

Bishop reminds Catholic educators they have a ‘treasure to share’

WILKES-BARRE – As he gathered with Catholic educators and administrators to kick off the 2024-2025 school year, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, reminded each of them of the unique role they play in our diocese.

“More than you realize, you have a treasure to share with our children,” Bishop Bambera said, emphasizing the incredible privilege they have to share the gift of faith and the Eucharist with their students.

“It is faith that serves as the foundation for all that we teach – rooted in servant leadership – that we both are called to model and instill in the lives given to our care. That sets us apart and gives us our unique Catholic identity,” he added.

During his homily for the Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Mass on Sept. 16, 2024, the Bishop asked the hundreds of educators gathered inside Saint Nicholas Church to reflect on the mission statement of our Diocesan School System.

“Many of the children and families who come into our lives are poor. Some are materially poor, but far more are spiritually and emotionally poor. Yes, they come seeking an education. But they also come looking for meaning and purpose in their lives,” Bishop Bambera said. “Parents come with hopes for their children. And children come trusting in you to love and respect them and to give them a way forward in life.”



Bishop Joseph C. Bambera delivers the homily for the Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Mass on Sept. 16, 2024, at Saint Nicholas Church in Wilkes-Barre. (Photos/Mike Melisky)



Catholic school teachers from all 19 Diocesan schools recite the ‘Prayer of Commitment’ together during the Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Mass on Sept. 16, 2024.

Several priests, including many that have direct connections to specific schools, concelebrated the Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Mass.

Before the celebration of Mass began, Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education/Superintendent of Catholic Schools, provided a brief welcome.

“Today, we celebrate positive moments and reflect on the opportunities for growth, professionally, spiritually, and emotionally,” she said. “We recognize the true joy it is to be part of one of the greatest missions of the church – Catholic education.”

Prior to the final blessing at the Mass, the Catholic educators and administrators recited the ‘Prayer of Commitment,’ asking God to strengthen their commitment to the ideals of Catholic education. Part of the prayer asks God for the courage to fulfill their duties each day.

“I place my trust in you, O God, and ask for the grace to fulfill my duties faithfully and conscientiously each day,” the educators said together. “Enable me to be your worthy disciple as I proclaim in word and deed your message of truth, justice, and peace through this commitment to Catholic education with the Diocese of Scranton.”

In addition to celebrating the Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Mass each year, Bishop Bambera has made it a priority to visit every Catholic school each school year, celebrating Mass with students and visiting classrooms.

Bishop Bambera has already celebrated Mass with Holy Cross High School in Dunmore and Holy Family Academy in Hazleton this year. The Masses will continue throughout the school year, ending in early May 2025, at Epiphany School in Sayre and Saint Agnes School in Towanda.

“Making Every Class Catholic”

Diocesan Teachers’ Institute Keynote Speaker shares how Catholic perspectives transform classroom experiences



Dr. Brett Salkeld served as the keynote speaker for the 2024 Diocesan Teachers’ Institute on Sept. 16 in Wilkes-Barre.

WILKES-BARRE – As he began his presentation to teachers in the Diocese of Scranton, Dr. Brett Salkeld struck a deal with his audience.

“If I can convince you that math can be taught from a Catholic point of view, will you come along with me for the ride?” he asked.

The crowd filled with hundreds of educators, seated inside the Holy Redeemer High School auditorium, willingly agreed.

Over the next hour, Dr. Salkeld explained how faith can be integrated into math – and many other aspects of a school

curriculum – from literature and language, to science, art, and even health.

“Kids naturally want to ask the big questions,” he said. “We have to be willing to engage in the big questions.”

For example, in his math analogy, Dr. Salkeld focused on a question most teachers have heard before: “Why do we need to study math?”

He said simple answers like “to graduate,” “to gain marketable skills,” and “to be a productive citizen,” all miss the mark.

“In a Catholic school, if a student asks, ‘Why should I study math,’ we can

answer something like, ‘You are created to know and love God and God’s works, and math is a unique and powerful way to explore the beauty and order of creation.’”

He even acknowledged a simpler answer, “because you can,” would suffice.

“There is nothing else we know in creation that does math and it is amazing that human beings do math,” he said. “Math is a tool in our toolkit to take care of creation. You’re using math to develop some potential that God built into creation.”

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Celebrating Dedication: Two Long-Time Educators Honored for 25 Years of Service to Catholic Education

WILKES-BARRE – Two long-time Catholic educators in the Diocese of Scranton, who have spent their careers instilling the values of compassion, integrity, and a love for learning in their students, were recognized for their accomplishments at this year's Diocesan Teachers' Institute Mass on Sept. 16, 2024.

Heather Feher and James Renfer were each presented with the Saint John Paul II Award by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, inside Saint Nicholas Church.

The award recognizes 25 years of dedicated service to Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton.

"I believe in Catholic education," Feher said. "I love being able to pass my values onto the children."

For the last 18 years, Feher has taught kindergarten at Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre. She previously spent six years teaching kindergarten at Gate of Heaven School and one year teaching pre-school at Saint Mary's Byzantine School.



Two long-time Catholic educators in the Diocese of Scranton were presented with the Saint John Paul II Award for 25 years of dedicated service to Catholic education in the Diocese of Scranton on Sept. 16, 2024, at Saint Nicholas Church in Wilkes-Barre. Participating in the presentation are, from left: Charlene Haggerty, Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools; James Renfer, Wyoming Area Catholic School, Exeter; Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton; Heather Feher, Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School, Wilkes-Barre; and Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education/Superintendent of Catholic Schools. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

Feher said she loves teaching kindergarten because the kids are excited

about coming to school each day.

"I like when they accidentally call me

'mommy.' Now that I'm getting older, I've been called 'grandma' twice this year," she joked. "I also love it when they come back from Holy Redeemer High School and visit us all right before they graduate. I love when I see them all grown up."

Renfer started his teaching career in 1999 teaching sixth-through-eighth grade at Sacred Heart School in Dupont. He then moved to Wyoming Area Catholic School, where he taught fourth grade for 13 years, and for the last five years has been teaching eighth grade.

"It's important that we keep the faith going in the schools," Renfer said.

As their fellow educators applauded them after the awards presentation, both Feher and Renfer said their success is a direct reflection of the incredible educational community that surrounds them.

"We're all very close. They're wonderful people," Renfer said of his fellow Catholic educators.

"We are a family," Feher added. "We're very close. I've made a lot of good friends."

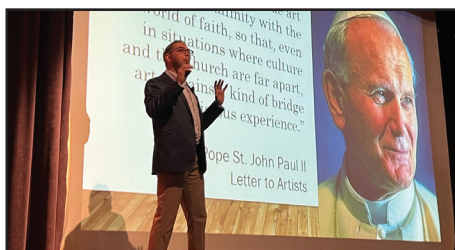
'Every subject can - and should - be taught from a Catholic worldview,' speaker says

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Dr. Salkeld served as the keynote speaker for the 2024 Diocesan Teachers' Institute. He based his presentation off his book, "Educating for Eternity: A Teacher's Companion for Making Every Class Catholic," which explained every subject can – and should – be taught from a Catholic worldview.

During his presentation, Dr. Salkeld, who serves as the Archdiocesan theologian for the Archdiocese of Regina, Canada, said teaching every subject from a Catholic perspective does more than just prepare students for the job market, it forms people who can change the world.

He also stressed that it should not be just "one more thing" to do in the classroom. Using the approach authentically, no matter what the class or age being taught, is a way to explain and model eternal truths to students.



Dr. Salkeld speaks during his presentation inside Holy Redeemer High School.

However, he stressed, especially as his presentation drew to a close, that educators should not simply "add things that feel forced or contrived."

"The point isn't to add 'Catholic' to check a box. Teaching from the Catholic point of view does not require mentioning God or the church in every single class," he said. "Do it when it is appropriate and when it makes sense. Do it when it is authentic. Sometimes when you're just doing quadratic equations, if you're pursuing the truth, that is fine."

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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.



During their October First Friday Mass, students from **All Saints Academy in Scranton** brought their favorite furry friends to the altar to receive their Saint Francis Blessing.



Students at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** celebrated the Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi by blessing their "animals" during Mass.



Students at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** do more than just sing in music class, as students practice playing their ukuleles.



Second grade students portray Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare during the annual blessing of the animals at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore**.



Students in Miss Mecir's sophomore biology classes at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore** are learning microscope skills as part of their current lesson. Learn more about the academic and extracurricular opportunities for your student by attending the Holy Cross HS Open House on Sunday, Oct. 27, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. More details and the registration link can be found at www.HCHS.org.



Moved by the Holy Spirit, students at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** collected supplies to be sent to Hurricane Helene victims.



Students, faculty and families from **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton** were joined by the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, for a special school liturgy on Oct. 7, 2024. In his homily, Bishop Bambera spoke of the miracle of the Eucharist and reminded students of the importance of giving thanks for the opportunity to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.



Pre-kindergarten students from **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** learned the importance about taking care of all of God's wonderful creations.



Father Daniel Toomey celebrates the Feast of St. Francis with the students at **Epiphany School in Sayre** by blessing their real-life pets and their stuffed animals. Students also donated \$650 to the St. Francis Kitchen as part of their celebration.



Art teacher Mrs. Taylor helps seventh grade students at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport** make the final touches to their 3-D art projects.



Students and families from **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** recently participated in the school's annual RUNGSA 5K Run/1 Mile Walk. This year more than 300 participants were registered for the race, with proceeds benefiting childhood cancer research and safety upgrades at the school.



Third grade students Kaitlynn O'Leary, Grace Dudkowski and Alexis Meadows from **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** show off their homeroom flag during the school's annual Race for Education.



Students, faculty and staff from **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** participated in McCarthy Tire Service's Hurricane Helene relief effort, collecting several pallets of dry food and cleaning supplies. Learn more about the academic and extracurricular opportunities for your student by attending the Holy Redeemer HS Open House on Sunday, Oct. 27, from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. More details about the school can be found at www.HolyRedeemerHS.org.



Students at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary by praying the rosary as a school community with a large helium balloon rosary.



Students at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** are learning all about agriculture and growing plants without soil. The school has acquired two hydroponic systems and the students are nurturing seeds into flowers and vegetables.



Mrs. Tynemouth's seventh grade class at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** plays music dominoes. Learn more about the academic and extracurricular opportunities for your student by attending the Notre Dame HS Open House on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 10 a.m. – noon. For more information about the school, please visit www.NDHigh.org.