

# The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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## Catholic Ministries Appeal 2024 begins: Answering the 'Call to Serve' across 11 counties

SCRANTON – In a time when communities are more interconnected than ever, the Diocese of Scranton is calling upon its faithful to unite in a transformative effort to support essential Catholic ministries across northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

The 2024 Catholic Ministries Appeal (Diocesan Annual Appeal) is now underway and comes with a pressing need for donations, vital to sustaining and expanding the life-changing work carried out by the Church.

This year's Appeal, under the theme 'Our Call to Service,' emphasizes the profound impact that every contribution can make. The Diocese of Scranton relies on the generosity of its parishioners to fund essential programs and services that touch tens of thousands of lives and no one parish can do on its own.

"In the Gospel of John, Jesus,

the Good Shepherd, reminds us that He came so that we may have life, and have it more abundantly," Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, said. "These are challenging economic times and there are many people in need who are relying on the Church of Scranton."

For example, every night, individuals in our local community face the harsh reality of homelessness.

For many years, the search for a safe place to sleep in the city of Wilkes-Barre meant bouncing around from church to church – but hope is on the horizon.

Work on a new, permanent home for Mother Teresa's Haven, Catholic Social Services' emergency shelter in Luzerne County, is now underway.

The location will be directly above the Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen on East Jackson Street.

Donations to the 2024 Appeal



will help to ensure the shelter opens and operates – possibly even being able to expand its hours when the winter weather arrives.

"I see us here, being able to provide more services than we can

ever imagine right now, because we're going to have office space here, we're going to be able to provide more case management," Joseph Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, explained.

The need for a permanent shelter has never been more urgent.

Last year, Mother Teresa's Haven provided nearly 5,400 individual nights of shelter to men in the community.

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Students at La Salle Academy in Jessup, one of 19 Catholic Schools, smile as they begin the 2024-2025 school year.

## Catholic School Surge: Diocesan schools see largest enrollment increase in years

SCRANTON – As the new school year begins, there are many new faces filling the classrooms and hallways of the 19 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton.

For the first time in more than seven years, enrollment has topped more than 4,500 students. As of Sept. 5, enrollment was at 4,565 students, a significant surge of nearly 150 more students compared to last year.

This robust increase underscores a renewed and enthusiastic embrace of Catholic values and academic excellence.

"While we are always focused on the spiritual, academic, and personal growth of our students, it is amazing to celebrate the growth of our enrollment too," Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary of Education/Superintendent, said. "As always, we are honored to provide a safe, nurturing, and welcoming Catholic school environment to our new and returning families."

Donohue believes one of the key drivers behind this year's enrollment increase is the emphasis on academic and spiritual excellence.

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# Nearly 1,000 college students gather for 'Mass of the Holy Spirit' at U of S

SCRANTON – Nearly one thousand students, faculty and staff from The University of Scranton gathered at the Byron Recreation Complex last week to participate in the school's annual Mass of the Holy Spirit.

The Mass, celebrated on Sept. 5, 2024, is a tradition among Jesuit academic institutions dating back to the 16th century, in which the community gathers to thank God for the gifts of creation and salvation and to seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in the coming year.

"As we begin this academic year, we are entering into it realizing that we can't do this alone," Father Joseph G. Marina, S.J., President of The University of Scranton, said. "We rely on the power of God's help and grace, and we invoke that through the Holy Spirit at this Mass."

Students say seeing so many attend the liturgy is a powerful reminder about the importance of faith.

"It reminds me that I'm not alone in this faith journey and it also reminds me that I'm not the only young one," senior Maria Stephen explained. "They all want



Members of The University of Scranton lacrosse team participate in the Mass of the Holy Spirit on Sept. 5, 2024. (Photos/Dan Gallagher)



Bishop Bambara celebrates the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the Mass of the Holy Spirit inside the Byron Recreation Complex.

to get closer to God in some way, shape or form. I don't know their stories and they don't know mine, but at least I know we're in it together in some way."

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambara, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass of the Holy Spirit.

During his homily, the Bishop encouraged each student to nurture his/her

relationship with Jesus, live with integrity, and give of themselves in service to others.

"You have the opportunity to respond to Jesus' invitation to serve more than you might imagine," Bishop Bambara said. "Continue to embrace the mission of this university and the many opportunities that are given to you to serve in the spirit of the Gospel and to work for justice and peace."

Jenna Kotlar, a senior at The

University of Scranton, has found the service opportunities on campus and in the greater Scranton community to be one of the most valuable parts of her education.

"For me personally, I find it to be such a joy because I really can see God working in all of those situations," Kotlar explained. "It is just a really cool thing to see people coming together, who have all different backgrounds and interests, for a common cause."

## Faith and education thrive: Diocese reports increasing Catholic School enrollment

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Catholic schools are well-known for a personalized approach to education, providing students with a strong academic foundation while instilling values of compassion and service.

"Our Catholic school educators are excited to teach our students to be the next generation of successful, faith-filled leaders in our world," Donohue added.

At Epiphany School in Sayre, Bradford County, enrollment this year has gone up eight percent. Enrollment this year is 101 students compared to 93 at the start of last academic year.

"Epiphany is like my second family. It is really amazing," sixth grader Evelyn Owen said.

Finn Heffron, who has just entered fourth grade, has been at Epiphany School since participating in its pre-kindergarten program.

"If I wasn't at this school, I wouldn't know a lot about all of God's great adventures and miracles," he said.



First grade students at Epiphany School in Sayre show off their religion workbooks as the new school begins.

Heffron credits Epiphany's teachers for the school's positive reputation.

"They are so sweet and loving," Heffron explained.

Recent graduates of Epiphany School have demonstrated outstanding success, showcasing a track record of excellence

that helps attract new families eager for their children to benefit from such a well-rounded educational experience.

"It's really amazing how you can build so many long-lasting friendships in this school," Nicolo Rossettie Cabrera, who just recently graduated from sixth grade, said. "Epiphany is smaller than public schools and you really get to bond with your classmates and teachers."

Saint Agnes School in Towanda, which is the other Diocesan Catholic School located in Bradford County, has also seen an enrollment increase this academic year.

Will Eberlin, who just entered fourth grade at Saint Agnes School, enjoys math class and interacting with kids from all different grade levels.

"I think the teachers are great and there's a lot of nice kids that go here," Eberlin said. "I have a lot of friends in

different grades."

Saint Agnes prioritizes the importance of service to the community. Each month, students pick a different charity to support. They have visited local food pantries, sang to seniors at area nursing homes and collected clothing for those less fortunate.

"I feel this school teaches how to be really grateful for the things you have," Madelyn Nash, who recently finished sixth grade, added.

As the new year begins, all 19 Catholic schools are preparing for a year filled with new opportunities, innovative programs, and rigorous academics with a strong moral foundation.

"It is a privilege to be a part of a community that values both academic and spiritual growth," Donohue said. "We encourage any family who is interested in learning more about the benefits of a Catholic education to call their nearest school at any point during the year. Come join our growing Catholic school family, promising a bright and hopeful future for students and communities alike."



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

# WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL



**Holy Family Academy  
in Hazleton**



**Holy Cross High School in Dunmore**



**Saint Clare/Saint Paul  
School in Scranton**



**Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre**



**Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East  
Stroudsburg**



**Saint John Neumann Elementary  
School in Williamsport**



**Holy Rosary School in Duryea**



**Our Lady of Peace School in  
Clarks Green**





**Wyoming Area Catholic School  
in Exeter**



**Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston**



**Notre Dame Elementary School  
in East Stroudsburg**



**Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School  
in Williamsport**



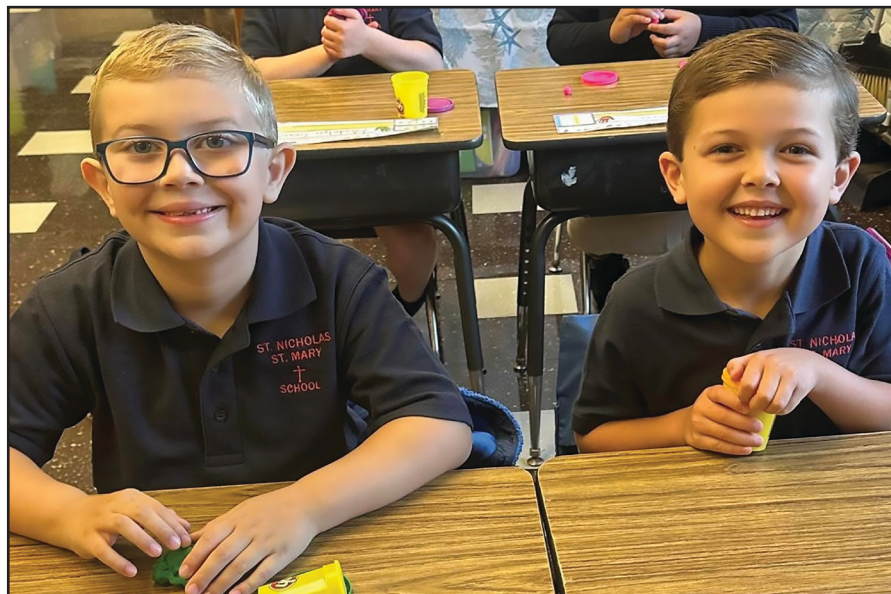
**All Saints Academy  
in Scranton**



**Saint Mary of Mount Carmel  
School in Dunmore**



**Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**



**Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre**



**Saint Agnes School in Towanda**