



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE OCTOBER 1 NATIONAL SHRINE PILGRIMAGE FROM THE DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Q: What are the important dates to remember in terms of registration?

A: Please pay close attention to the following dates, especially regarding registration.

May 12, 2025: Registration Opens for National Shrine Pilgrimage

August 18, 2025: Registration Closes for National Shrine Pilgrimage

August 28 & 29, 2025: Bus Rosters and Arrival/Departure Locations Finalized and Communicated to Pilgrims via Email

October 1, 2025: Pilgrimage Date to Basilica of the National Shrine

Q: What is the cost of the pilgrimage and what is included and not included?

A: The cost per participant is \$80.00. That fee covers bus transportation only and does not include a pilgrim's lunch, snacks, or driver gratuity.

In full transparency, the cost for each bus is approximately \$4,000 – which means the cost per pilgrim is completely funding the transportation costs. We will be using the Martz bus company in the valley cities, and may use other regional companies for busing in the western/northern parts of the Diocese.

For parishes that will be working to fill a roster of parishioners for one bus, please have the individuals make full payment directly to your parish – and when the parish submits its completed roster of pilgrims, submit one check made out to **Diocese of Scranton**.

Q: Does a parish need to fill all 52-seats for a bus if promoting the pilgrimage and getting parishioners to sign-up through the parish?

A: No! While parishes are encouraged to sign-up as many parishioners as possible, it is not necessary for a parish to fill all 52 seats. Once all parish bus rosters are received on the date that registration closes in August – the Diocesan Pilgrimage Coordinator will look to combine groups in the same geographic area and identify a nearby departure site that offers parking available.

Q: My parish is not actively working to fill a bus, can I (or my family and friends) still register somehow and find a local departure point?

A: Yes. We are hoping many parishes will encourage parishioners to attend together, but individuals may still register for the Shrine Pilgrimage even if they do not. Individuals may register and pay on the Diocese of Scranton website. Once registration closes, we will work to find the closest departure site to each individual's location and communicate that information back in late August.

Q: Because lunch is not included, will there be meals available at the Shrine?

A: The Basilica Cafeteria is only open on Saturdays and Sundays – but makes a limited number of meals available for sale to Diocesan pilgrimage groups. Pilgrims do not need to order ahead. The cost typically ranges from roughly \$10-\$15 for lunch. Pilgrims are also welcome to bring their own lunch or visit a restaurant within walking distance to the Shrine.

Q: Will there be a local group providing music for the Mass at the Shrine?

A: Yes. The Catholic Choral Society of NEPA has graciously agreed to provide the music during the Diocese of Scranton's Pilgrimage Day at the Shrine.

Q: Is there an opportunity for my family or business to offer a sponsorship of any kind?

A: Yes. The National Shrine offers the opportunity for any visiting Diocese to have the sanctuary decorated with flowers for the celebration of Mass. The cost of flowers would be approximately \$1,000. Anyone who would like to sponsor flowers in honor or remembrance of

a loved one, with recognition in the Mass program, can contact Father Andrew HvozdoVIC, Diocesan Director of Pilgrimages, by emailing ahvoz87@gmail.com or calling (570) 639-1535.

Q: Will the gift shop and bookstore be open during the Pilgrimage?

A: Yes. The Basilica's Gift Shop and Bookstore are open daily from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Bishop Bambera will also offering a blessing for religious items purchased during the pilgrimage at the conclusion of the Mass.

Q: Is the Basilica Shrine Designated as a Pilgrimage Site for the 2025 Jubilee Year?

A: Yes! The National Shrine has been designated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary as a Special Place of Pilgrimage for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. As such, visitors and pilgrims to Mary's Shrine can obtain a plenary indulgence by visiting and fulfilling the normal conditions of the indulgence.

Q: Can you participate in the Pilgrimage on October 1 without taking bus transportation and paying the \$80 for transportation?

A: Yes. Anyone from the Diocese of Scranton (and beyond) is welcome to drive themselves down to Washington, D.C., that day and participate in the Pontifical Mass at the National Shrine, along with the Holy Hour and confessions, and other activities.

We recognize that some parishioners might also have family in the area and choose to go down beforehand or possibly stay later. Extra Mass programs will be available in the Shrine on the day of the pilgrimage for anyone that is not coming by bus.

Q: My parish has parishioners who are interested in going down the night before the Pilgrimage and staying over. Is that an option?

A: Yes. Anyone is welcome to go down the night before the pilgrimage and find local hotel accommodations. If a parish has significant interest from parishioners in getting a large group together and filling a bus in this way (with 52 passengers) – please contact Father Andrew HvozdoVIC, Diocesan Director of Pilgrimages, by emailing ahvoz87@gmail.com or calling (570) 639-1535, who will assist with possible recommendations and will help with coordination.

Q: My question is not listed above, who should I contact?

A: If you have any questions that are not answered above, please contact Father Andrew Hvozdovic, Diocesan Director of Pilgrimages, by emailing ahvoz87@gmail.com or calling (570) 639-1535, and he will return your inquiry as soon as possible.