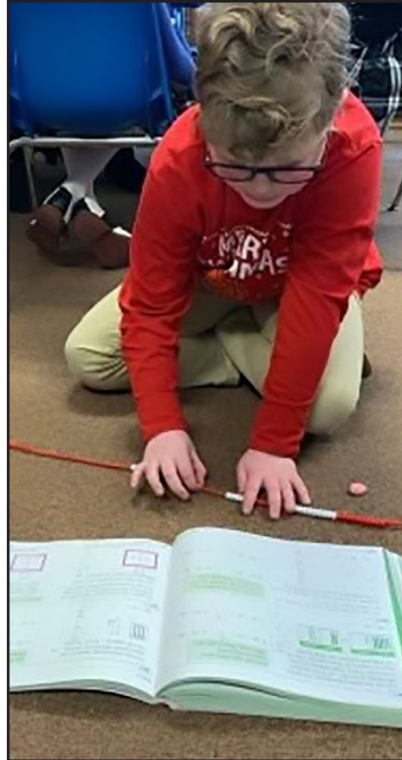
Children at Risk, a local charity, benefited from the generosity of the students at **Epiphany School in Sayre**. The students collected 54 pairs of mittens and gloves, 37 hats, 40 pairs of socks, and two blankets.



Students and administrators from **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** made some special Christmas deliveries just before break, delivering cheer to local churches, fire departments and police departments.



Flutists Valerie Strohl, Alexandra Sartori and Mason Makuta, all students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, shared their musical talents at the recent Christmas concert.



Students in second grade at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** work on computational fluency in subtraction within 100!



Fifth grade students at **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** raise and lower the American flag that is just outside their building each day.



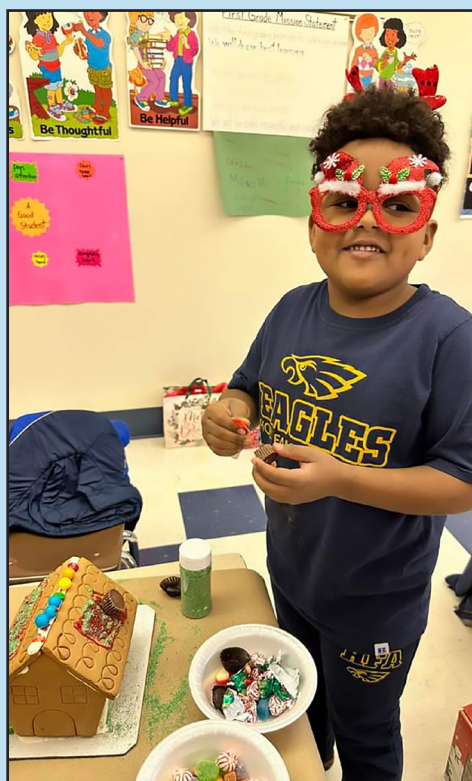
These smiling Falcons, students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**, had a blast at the Christmas Carnival presented by our Falcon Family Alliance.



The Living Nativity at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** reminded students and their families, as well as members of the local community, about the reason for the season, the birth of our Lord.



Mrs. Franzone's eighth and ninth grade English classes at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** created snowflakes on which they wrote their prayer requests. The English 9A section is pictured by the "Blizzard of Blessings" display.



It's gingerbread house creation time for students at **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**.



Snow Day Fun! The Pre-kindergarteners at **All Saints Academy in Scranton** are now junior scientists after making snow by mixing hair conditioner with baking soda.



During their Christmas Spirit Week, some eighth graders at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** proudly show off their ugly sweaters.



The Pre-kindergarten class at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** received a visit from Father Arun Lakra as part of the school's Adopt-A-Priest Program!



Students from **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport** help sort through some of the 1,200 pounds of food they and the elementary school students collected for the United Churches of Lycoming County Food Pantry.

Host-for-a-Day Campaign supports mission to feed needy

Campaign celebration event is April 10; RSVPs required by March 30

SCRANTON - Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton has begun the 46th annual Host-for-a-Day campaign to support its mission of providing a free daily meal and other services to needy men, women and children in the area.

For a donation of \$100 or more, an individual, family, business, community organization or faith-based group can help to fund the day's meal. Various other sponsorship levels are also

available, starting at \$500.

In effect, each contributor becomes a "host" for a day. Contributors may then select a date on which they, or someone they designate or memorialize, will be recognized as helping to provide that meal.

Financial contributions to the Kitchen also help to fund other programs such as a Client-Choice Food Pantry and Free Clothing Store, and weekly meals at parish locations and high-rise

housing buildings in Carbondale and Olyphant, which has now expanded to Roaring Brook Township.

In October the Kitchen's Free Mobile Clothing Trailer began visiting various locations to bring clothing items to those in need who might not be able to come to the Scranton campus.

And recently the Kitchen entered a "Code Blue" collaboration with the City of Scranton and Keystone Mission.

When the temperature gets below 20 degrees, the Kitchen provides hot soup and a hot sandwich to homeless folks welcomed to shelter at Weston Field.

"We are constantly looking at ways we can be of service to those in need," said Rob Williams, Kitchen executive director. "In fact we are now engaging in a visioning process to explore how we might be able to offer even more assistance. We are excited to see what the possibilities could be."

Stephanie Grudis-Whisner, a member of the Kitchen's Advisory Board, is chairing the 2024 Host-for-a-Day campaign and leading the effort with her fellow board members.

"It is inspiring to think about how many people are fed and have other needs met through the efforts of the staff and volunteers at the Kitchen," she said. "And of course this is only possible because of the support we receive from so many individuals and organizations, particularly through the Host for a Day campaign."

Recent contributors to the campaign are receiving an appeal directly from the Kitchen through the mail or will be contacted by members of the Kitchen's Advisory Board.

Host for a Day gifts can also be made by calling the Kitchen



Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen has launched its 2024 Host-for-a-Day campaign, which is the primary means of financial support for the Kitchen's mission to provide a free daily meal and other services to area needy. Pictured from left are Advisory Board member Stephanie Grudis-Whisner, campaign chair; Kitchen Executive Director Rob Williams; and Advisory Board President Michele Bannon.

at (570) 342 5556, or sending a check to Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen, 500 Penn Avenue, Scranton PA 18509. Donations can also be made online at: www.stfranciskitchen.org or [facebook.com/stfranciskitchen](https://www.facebook.com/stfranciskitchen).

This year the celebration that concludes the campaign will be held at Fiorelli's in Peckville on Wednesday, April 10, beginning at 6 p.m. Each contributor and a guest is invited to attend. RSVPs are required by March 30 to confirm attendance and an accurate meal count.

Those who would like to sponsor the reception are asked to call the Kitchen at (570) 342-5556.

YOU Can Feed and Clothe People In Need!

More than 250 men, women and children rely on Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen for a daily meal, food for their household, and clothing to keep warm.

These services include the daily midday meal and three evening suppers at the Kitchen in Scranton as well as weekly meals in Carbondale, Olyphant and Roaring Brook Township at parish locations and high-rise housing buildings. The Kitchen also operates a Client-Choice Food Pantry and a Free Clothing Store, which has expanded with a Free Mobile Clothing Trailer to bring clothing items to those in need at various locations.

All of this is only possible through the dedicated service of our staff and volunteers, and your generous financial support for the annual Host-for-a-Day campaign. For a donation of \$100 or more, an individual, a family, a business, a community organization or faith-based group can help sponsor a day's meal at the Kitchen and be recognized as a "host" of that meal. Various other sponsorship levels are also available.



Donations can also be made by:

Calling the Kitchen at 570-342 5556, online at stfranciskitchen.org, [facebook.com/stfranciskitchen](https://www.facebook.com/stfranciskitchen) or sending a check to Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen, 500 Penn Avenue, Scranton PA 18509.

Thank You For Your Support!

The culmination of the campaign will be celebrated at Fiorelli's in Peckville on Wednesday, April 10, at 6 p.m. RSVPs are required by March 30. Those who would like to sponsor the reception are asked to call the Kitchen at 570-342 5556.



National Marriage Week launches "Love Beyond Words" Campaign for 2024

National Marriage Week, an annual celebration dedicated to promoting the institution of marriage, announces the launch of its 2024 campaign with the inspiring theme "Love Beyond Words."

This year's mission encourages couples to put their love into action and raise awareness of the profound positive impact strong marriages have on society.

Director Carl Caton talks about the importance and thrill of leading this campaign, "This is a national campaign and it's exciting to watch it grow, but the roots are in communities all around the country. We are here to help connect couples with the resources that will help them strengthen their marriages during this special week and throughout the year!"

Taking place from Feb. 7 to Feb. 14 every year, National Marriage Week coincides with the week leading up to Valentine's Day, making it the perfect time to celebrate the joys and virtues that marriage brings into our lives.

Research consistently demonstrates that married couples experience great health, financial stability, and personal happiness. Moreover, it provides the best environment for raising children, offering them a better chance at life.

The 2024 campaign, "Love Beyond Words," will build upon and launch in partnership with well-known sociologist Dr. Bradford Wilcox and will feature content from his upcoming book, "Get Married," which challenges the notion that individual happiness is found through self-pursuit. Instead, it highlights the fulfillment derived from opening our hearts to others, especially within our most meaningful relationships.



National Marriage Week spokesperson, Arlene Pellicane, a renowned figure in the field and host of the highly regarded podcast, The Happy Home, feels passionately about this mission.

"Marriage is something wonderful to be celebrated. The whole idea is to help people celebrate, to help our society value marriage, and then support marriages by providing them with resources to become more successful in their marital journey," she said. "You don't have to come from a happy home

to create one."

This weeklong program will challenge couples to put their love into action and provide couples with practical tools and resources through ideas and activities for:

- Daily connection
- Weekly dates
- Regular getaways

As National Marriage Week showcases, the Sacrament of Marriage is not a one-time ceremony, but a lifelong collaboration with God to bring life and grace to the world

through the powerful witness of and creating a lasting impact married love.

We invite you to join For more information and National Marriage Week in to get involved, visit www.MarriageWeek.org.

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The Diocese of Scranton

The Catholic Light

— 2024 PUBLICATION SCHEDULE —

January 11	February 15	March 7 - 28	April 18
May 16	June 13	July 18	August 15
September 12	October 17	November 14	December 19

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MISSION MESSAGE

**Remembering
Haiti**

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



and God works through all of us to bring this about. He then handed me a wooden crucifix. On that crucifix — in the form of Jesus — was the rubble from the destroyed Cathedral in Port-au-Prince.

In the midst of their tragedy and tears, what did the Haitian people do? They didn't give up hope. They didn't cash in their faith. They didn't fall into blaming God. Rather, they kept praying, raising their voices to Heaven, saying: "Jesus, Jesus."

They looked to the one whose love transcends time, tragedy, and even death. They looked to the one whom they know will have the last word. They united their sufferings to the cross of Christ because they know that the cross is never the end of the story — Resurrection is.

Thirteen days from now, on Jan. 24, is the feast of Saint Francis de Sales. Father Tom Hagen happens to be an Oblate of Saint Francis de Sales. Along with sending me home with that crucifix, he also sent me home with the prayer of Saint Francis de Sales:

Do not look forward to the mishaps of this life with anxiety, but await them with perfect confidence, so that when they do occur, God, to whom you belong, will deliver you from them. God has kept you up to the present; remain securely in the hand of his providence, and he will help you in all situations. When you cannot walk, he will carry you.

Do not think about what will happen tomorrow; for the same Eternal Father who takes care of you today will look out for you tomorrow and always.

Either God will keep you from evil, or God will give you invincible courage to endure it.

This prayer sums up the soul of the Haitian people. Haiti is the kind of place that once you have visited it you can never forget it. Today, I am still remembering Haiti.

Almost exactly fourteen years ago, on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010, at 4:53 p.m., a 7.0-magnitude earthquake rocked Haiti. The devastating earthquake spared neither poor nor powerful.

The President was homeless; the U.N. mission chief was missing, and the Archbishop dead. The Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince was largely destroyed. Entire neighborhoods were flattened and hundreds of thousands of people were either killed or injured.


Well before that devastating earthquake, Haiti was suffering. It is sad but true. Oftentimes, it takes a disaster to get the most generous response from humanity. If there was an upside or a saving grace to that earthquake, it is that it challenged the world to wake up and open its eyes, take notice, and show mercy. The Haitians have a saying: "What the eye doesn't see doesn't move the heart."

I remember my first visit to Haiti in 2006. My heart was moved by what I witnessed and it still remains with me: the clamoring crowds at the airport begging the arriving passengers for help; the smell of garbage in our walk on the dirt streets to the Missionaries of Charity for morning Mass; the poor young Haitian students sharing their mud pies in the mission schools of Cite Soleil; the vendors on the crowded dirt streets trying to sell their goods in the oppressive heat.

Two years after that devastating earthquake, I returned to Haiti in that very same month of January 2012. Once again, my heart was moved by what I saw. In the aftermath of the earthquake, I saw the destroyed Cathedral in Port-au-Prince and the rubble from many other buildings and homes. But I also saw reasons to hope. The Haitian people who had lost so much also experienced the mercy and love of so many people from all around the world. Missionaries from different places and different backgrounds traveled to Haiti because they cared and wanted to help rebuild their future.

Father Tom Hagen's volunteer house, which was completely leveled, was now rebuilt. Morning Mass continues at the Missionaries of Charity chapel, and everywhere I went I could see the Church reaching out with love and mercy. It is during a time like this that I find myself very proud of my Church.

Before I left Haiti that year, Father Tom told me that there is always a springtime after death



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PSALM 65:11

Papal calendar for 2024: Not full, but puts spotlight on major events

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - As the new year begins, Pope Francis will be the oldest reigning pope since the early 1900s and the third oldest in history.

Having celebrated his 87th birthday in mid-December, Pope Francis' initial calendar for 2024 had just the essentials.

A full slate of the usual papal liturgies and meetings are scheduled; bishops will continue making "ad limina" visits; Argentina will have its first female saint; the Synod of Bishops on synodality will conclude in October; and the jubilee year opens at the year's end.

While doctors convinced the pope to cancel his scheduled trip to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December, he has continued to speak confidently about at least three countries he has on his wish-list for papal trips in 2024.

The pope told the Mexican news outlet N+ that a trip to Belgium is already "certain" and that two others, to Polynesia and Argentina, are being looked into. He did add that any long-distance trips would have to be "rethought" because of his age. Unlike his predecessors, Pope Francis has not returned to his native country since his election, nearly 11 years ago.

Belgium, which is just a two-hour flight away, would most likely be a one- or two-day trip to mark the founding of the oldest Catholic university still in existence in the world, the Catholic University of Leuven, which celebrates its 600th anniversary in 2025.

The only other trip local bishops have confirmed is to the Italian city of Verona May 18, 2024, to take part in Italy's annual Festival of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Already in the month of January, Pope Francis has celebrated several traditional papal liturgies starting with welcoming

the new year with Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, and World Peace Day, followed by Mass on the Epiphany Jan. 6 and then Mass on the feast Baptism of the Lord Jan. 7 with the baptism of several infants.

The rest of the month includes meetings with the staff of the office responsible for public security at the Vatican, as well as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan. 18-25, concluding with an evening prayer service at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

The new year also means a new round of "ad limina" visits by groups of bishops around the world. Bishops had made the visits every five years, but the interval has grown over time to be about every nine to 10 years. Bishops from the African continent will be finishing up their visits in 2024, and those next in line include bishops from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Greece, the Koreas and Japan. Their last ad limina visits were in 2015.

The pope is scheduled to meet with his international Council of Cardinals in February. Those meetings are usually held quarterly and ongoing topics of discussion include: the "feminine dimension of the church," the synod on synodality and safeguarding minors.

It is difficult to predict if or when there will be any consistories to create new cardinals in 2024. Pope Francis has made it an almost annual event, but when he handed out red hats in September 2023, he brought the number of cardinal electors up to 137, well above the limit of 120 and the highest number since St. John Paul II raised it to 135 in 2003.

Barring any deaths, the number of cardinal electors should be 132 starting in January,

then down to 125 by June and 119 by December as some cardinals turn 80 and are no longer eligible to vote in a conclave. Those approaching the cutoff include U.S. Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, who celebrates his 80th birthday June 29.

For beatifications and canonizations, so far there is only one on the papal calendar for 2024.

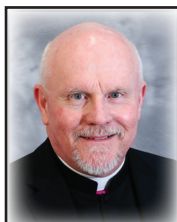
Pope Francis recently authorized the canonization of Blessed María Antonia de San José for Feb. 11, the feast of

Our Lady of Lourdes. An 18th-century Catholic laywoman who championed the Ignatian spiritual exercises in Argentina after the Jesuits were expelled, she will be the first female of Argentina to be canonized.

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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 Respecto 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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Sister Mary Persico, Marywood University President, announces retirement

SCRANTON - Sister Mary Persico, I.H.M., Ed.D., the 12th President of Marywood University, has announced to the Board of Trustees her decision to retire from her role, effective June 30, 2024.

Sister Mary was elected President of Marywood University by the University Board of Trustees in April 2016 and began her presidential tenure on July 1, 2016. Throughout her eight-year tenure, the University endowment has nearly doubled and maintained a fiscally responsible status, even during universally challenging financial times in higher education and while the industry as a whole has faced a national downturn in enrollments.

To further strengthen Marywood's future, Sister Mary is presently guiding the University's \$30 million comprehensive campaign, which is set to conclude upon her retirement. The campaign is designed to fund new construction and academic spaces on campus, to provide scholarships for students, and to



Sister Mary Persico, I.H.M.

enhance the student experience. The state-of-the-art Pascucci Family Health Sciences Pavilion, an addition to the O'Neill Healthy Families Center, which will house all students who study the Health Sciences, will be dedicated in May 2024.

Since 2016, several signature programs have enjoyed expansion, including the Physician Assistant and Architecture programs, and several innovative programs in Respiratory Therapy, Construction Management, and Biotechnology were launched. Last spring, the Living City Lab at Marywood University was established and dedicated to the memory of Jane Jacobs, an urbanist and activist from Scranton; this entity is

housed in the Insalaco Center for Studio Arts. Sister Mary also launched the Center for Law, Justice, & Policy, as a precursor to the engagement of students in programs that will lead to legal-related professions. Additionally, the University established the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, out of which grew the Center for Truth and Racial Healing.

Sister Mary's belief that universities exist to serve the communities that surround them was realized, in part, with the purchase of Marywood Heights, the former Holy Family Skilled Nursing Facility, which is home to nearly 90 residents. Marywood Heights is the first UBRC (University Based Retirement Community) in Northeast Pennsylvania. In addition, the Nativity Miguel School of Scranton was relocated to Marywood University in 2019 and is now a permanent addition to campus.

"On behalf of the Trustees, I wish to acknowledge our

admiration for Sister Mary, her collaborative leadership, and her bold vision for Marywood," Board President, Lisa Lori, Esq., said. "Sister Mary has been an inspiration to us all. Throughout the years, and long before her tenure as President, Sister Mary promoted the mission and core values of our University. She has kept them ever before our students, staff, faculty, and administration as the collective light that guides all we do."

The Board of Trustees will launch a national search for Sister Mary's successor. The Board of Trustees has hired a search firm/consultant and will be forming a search committee, which will include members of various stakeholder groups. The position is expected to be posted this month, with a plan to announce finalists for the position in March and a President-Elect by early April 2024.

ECHO Apprentices assisting parishes

Continued from Page 16

Santarpia also served as a student interfaith coordinator, helping to create spaces for student dialogue on faith and spirituality.

"I'm hoping to be responsive to where the need is," she added, about her new responsibilities. "I'm trying to really connect with the people at the parishes, see what groups exist, see what communities are there, see where there is maybe a need or an interest for something more and hopefully fit into that working with who is there and what they have that thirst for."

Shannon Kowalski, Director

for Service and Mission in the Diocesan Office for Parish Life, helps to coordinate the Diocesan partnership with Notre Dame University.

"Working with the ECHO apprentices has been a rewarding experience all the way around. The academic and spiritual formation that the students receive so evidently trickles down to our parishes they are serving in – they are leading adult bible studies, forming retreats, and assisting with catechesis. It is also nice to watch the ways in which their witness as young adults interested in church ministry has helped build up young adult ministry in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area."

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Christmas concert held at Pittston church



The Pittston parishes of Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Joseph Marello hosted "A Christmas Celebration" concert on the Second Sunday of Advent at Saint John the Evangelist Church. The event featured guest organist Greg Zelek of the Madison Symphony Orchestra in Wisconsin, who



performed seasonal organ music that also provided accompaniment for the singing of Christmas carols by those in attendance. The concert program also included a presentation of the Nativity story by several children from the parishes. Along with a photo of concertgoers enjoying and participating in the Christmas performance, Zelek is pictured, above right, with Saint John's organist and music director Mike Sowa.

performed seasonal organ music that also provided accompaniment for the singing of Christmas carols by those in attendance. The

The reason for the season



Continuing an annual tradition that began in 2003, Knights of Columbus Council 7622 in Jermyn once again served as the sponsor for a billboard in Lackawanna County celebrating the true meaning of Christmas. The billboard's time-honored message featuring the Nativity of Our Lord continues to be made possible through the generous contributions from the following: Christ the King Parish in Archbald; Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Parish in Jermyn; Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Peckville; Community Bank, N.A.; Harrison Funeral Home; Battenberg Furniture; Bernardi-Wilson Insurance, Inc.; T & R Service Station; Yeselavage Rugs; Louis J. Rapoch Funeral Home; Johnson's Fixit Shoppe; Joseph W. Arcadipane, DMD; Calabro Floor Coverings, Inc.; Vladika Insurance Agency; Convenient Food Mart; Mark Bednash Enterprises; KRTS Associates; and Kevin and Margaret Ryczak. Pictured in front of the "Keep Christ in Christmas" billboard prominently displayed at the south entrance to the borough of Jermyn are, from left: K of C Council 7622 Knight Charles Battenberg; Earl Pittack, lector; Frank Ryczak, treasurer; Council Deputy Grand Knight Mario Fitzgerald; and Ted Prusinski, first-year trustee.

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Oblates of Saint Joseph to celebrate Feast of the Holy Spouses with Jan. 21 Mass

LAFLIN — The Feast of the Holy Spouses will be celebrated at the Oblates of Saint Joseph Chapel, Route 315, Laflin, on Sunday, Jan. 21, with a special Eucharistic liturgy at 3 p.m.

Guest celebrant and homilist for this year's feast day Mass will be Father Anthony Generose, pastor of the Hazleton parish



communities of Most Precious Blood and Queen of Heaven. He

also serves in the Tribunal Office of the Diocese of Scranton, where he formerly held the position of Judicial Vicar.

The annual celebration of the Holy Spouses honors the spousal role of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, exalting the sanctity of marriage and family life within our modern world.

The special feast was approved by the Vatican for the Congregation for the Oblates of the Saint Joseph in 1989.

All faithful are invited to attend Holy Spouses celebration, which will conclude with a social.

For more information, contact the Oblates' seminary office at (570) 654-7542.

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Collection for the Church in Latin America set for Jan. 27-28 in Diocesan parishes

SCRANTON — During the weekend of Jan. 27 & 28, all parishes in the Diocese of Scranton will hold a second collection for the Church in Latin America.

The collection funds a wide range of pastoral activities and programs, from evangelization programs to pregnancy centers to leadership development of community leaders based on Catholic Social Teaching.

The Bishops of the United States decided in 1965, at the end of the Second Vatican Council, to establish the collection,

recognizing that the Church in Latin America needed help and that it was important to establish a relationship with our sister churches to the South.

Since the collection began, more than \$185 million has been donated by U.S. Catholics. The collection has been increasing through the years, with about \$68.5 million contributed over the past decade.

Last year, the collection delivered more than \$6.5 million in grants to help people who reside in regions where poverty, political and religious

persecution, and other hardships make it difficult for the Church to support itself.

The 2023 collection funded 251 grants supporting evangelization, catechesis, family ministry, pro-life work and outreach to groups as diverse as prisoners, university students and Indigenous communities.

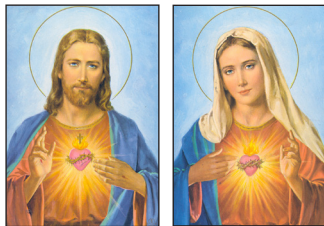
Grants also aided in sponsoring the formation of

seminarians, clergy and those in consecrated life, as well as providing for emergency disaster relief following hurricanes, earthquakes and floods.

Almost every country, with the exception of some very small Caribbean island nations, has received assistance since the collection began. During the past few years, Haiti has been among the top five recipients.

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 Feb. 2 at Saint Joseph's Oblate Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laflin (Pittston).



Devotions begin Friday evening at 8 p.m. with recitation of the Rosary, during which time confessions are heard. Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated at 8:55 p.m., followed by benediction and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and consecration to the Sacred Heart.

The vigil continues with the crowning of the Blue Army Pilgrim Virgin Statue, the Blue Army Pledge, Fatima prayers and Marian hymns, followed by litanies 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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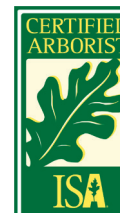
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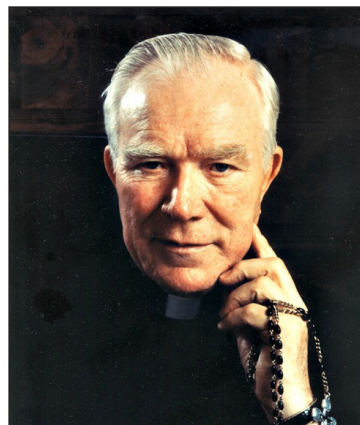
Holy Cross Congregation announces Global Rosary for World Peace

ROME, Italy — The Congregation of Holy Cross announces a Global Rosary for World Peace to be held Friday, Feb. 16.

This digital prayer event will begin live from Rome and, with the assistance of Holy Cross Family Ministries, will include the participation of Holy Cross ministry centers around the world.

In the spirit of its founder, Venerable Patrick Peyton, Holy Cross Family Ministries serves an apostolate of the Congregation of Holy Cross in loving devotion to Jesus Christ and His Church by inspiring, promoting and fostering the prayer life and spiritual well-being of families throughout the world.

During the recent Feast of Mary, Mother of God, which also commemorates the World Day of Peace, Holy Cross Superior General Brother Paul Bednarzyk invited all Holy Cross ministry centers on five continents in 18 countries to gather and pray for world peace on the First Friday of Lent, Feb. 16.



Venerable Patrick Peyton

The event will kick off from Rome at 4 p.m. (local time), with a personal message and prayer from Brother Bednarzyk.

The Congregation of Holy Cross joined in universal prayer and fasting with Pope Francis when he declared a Day of Prayer for Peace on Oct. 27, 2021.

“The horrific violence and tragic loss of life we have witnessed with the war in Ukraine, and now the recent war in Israel and Gaza, is staggering and shocking,” Brother Bednarzyk said. “Such violent conflicts, however, are also taking place in other parts of the world as well. None of us are left unaffected, unmoved by these horrendous events. We seek to respond from our faith.”

Brother Bednarzyk has invited Holy Cross religious and all those whom they serve to unite in praying the Rosary of the Seven Dolours devotion to Our Lady

of Sorrows, the Congregation’s patroness.

“As Mary stood by the Cross of Jesus, our Constitutions remind us that Mary has much to teach us about the cross as well as its daily hope,” Brother Bednarzyk said. “Through her intercession, as we reflect on the sorrows of our world today, we hope that Mary will be Our Lady of Hope, helping us to be peacemakers, men and women with hope to bring in our world today, so that there may be an end to all violence and war.”

After the opening prayer from Rome, meditations and prayers on the traditional Seven Dolours, or Sorrows of Mary, will be led by the worldwide Holy Cross ministry centers, thus seeking to truly unite the world in prayers for peace.

“Our founder, (Holy Cross Father) Patrick Peyton believed in the power of prayer. He believed prayer began in the home and the power of that prayer overflowed to the surrounding community,” Holy Cross Father Fred Jenga, president of Holy Cross Family Ministries, said, noting the venerable candidate for sainthood coined the phrase, “A world at prayer is a world at peace.”

“We hope individuals and families around the world will join us to bring hope to the world and demonstrate by our example the power of prayer.”

More information visit: www.HCFM.org/PrayForPeace

Apostleship of Prayer

Papal Intention for January 2024

For the Gift of Diversity in the Church —

We pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community and to discover the richness of different traditions and rituals in the Catholic Church.

Catholic Happenings Around the Scranton Diocese

Sleeping Bag Project — JAN. 13, sponsored by St. Patrick Parish in Nicholson; all are welcome to help make sleeping bags for the homeless on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in St. Patrick's Hall. No sewing skills required. Donations of blankets, fabric, thread, yarn, toiletries and men's ties can be placed in the blue barrel at the hall entrance. For more information, call Joan at (570) 942-4481.

Monthly Parish Meal — JAN. 14, hosted by St. Ann Basilica Parish in West Scranton, including the parish worship site of SS. Peter & Paul; sit-down hot meal will be served free of charge from 1 to 2 p.m. in St. John Paul II Hall in the lower level of SS. Peter & Paul Church, 1309 West Locust St., West Scranton. The complimentary dinner is offered

to the community on the second Sunday of each month, provided by a Social Justice Grant through the Diocesan Annual Appeal. For reservations, contact the St. Ann Rectory at (570) 342-5166.

Sunday Pierogi & Soup Sale — JAN. 14, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Church, 1309 West Locust 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 — JAN. 16, 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.

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

Pro-Life Rosary Rally — JAN. 20, offered for the protection of the unborn; begins at noon at the Fatima Grotto, 51 North St., Wilkes-Barre. All faithful are

invited to pray the Rosary for the sanctity of all human life.

Monthly Meeting of the Lay Carmelites — JAN. 20 & FEB. 17, 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, Laflin. For more

Continued on next page



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Prayer Requests for Priests

The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule is as follows:

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; January 17, Father Dominic Sabi; January 18, Father Thomas Sarnecki; January 19, Father Arbogaste Satoun; January 20, Father Kenneth Seegar; January 21, Monsignor John Sempa; January 22, Father Gerald Shantillo, V.G.; January 23, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Joseph Sibilano; January 24, Monsignor Constantine Siconolfi; January 25, Father Shawn Simchock; January 26, Father Robert Simon; January 27, Father Andrew Sinnott; January 28, Father Joseph Sitko; January 29, Father Phillip Sladicka; January 30, Father Stephen Stavoy; January 31, Father Scott Sterowski; February 1, Pope Francis; February 2, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; February 3, Jesuit Father Daniel Sweeney; February 4, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Raymond Tabon; February 5, Father Philbert Takyi-Nketiah; February 6, Father John Terry; February 7, Father Fidel Ticona; February 8, Father Peter Tomczak; February 9, Father Daniel Toomey; February 10, Father Rawel Toppo; February 11, Father Sudhir Toppo; February 12, Father Peter Tran; February 13, Monsignor David Tressler; February 14, Father Jeffrey Tudgay, J.V., V.E.; February 15, Father John Turi; February 16, Father Anthony Urban; February 17, Father Brian Van Fossen; February 18, Monsignor Neil Van Loon; February 19, Father Shinu Vazhakkootathil; February 20, Father Joseph Verespy.

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Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

Continued from previous page
information, contact Chris at (570) 239-8094.

“Nazareth Group” Days for High School Girls — JAN. 20 & APRIL 20, hosted by the Capuchin Sisters of Nazareth in Tunkhannock and Williamsport; Saturday programs are presented by the Nazareth Group for young women interested in deepening their faith and growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ. The encounter groups include enriching prayer, talks, discussions and nature walks. Open to all girls

in grades 9-12; the experience is offered from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Capuchin Sisters’ two convent locations: Mother of God Convent, 215 Wellwood Drive, Tunkhannock; and Mother of the Eucharist Convent, 6100 Jacks Hollow Road, Williamsport. Reservations are required. For Tunkhannock, contact Sister Angela of the Capuchin Sisters at (570) 836-2737; for Williamsport, contact Sister Clare at (570) 745-3334.

AOH Night at the Races — JAN. 26, presented by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Williamsport; event will be held in the Fleming Center at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Williamsport. Doors open at 6 p.m.; races start at 7 p.m. Race horses cost \$20 each and includes admission; complimentary refreshments provided. For more information and to reserve a horse, contact John Comerford at (570) 447-9659.

Mardi Gras Dinner Dance — FEB. 3, hosted by Visitation of the BVM Parish in Dickson City, at St. Mary Visitation Parish Center, 625 Dundaff St., Dickson City; doors open at 5:15 p.m. and buffet dinner will be served at 5:45 p.m. Musical entertainment provided by Cameron Avenue Band; event is adults only (21 & older) and patrons may provide their own beverages. Reservations must be made in advance; no tickets sold at the door. Cost: \$30 per person; pre-sale tickets available at the parish office at 1090 Carmalt St., Dickson City, or call (570) 489-2091.

57th Annual “German Nite” Dinner & Dance Social — FEB. 3, sponsored by the Holy Name Society of St. Nicholas-St. Mary Parish in Wilkes-Barre; doors open at 6 p.m. at St. Nicholas-St. Mary School Auditorium, 240 South Washington St., Wilkes-Barre. German-style buffet dinner served at 6:15 p.m., featuring pork & sauerkraut, chicken francaise,

bratwurst, mashed potatoes, halushki & green beans; beer and soda included. Dance music provided from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. by the German band Schnitzel. Cost: \$30 per person (adults 21 & older). Advance tickets only; reserved seating for groups of eight or more available. For more information and tickets, call the parish office at (570) 823-7736.

Knights of Columbus Free Throw Contest — FEB. 4, sponsored by Knights of Columbus in Williamsport; competition held in the gymnasium at St. John Neuman Jr./Sr. High School, 901 Penn St., Williamsport. Registration at 12:30 p.m.; contest begins at 1 p.m. Competitive divisions for boys and girls, ages 9-11 & 12-14; top three shooters in each division will receive awards.

Night at the Races — FEB. 9, sponsored by St. Monica Parish in West Wyoming; doors open at 6 p.m. in the church hall, with post time set for 7 p.m. Event also includes \$50 in cash prizes, complimentary food, beer & soda, Chinese auction, and gift basket drawings. Admission fee: \$10 (adults only/21 & older); race horses cost \$10 each. All proceeds benefit the parish.

Mardi Gras Celebration — FEB. 10, sponsored by Prince of Peace Parish in Old Forge; begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Arcaro & Genell Banquet Room, Main St., Old Forge. Cost: \$35 person (adults only), includes appetizers and full-course dinner with choice of beef, chicken or fish. Beer, wine and soft beverages included; entertainment provided by The Dynamic Duo. Event also includes a cash raffle drawing. Advance reservations encouraged; seating is limited. Reservations for tables of 8 or 10 available by contacting the parish rectory at (570) 457-5900. Tickets will also be sold at all weekend Masses; payment due with all reservations.

Who makes house calls?

As of October 2015, I will now meet clients either at their home, or at a location they choose and no longer require clients to meet at my office. I have decided that I would change the way I meet with people so it will be as easy and as convenient as possible for the client.

Based on my practice, which consists of estate planning and administration along with elder law, I find that clients are more comfortable discussing such matters in familiar surroundings. While I know this may seem unconventional to some, I believe I will be able to serve clients much better in this fashion.

If anyone is uncomfortable with home visits, I have a few locations where I can meet in an office setting. I look forward to meeting with my existing clients and especially meeting new clients that are looking for any assistance in estate or elder law matters.



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- Medicaid Application Assistance

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Marian Devotion Ministries to host Rosary service Jan. 15

Fostering prayerful devotion to Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary through recitation of the Holy Rosary, Marian Devotion Ministries in the Diocese of Scranton announces its first Rosary prayer service for 2024.

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

Fatima prayers and hymns.

The upcoming Marian Devotion event is scheduled as follows:

Monday Evening of Marian Devotion — Jan. 15, 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.



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"9 Days for Life" unites hundreds of thousands in prayer for the protection of life

WASHINGTON - Catholics nationwide are invited to pray "9 Days for Life," an annual Respect Life novena starting Tuesday, Jan. 16.

In the Catholic Church, a 'novena' consists of prayers over nine successive days, and this particular novena is an opportunity for prayer and reparation in observance of the annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children on Jan. 22.

Participants may access the novena and also subscribe to receive the daily prayers by email or text message in English at

9daysforlife.com or in Spanish at respectlife.org/9-dias-por-la-vida. The prayers will also be posted daily on the Diocese of Scranton website and social media.

Sponsored by the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the novena began in 2013 in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* - the Supreme Court decision that made abortion legal throughout the United States.

While the Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*

returned the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives at federal and state levels, continuing efforts are needed to protect children and their mothers from the tragedy of abortion. Since the novena began, it has reached hundreds of thousands of people in over one hundred countries spanning six continents.

The overarching intention of the novena is the end to abortion. Each daily prayer intention highlights a related topic and is accompanied by a reflection, educational information, and suggested daily actions.

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