

# The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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## Eight men to be ordained Permanent Deacons on Nov. 29

SCRANTON – The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will ordain eight men as permanent deacons for the Diocese of Scranton at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 29, 2025, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The newly ordained deacons will join the ranks of clergy who minister to the faithful in parishes and other settings throughout the Diocese.

During the Mass of Ordination, Bishop Bambera will ordain the following men to serve permanently in the Order of Deacon: Fernando Alves, Francisco Castelan, Michaelangelo Colaneri, Frank Fanelli, Joel Marte, Jorge Roca, Rafael Sanchez Velasquez, and Christian Saunders.

“For me, the deacon is the bridge between the sanctuary and the people,” Michaelangelo Colaneri, a parishioner of the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, said. “You’re allowed to be right next to the mystery of God on the altar on Sunday, and then you’re able to take that majesty that comes from Him and extend it to the people in your parish.”

Colaneri calls his upcoming ordination a “tremendous responsibility and a beautiful call.”

“Being able to bring the blessings of God from the altar to the kitchen table is probably the greatest thing I could ever ask for,” he stated.

Both Frank Fanelli, a parishioner of Saint Ann Parish in Shohola, and Fernando Alves, a parishioner of Saint Luke Parish in Stroudsburg said their calls to the diaconate grew naturally from years of service to others.

“I was approached by Deacon Joe Connelly while feeding the needy,” Fanelli explained. “He felt that I would be a good candidate. I’ve been a Eucharistic Minister for many years, and I just felt the need to go further with my faith.”

“I first started teaching religious education, then helping in the soup kitchen. When the parish reopened after COVID, I helped as an usher and with the cleaning crew. With time, the desire to be a deacon started growing in me, but I never felt worthy of that,” Alves added.

All the men being ordained will complete a five-year formation program and become members of the three-fold ordained ministry that consists of bishops, priests, and deacons.

The upcoming Diaconate Ordination will be historic for the Diocese of Scranton – because several of the candidates speak Spanish as their primary language. All



**Fernando B. Alves**



**Francisco Castelan**



**Michaelangelo J. Colaneri**



**Frank A. Fanelli**



**Joel Marte**



**Jorge A. Roca**



**Rafael Sánchez Velásquez**



**Christian D. Saunders**

formation classes were held jointly in English and Spanish with assistance of real-time translation services.

With assistance from online translation applications, *The Catholic Light* was able to speak in Spanish with both Rafael Sanchez and Jorge Roca, both parishioners of Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg, about their reasons for becoming deacons.

“I heard the call many years ago and have been participating in the service of my parish ever since,” Sanchez said. “My purpose (in becoming a deacon) is to serve my community, to serve everyone in need, guided of course, by my priests and obviously by the Bishop.”

Roca said he looks forward to carrying Christ’s message to the communities where it is needed most and hopes other men will consider the possibility of a vocation to the diaconate.

“Very few answer Christ’s call when He calls you to serve. I think many of us are afraid at first, but you lose all that fear as you develop the spiritual formation you receive to walk in this ministry. This formation is very important in a person’s life,” Roca said.

A third man from Saint Matthew Parish, Joel Marte, will also be ordained. Through his ministry, he hopes to accompany others in their most difficult moments.

“If you have somebody that is going through a tough moment with their kids, with their spouse, with a loved one that has passed, being able to walk with them and be able to help them carry the cross and support them and bring them closer to Christ, that is what I’m looking forward to,” Marte stated.

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## The Catholic Light

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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE  
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON



### DIOCESE OF SCRANTON MISSION STATEMENT

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

### POLICY STATEMENT

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Secretary for Communications/Editor-in-Chief:  
Eric M. Deabill

### Managing Editor:

Kevin G. McDonnell

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## Meet the Class of 2026 Permanent Deacons

*Continued from Page 1*

A deacon's service has three aspects: word, worship, and charity. He can perform certain ministerial functions such as administering baptism; serving as the deacon at the Mass, including proclaiming the Gospel, preaching the homily and distributing Holy Communion; bringing viaticum to the sick; presiding at wake services, funeral liturgies and burial rites and with permission by the pastor, may celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Deacons also minister to the needs of families, single parents, students, the aged and infirmed, the imprisoned and those who suffer from poverty or addictions.

"I'm really moved by service to those that could never reciprocate," Christian Saunders, a parishioner of Saint Paul Parish in Scranton, said. "I feel like that is service to Christ."

Saunders said his calling to the diaconate began early in life.

"Since I was a teenager, I felt a call to serve God," he added. "At the age of 40, I knew that I would not be able to ignore that call anymore."

Francisco Castelan began his formation program in Brooklyn, N.Y. before moving to the Scranton area and attending Mass at Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish.

"I was not thinking about becoming a deacon, but in my (former) parish, five or six people said I could become a deacon," he said. "I listened to call of Jesus and that is why I decided to be a servant of Him."

All are welcome to attend the Ordination Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter. For those unable to attend in person, CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton will provide a live broadcast of the Mass. A livestream will also be available on the Diocese of Scranton website, YouTube channel, and



across all Diocesan social media platforms.

The following are brief biographies of the Permanent Deacon Class of 2026:

### **Fernando B. Alves**

Fernando B. Alves, 48, of Stroudsburg, is a member of Saint Luke Parish in Stroudsburg. He is married to his wife, Dina, for 14 years and the couple has five children.

Following graduation from Saint Mary of the Assumption/Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, N.J., in 1995, Alves earned his Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Rutgers University, New Jersey, in 2002.

The deacon candidate currently serves as controller for the Archdiocese of New York.

### **Francisco Castelan**

Francisco Castelan, 49, and his wife of 30 years, Elena, reside in Scranton and are members of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in South Scranton.

The couple has four children.

### **Michaelangelo J. Colaneri**

Deacon candidate Michaelangelo J. Colaneri, 38, is a resident of Wilkes-Barre.

He and his wife, Kristine, have been married for six years and are parishioners of the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

A 2006 graduate of Scranton High School, Colaneri continued his education at Villanova University near Philadelphia, where he earned his bachelor's degree in theology in 2010.

The ordinand currently serves as a territory manager for Lennox Industries.

### **Frank A. Fanelli**

Lackawaxen resident Frank A. Fanelli, 61, has been married to his wife, Nancy, for 36 years. They are the parents of three children and are parishioners of Saint Ann Parish in Shohola.

A 1982 graduate of Nazareth Regional High School in Brooklyn, N.Y., Fanelli entered his law enforcement training at the New York Police Department/New York City Police Academy, where he graduated in 1987.

The future deacon is a retired detective with the NYPD.

### **Joel Marte**

East Stroudsburg resident Joel Marte, 41, is a member of Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg, along with his wife, Ramona.

The couple has been married for nine years and are the parents of seven children.

The ordinand graduated from Northampton High School in 2002 and is employed as a general contractor.

### **Jorge Roca**

Jorge Roca, 58, and his wife, Roselia Veronica, reside in Stroudsburg and are members of Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg.

Married for 30 years, the couple has four children.

The deacon candidate currently works in the construction industry.

### **Rafael Sánchez**

Rafael Sánchez, 63, is a resident of East Stroudsburg.

He has been married to his wife, Flor Alina, for 43 years and they are the parents of three children.

The family is among the parishioners of Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg.

### **Christian D. Saunders**

Scranton resident Christian D. Saunders, 45, is a member of Saint Paul Parish in the city's Green Ridge section.

He and his wife of 17 years, Stefanie, are the parents of four children.

A 1999 graduate of the former Bishop O'Hara High School in Dunmore, Saunders earned his bachelor's degree in accounting from Marywood University in 2003.

The deacon ordinand is currently employed as a licensed realtor.



# Jubilee Mass for Religious recognizes 1,415 years of service

SCRANTON – With prayers of thanksgiving and deep gratitude, the Diocese of Scranton celebrated its annual Jubilee Mass for Women and Men Religious on Sunday, Oct. 26, 2025, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

The Mass honored 23 religious sisters and brothers who are marking milestone anniversaries in consecrated life this year – accounting for a combined 1,415 years of faithful service to God and the Church.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant and homilist for the Jubilee Mass. The Bishop expressed heartfelt appreciation to the jubilarians for their lifelong witness of discipleship and prayer – which has spanned 25, 50, 60, 70 and even 75 years in some cases.

“What a blessing we’ve been given in all of you,” Bishop Bambera said. “More than you realize or appreciate, you continually challenge us to trust in the mercy, love and forgiveness of God – something that many of us in the Church forget, all too often.”

In his homily for the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Bishop reflected on the Gospel call to authentic discipleship, reminding those gathered that faith must always be lived with integrity and compassion.

“There is a very simple message that I hope we will all take from today’s Gospel,” the Bishop said. “Jesus calls us to live our lives with integrity. He calls us to give the beliefs that we profess a life.”

Drawing upon a personal story from his visit to Cape Coast Castle in Ghana,



**Religious Sisters celebrating Jubilee anniversaries in 2025 filled the front pew of the Cathedral of Saint Peter Oct. 26, 2025, as the Diocese of Scranton celebrated its annual Jubilee Mass for Women and Men Religious. (Photos/Mike Melisky)**

a former slave fortress, Bishop Bambera spoke of the “disconnect” that can sometimes exist between what we profess as Christians and how we live our lives.

As he looked at the jubilarians seated in front of him, the Bishop thanked them for boldly proclaiming the Gospel message in a world that far too often fails to embrace it.

“Your commitment to work for justice for the marginalized – immigrants, the poor, those held captive today by greed and sexual exploitation, and all those oppressed by far too many who deem themselves righteous – provides us with a unique and powerful witness to the presence of God at work in our world today in 2025,” Bishop Bambera added.

Among those celebrating jubilees this year is Sister Mary Theresa Wojcicki, a Sister of Christian Charity, who is marking 50 years of religious life. Originally from Great Meadows, N.J., Sister Mary Theresa now ministers at Saint Jude School in Mountain Top.

“The greatest joy that I have had was to be able to work with children and bring them to Jesus,” she said.

Reflecting on her vocation, Sister Mary Theresa shared, “I was impressed with the Sisters of Christian Charity in grade school. I saw that they were cheerful, always happy, and ready to serve – and I wanted to follow that charism.”

Sister Elizabeth (Betty) Bullen, a Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is

celebrating 60 years of religious life this year.

Originally from Pittsburgh, Sister Betty spent much of her ministry in North Carolina before returning to live in Scranton. She describes her ministry as a lifelong adventure in faith and friendship.

“My greatest joy has been getting to meet amazing people who are different than I was and being able to expand my understanding of cultures and faiths,” she said.

Sister Mary Eleanor Thornton, a Sister of Mercy, who is celebrating 70 years of religious life, said her greatest joy has been spending decades ministering to the poor through social service centers, food programs, and parish outreach.

“It was such a joy and an honor (to serve the poor). God used me to collect food, furniture, and clothing that the poor would need,” she said. “I loved gathering volunteers who would help me.”

Looking back on seven decades of service, Sister Mary Eleanor found special meaning in Bishop Bambera’s homily and his reminder that we can’t just call ourselves Christians; we really must live what Jesus Christ wanted us to do.

“It is all God doing it in us. God gives us the gifts,” she explained. “I’m just grateful to the Sisters of Mercy that they have a fourth vow – to serve the poor, the sick and the uneducated – and that they were willing to let me do the things I could do for the poor.”



**Father John Michael Lee, C.P., right, and Father Donald Ware, C.P., concelebrate Mass.**

## 2025 JUBILARIANS

### SISTERS, SERVANTS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY (I.H.M.)

75 Years

Sister Kathleen McNulty, I.H.M.

70 Years

Sister M. Leonnette Bower, I.H.M.

Sister Kathleen Hassett, I.H.M.

Sister Cor Immaculatum Heffernan, I.H.M.

Sister M. Claudette Naylor, I.H.M.

60 Years

Sister Elizabeth Bullen, I.H.M.

Sister Ann Marie McDonnell, I.H.M.

50 Years

Sister Judith Ann Ziegler, I.H.M.

### SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS (R.S.M.)

75 Years

Sister Marie Genevieve Mannix, R.S.M.

70 Years

Sister Margaret Mary Donnelly, R.S.M.

Sister Leonita Duhoski, R.S.M.

Sister Mary Eleanor Thornton, R.S.M.

60 Years

Sister Mary Ellen Brody, R.S.M.

Sister Mary Ellen Fuhrman, R.S.M.

Sister Catherine McGroarty, R.S.M.

Sister Marie Parker, R.S.M.

50 Years

Sister Imelda Sherrett, R.S.M.

### SISTERS OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS (SS.C.M.)

60 Years

Sister Madonna Figura, SS.C.M.

### SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY (S.C.C.)

50 Years

Sister Mary Theresa Wojcicki, S.C.C.

### OBLATES OF SAINT JOSEPH (O.S.J.)

60 Years

Father Joseph D. Sibilano, O.S.J.

### THE CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION (C.P.)

60 Years

Father John Michael Lee, C.P.

Father Donald Ware, C.P.

25 Years

Father C. Lee Havey, C.P.



# U.S. Bishops approve 'special pastoral message' on immigration

BALTIMORE (OSV News) - The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a "special pastoral message on immigration" Nov. 12, voicing "our concern here for immigrants" at their annual fall plenary assembly in Baltimore.

The statement came as a growing number of bishops have acknowledged that some of the Trump administration's immigration policies risk presenting the church with challenges in administering pastoral support and charitable endeavors, as well as religious liberty challenges.

Archbishop Richard G. Henning of Boston told OSV News in an interview that the feeling "we have to say something" on the subject of showing solidarity with immigrants has been "kind of bubbling up from the bishops."

"Obviously, the beliefs of the church have political consequences, but they're not political in the usual sense of the word," he said. "And so there was a real effort to make sure that this would be a pastoral address to our people rather than an attempt to lobby."

Despite differences in age, geography or other viewpoints, Archbishop Henning said, the U.S. bishops have almost universally heard from parishioners or pastors about "suffering the effects of this."

"We're pastors," he said. "We care about the people we serve, and what we're hearing from them is fear and suffering. So it's hard not to want to respond to that."

The statement, released in the late afternoon, said, "As pastors, we the bishops of the United States are bound to our people by ties of communion and compassion in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

According to a USCCB news release issued with the text of the statement, this "marked the first time" in 12 years the bishops' conference "invoked this particularly urgent way of speaking as a body of bishops. The last one issued in 2013 was in response to the federal government's contraceptive mandate."

## U.S. Bishops Issue "Special Message" on Immigration

November 12, 2025

As pastors, we the bishops of the United States are bound to our people by ties of communion and compassion in Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are disturbed when we see among our people a climate of fear and anxiety around questions of profiling and immigration enforcement. We are saddened by the state of contemporary debate and the vilification of immigrants. We are concerned about the conditions in detention centers and the lack of access to pastoral care. We lament that some immigrants in the United States have arbitrarily lost their legal status. We are troubled by threats against the sanctity of houses of worship and the special nature of hospitals and schools. We are grieved when we meet parents who fear being detained when taking their children to school and when we try to console family members who have already been separated from their loved ones.

Despite obstacles and prejudices, generations of immigrants have made enormous contributions to the well-being of our nation. We as Catholic bishops love our country and pray for its peace and prosperity. For this very reason, we feel compelled now in this environment to raise our voices in defense of God-given human dignity.

Catholic teaching exhorts nations to recognize the fundamental dignity of all persons, including immigrants. We bishops advocate for a meaningful reform of our nation's immigration laws and procedures. Human dignity and national security are not in conflict. Both are possible if people of good will work together.

We recognize that nations have a responsibility to regulate their borders and establish a just and orderly immigration system for the sake of the common good. Without such processes, immigrants face the risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Safe and legal pathways serve as an antidote to such risks.

The Church's teaching rests on the foundational concern for the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). As pastors, we look to Sacred Scripture and the example of the Lord Himself, where we find the wisdom of God's compassion. The priority of the Lord, as the Prophets remind us, is for those who are most vulnerable: the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger (Zechariah 7:10). In the Lord Jesus, we see the One who became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9), we see the Good Samaritan who lifts us from the dust (Luke 10:30-37), and we see the One who is found in the least of these (Matthew 25). The Church's concern for neighbor and our concern here for immigrants is a response to the Lord's command to love as He has loved us (John 13:34).

To our immigrant brothers and sisters, we stand with you in your suffering, since, when one member suffers, all suffer (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:26). You are not alone!

We note with gratitude that so many of our clergy, consecrated religious, and lay faithful already accompany and assist immigrants in meeting their basic human needs. We urge all people of good will to continue and expand such efforts.

We oppose the indiscriminate mass deportation of people. We pray for an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement. We pray that the Lord may guide the leaders of our nation, and we are grateful for past and present opportunities to dialogue with public and elected officials. In this dialogue, we will continue to advocate for meaningful immigration reform.

*As disciples of the Lord, we remain men and women of hope, and hope does not disappoint! (cf. Romans 5:5)*

*May the mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe enfold us all in her maternal and loving care and draw us ever closer to the heart of Christ.*



# Los obispos de EEUU aprueban un ‘mensaje especial’ sobre la inmigración

BALTIMORE (OSV News) - El 12 de noviembre, la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos aprobó un “mensaje especial sobre la inmigración”, en el que expresaron “nuestra preocupación” por los inmigrantes durante su asamblea plenaria anual de otoño celebrada en Baltimore.

La declaración se produjo cuando un número cada vez mayor de obispos ha reconocido que algunas de las políticas de inmigración de la administración Trump corren el riesgo de presentar a la Iglesia tanto desafíos prácticos en la administración del apoyo pastoral y las iniciativas caritativas, como desafíos a la libertad religiosa en el país.

El arzobispo Richard G. Henning de Boston dijo a OSV News en una entrevista que el sentimiento de “tenemos que decir algo” sobre el tema de mostrar solidaridad con los inmigrantes ha estado “brotando de los obispos”.

“Obviamente, las creencias de la Iglesia tienen consecuencias políticas, pero no son políticas en el sentido habitual de la palabra”, afirmó. “Por eso se hizo un verdadero esfuerzo para garantizar que se tratara de un discurso pastoral dirigido a nuestro pueblo y no de un intento de presión política”.

A pesar de las diferencias de edad, geografía u otros puntos de vista, dijo el arzobispo Henning, los obispos estadounidenses han escuchado casi de forma unánime a feligreses o párrocos hablar sobre “los efectos que esto está causando”.

“Somos pastores”, dijo el arzobispo. “Nos preocupamos por las personas a las que servimos, y lo que escuchamos de ellas es miedo y sufrimiento. Por lo tanto, es difícil no querer responder a eso”.

La declaración, publicada hacia el final de la segunda jornada de la reunión plenaria, decía: “Como pastores, los obispos de los Estados Unidos, estamos unidos a nuestro pueblo en nuestro Señor Jesucristo, por lazos de comunión y compasión”.

Según un comunicado de prensa de la USCCB del 12 de noviembre, publicado junto con la declaración traducida al español, este mensaje especial marcó “la primera vez en doce años” que la conferencia episcopal “recurrió a esta forma particularmente urgente de expresarse como cuerpo episcopal. La última vez que lo hizo fue en 2013, en respuesta al mandato federal sobre anticonceptivos”.

## Obispos de Estados Unidos emiten “Mensaje Especial” sobre inmigración

12 de noviembre de 2025

Como pastores, los obispos de los Estados Unidos, estamos unidos a nuestro pueblo en nuestro Señor Jesucristo, por lazos de comunión y compasión. Nos inquieta ver en nuestras comunidades un clima de temor y ansiedad ante las prácticas de perfilamiento y la aplicación de las leyes migratorias. Nos entristece profundamente el tono que ha adoptado el debate contemporáneo y la creciente denigración de los inmigrantes. Nos preocupan las condiciones en los centros de detención y la falta de acceso a una atención pastoral adecuada. Lamentamos que algunos inmigrantes que viven en los Estados Unidos han perdido su estatus migratorio de manera arbitraria. Nos preocupan las amenazas contra la santidad de los lugares de culto, y el carácter especial de los hospitales y las escuelas. Nos entristece profundamente cuando nos encontramos con padres que temen ser detenidos al llevar a sus hijos a la escuela o cuando intentamos consolar a familiares que ya han sido separados de sus seres queridos.

A pesar de los obstáculos y prejuicios, por generaciones, los inmigrantes han contribuido inmensamente al bienestar de nuestra nación. Como obispos católicos, profesamos nuestro amor por nuestro país y oramos por su paz y prosperidad. Por este preciso motivo nos sentimos obligados en este entorno a elevar nuestras voces en defensa de la dignidad humana otorgada por Dios.

La enseñanza católica exhorta a las naciones a reconocer la dignidad fundamental de todas las personas, incluidos los inmigrantes. Como obispos, abogamos por una reforma significativa de las leyes y los procedimientos migratorios de nuestra nación. La dignidad humana y la seguridad nacional no son valores en conflicto. Ambas pueden alcanzarse con buena voluntad y uniendo esfuerzos.

Reconocemos que las naciones tienen la responsabilidad de controlar sus fronteras y establecer un sistema de inmigración justo y ordenado por el bien común. Sin dichos procedimientos, los inmigrantes corren el riesgo de caer en la trata de personas y en otras formas de explotación. Las vías legales y seguras sirven como antídoto frente a esos riesgos.

La enseñanza de la Iglesia se basa en la preocupación fundamental por la persona humana, creada a imagen y semejanza de Dios. (Génesis 1:27). Como pastores, recurrimos a las Sagradas Escrituras y al ejemplo de Dios mismo, donde encontramos la sabiduría de la compasión de Dios. La prioridad del Señor, como nos recuerdan los profetas, es para los más vulnerables: las viudas, los huérfanos, los pobres y los migrantes (Zacarías 7:10). En el Señor Jesús, vemos a Aquel que se hizo pobre por nosotros (2 Corintios 8:9), vemos al buen samaritano que nos levanta del polvo (Lucas 10:30-37) y vemos a Aquel que se encuentra en los más pequeños (Mateo 25). La preocupación de la Iglesia por el prójimo y nuestra preocupación aquí por los inmigrantes son una respuesta al mandato del Señor de amar como Él nos ha amado (Juan 13:34).

A nuestros hermanos y hermanas inmigrantes, estamos con ustedes en su sufrimiento, pues si un miembro sufre, todos sufren (1 Corintios 12:26). ¡No están solos!

Observamos con gratitud que tantos de nuestros sacerdotes, religiosos consagrados, y fieles laicos ya están acompañando y asistiendo a inmigrantes en sus necesidades humanas básicas. Exhortamos a todas las personas de buena voluntad a continuar y ampliar esos esfuerzos.

Nos oponemos a las deportaciones masivas e indiscriminadas. Oramos por el fin de la retórica inhumana y de la violencia, ya sea dirigida contra inmigrantes o contra los organismos de seguridad. Oramos para que el Señor guíe a los líderes de nuestra nación y estamos agradecidos por las oportunidades pasadas y presentes de dialogar con funcionarios públicos y electos. En este diálogo, continuaremos abogando por una reforma migratoria significativa.

*Como discípulos del Señor, seguimos siendo hombres y mujeres de esperanza, y la esperanza no defrauda!*  
(Romanos 5,5).

*Que el manto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe nos envuelva a todos en su maternal y amoroso cuidado y nos acerque cada vez más al corazón de Cristo.*

# Prayer vigils for immigrants mark Cabrini feast, commitment to human dignity

SCRANTON – On the feast of the patron saint of immigrants – and a day after the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a special pastoral message on immigration – a coalition of Catholic organizations held a second wave of prayer vigils across the country Nov. 13 for what organizers called a “national day of public witness for our immigrant brothers and sisters.”

The latest vigils – which took place on the feast of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, an Italian immigrant whose ministry to fellow immigrants ultimately led to her canonization as the first American saint – came amid growing concern from various faith communities and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops about the impact of hardline immigration policies.

The first round of “One Church, One Family: Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants” vigils took place in multiple locations around the country on Oct. 22.

In Scranton, the Nov. 13 witness began with a 4:30 p.m. Mass at The University of Scranton’s Madonna della Strada Chapel, celebrated by university president Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J. Following Mass, participants processed by candlelight – a challenge with gusty November wind – from the university campus down Monroe Avenue to Courthouse Square in downtown Scranton, where they concluded the evening with prayer, song, and personal testimony.

Organizers stressed that the gathering was not a political rally but a public



**Several dozen people gathered for a “One Church, One Family: Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants” vigil on Courthouse Square in Scranton on Nov. 13, 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

expression of Catholic teaching on human dignity and solidarity.

“We are here tonight to bear witness to what is going on with our community, particularly with immigrants,” Joe Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, explained. “We find some of the actions of the government dehumanizing – and that is not what Christians are about.”

On Courthouse Square, speakers read the U.S. Bishops’ new pastoral message on immigration and shared quotes from popes and other Church leaders.

Mahoney recalled the words of President Abraham Lincoln at the end of the Civil War – “malice toward none, charity for all” – and urged those gathered to reject rhetoric that demonizes people because of where they come from.

“Why do we have to say that these folks are evil because they came from some other place?” he asked. “Most of our ancestors did the same. This is not a political issue. This comes right back to the Gospel.”

Dr. William Cohen, a professor of theology at The University of Scranton who directs the school’s Peace and Justice Studies

program and coordinates “Christians for the Common Good,” said many residents have been personally affected by recent immigration enforcement actions.

“There are a lot of people in Scranton and the surrounding area that are really moved with pain and with concern about their neighbors, their friends, their children’s friends, who are being ripped from their community,” Cohen said.

He noted that many of those caught up in enforcement efforts have been working, paying taxes, and doing no harm.

“While we recognize the need for an immigration policy that is orderly, we recognize that the kinds of actions that have been happening locally are not upholding the dignity of people,” he continued. “All Catholics and people of goodwill should agree that every human being has dignity.”

Julie Schumacher Cohen, Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement and Governmental Affairs at The University of Scranton, said the vigil was rooted in Catholic moral teaching, not partisanship.

“Upholding human dignity is one of the core teachings that we’re taught in the Catholic church. We’re in a critical time when we’re seeing the devaluing of human lives – of our immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters – and we have to stand against that,” she said.

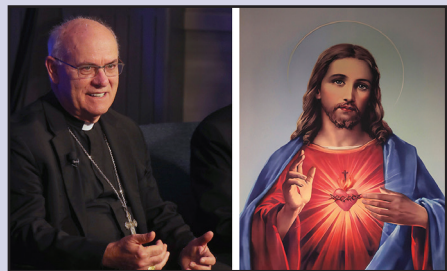
Scranton’s longstanding connection to Mother Cabrini and to immigrant communities was also highlighted.

“This is a community that has been home to immigrants since its founding,” Schumacher Cohen added. “Mother Cabrini actually came to Scranton in 1899. She came here six times, and she started a convent and a school. I think if she was alive today, she would probably be very much appalled at what is happening in terms of the closing of borders to refugees and the policies of mass deportation.”

For participants, the evening was a chance both to pray and to be seen.

“As Catholics, it’s important for us to voice our concerns for what is going on, because we could be next,” Anthony Farah, a parishioner of Saint Robert Bellarmine Parish in Wilkes-Barre, said. “It is good to see that there are people that care about these issues in our community.”

## Bishops will consecrate U.S. to Sacred Heart of Jesus for 250th anniversary of its founding



BALTIMORE (OSV News) - As the U.S. marks its 250th anniversary next year, the U.S. bishops will consecrate the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The decision was taken during a Nov. 11 session of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ fall plenary assembly.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort

Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chair of the USCCB’s Committee for Religious Liberty, said the consecration would take place at the USCCB’s spring assembly in June 2026, which concludes on the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“To help Catholics prepare for the consecration, we would develop prayer resources, including a novena that will lead up to the solemnity of the Sacred Heart,” he said.

Devotion to the Sacred of Heart of Jesus, which traces its roots to at least the second century, grew during the Middle Ages and was later extended to the universal church following Christ’s revelations of his Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a 17th-century French woman religious.

## Bishops approve new National Eucharistic Congress for summer 2029



BALTIMORE (OSV News) - The U.S. bishops have given the green light to hold the 11th National Eucharistic Congress in the summer of 2029, in a Nov. 12 vote on the final public day of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Fall Plenary Assembly.

The location of the event has not yet been made public. However, the possible

cities have been narrowed down to three, according to Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota, and chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress, Inc.

OSV News has learned that site visits have been completed and that the city announcement likely will come next spring.

The 2029 congress follows the successful 10th National Eucharistic Congress that took place July 2024 in Indianapolis, as part of the larger three-year National Eucharistic Revival.

Bishop Cozzens said the 2029 date would also help the church build up to the 500th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego Cuauhtloatzin in Mexico in 2031.



# Leave a Mark Mass turns ten, echoing Pope Francis' call to transform the world

SCRANTON – The Cathedral of Saint Peter was filled with youthful energy Nov. 2, 2025, as young adults from across the Diocese of Scranton gathered for the tenth annual Leave a Mark Mass.

This year's liturgy, celebrated by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, also held special significance because it not only marked the beginning of National Vocation Awareness Week, but also coincided with the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day).

Launched in 2016 in response to Pope Francis' challenge at World Youth Day in Poland – urging young people not to “vegetate” through life but to “leave a mark” on the world – the annual Mass has quickly become popular with teenagers as they think about how God is calling them to serve the Church.

“Open your hearts to the power and presence of God, to reflect upon the ways in which the Lord is calling you to serve the Church and to walk as His disciples,” Bishop Bambera said in his greeting at the beginning of Mass.

Jian Carlo Capellan, a young adult from Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg, attended the Leave a Mark Mass for the first time this year and called the experience “awesome.”

“It was beautiful to be able to go in the Cathedral,” Capellan said. “I think it's very important that youth come together and congregate together to learn more about God and his teachings.”

This was also the first Leave a Mark Mass that Alexandra Villarreal, a



Ellie Kloss, left, and other many other young adults participate in the Leave a Mark Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Nov. 2, 2025. (Photos/Mike Melisky)



parishioner of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Scranton, attended.

“Connecting with teens my age really opens new ground to connecting with God and how we can build on the church,” she said.

Sophia Petrus, a university sophomore, said returning to the Leave a Mark Mass for a second year felt like coming home.

“I came here for the first time last year and I met so many great people. I met the Capuchin Sisters of Nazareth and I decided in a week to go on a retreat with them,” Petrus said.

Father Alex Roche, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation and Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarians served as homilist for the Leave a Mark Mass.

Reflecting on both All Souls' Day and the call to discipleship, Father Roche offered a reflection on the ancient phrase memento mori, which means “remember your death.”

He challenged all people attending the Mass to keep their focus on what truly endures.

“So many of the things that we spend so much of our time worrying about and obsessing over, simply don't matter in the end,” Father Roche said. “What matters is how we follow our call, how each, in our own unique way, brought God's peace, beauty, hope and love into the world.”

Following Mass, young adults gathered at the Diocesan Pastoral Center for a reception featuring food trucks from The Greek Shack and All Belgium. As they ate, those in attendance also got to learn more about vocations to religious life or

the priesthood if they were interested.

Liam Barry, who just entered Saint Andrew's College Seminary in South Orange, N.J., believes the Leave a Mark Mass is an important event to build up vocations to the priesthood.

“I think it's very important for young people to take an active role in the church because we are the future of the church,” Barry stated.



Top: Religious sisters pose for a group photo during a social following Mass.

Above: Sister Kieran Williams, I.H.M., talks to two young women about religious life.

## Diocese of Scranton accepts two new men into Program for Priestly Formation



SCRANTON - The Diocese of Scranton Vocations Office is pleased to announce that the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, has accepted two new men into the Program for Priestly Formation.

In early November, Bishop Bambera accepted Daniel Kotsko from Saint Faustina Kowalska Parish in Nanticoke (pictured at left) and Faustinus Ugo from Christ the King Parish in Archbald (pictured at right) as seminarians.

Keep Dan and Faustinus in your prayers as they begin their formation!

The acceptance of these two new seminarians means the Diocese of Scranton now will have 15 men in formation at this time.



Father Alex Roche, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation and Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarians, delivers the homily during the Leave a Mark Mass.



# Our Call to Serve: How Your Gift Honors the Dignity of the Poor

SCRANTON - In his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te*, Pope Leo XIV reminds us of God's abiding and enduring love for the poor.

His words come at a critical moment in the life of the Church and our world, for we are indeed a Church **for the poor**.

As we approach Thanksgiving and the hopeful season of Advent - a time when we naturally reflect on and give thanks for our blessings - we can also take to heart Pope Leo's reminder that "there are many forms of poverty: the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence, the poverty of those who are socially marginalized and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities, moral and spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, the poverty of those who find themselves in a condition of personal or social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom."

Near the end of the document, Pope Leo offers an important clarification about almsgiving - one that is often misunderstood.

He notes that "the most important way to help the disadvantaged is to assist them in finding a good job, so that they can lead a more dignified life by developing their



abilities and contributing their fair share."

Yet he also cautions that "where this is not possible, we cannot risk abandoning others to the fate of lacking the necessities for a dignified life. Consequently, almsgiving remains, for the time being, a necessary means of contact, encounter and empathy with those less fortunate."

**The Catholic Ministries Appeal is our collective and unified response to this call.**

Through the kitchens, pantries, and shelters of Catholic Social Services, in addition to parish food pantry social justice grants, it provides vital aid to those struggling with hunger and homelessness - needs that have increased significantly.

Your support likewise enriches parish life, advances youth formation, prepares seminarians for ministry, cares for retired clergy, and empowers parish initiatives and social justice programs.

We are ahead of last year's pace; as of press time for this issue of *The Catholic Light*, we have recorded approximately \$3 million in gifts - 65% of our overall goal. If you have not yet made your gift, we invite you to respond to this important call to stewardship today.

Contributions may be mailed to: **Catholic Ministries Appeal**, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503.

You may also visit **AnnualAppeal.org** to make a secure online donation and where you can also follow this year's progress and view stories of impact throughout the Diocese.

Every dollar committed to the Catholic Ministries Appeal stays here in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania - and each one of us in committing a financial gift to the Appeal helps to strengthen our Catholic ministries and outreach throughout all eleven counties of our Diocese.

**No matter the amount, your gift makes a meaningful difference.**

Thank you for supporting this year's Appeal - a tangible expression of Our Call to Serve and to honor the dignity of all who face material or spiritual need.

## CSS Food pantries report significant increase in need during SNAP disruptions

CARBONDALE — Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton reported a notable increase of new families and individuals visiting its food pantries this fall, mirroring a trend seen across Pennsylvania and the nation following recent disruptions to federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Even before the temporary freeze in SNAP disbursements, the CSS Carbondale food pantry was experiencing a steady rise in new households seeking help.

In August 2025, the pantry served 39 new families and 794 returning families. That number grew in September, when 51 new families and 783 returning families came through the doors. In October, the pantry assisted 46 new families and 972 returning families — the highest monthly total this year.

"We've seen an increase in families coming in for help with the food pantry and the clothing room," Jolette Lyons, Catholic Social Services Director of Lackawanna

County Offices, said. "It is not what people typically think of as 'the poor.' It is the working poor. They are families that are struggling to keep their children fed and their households running."

Dominique Draper, manager of the Carbondale pantry, echoed that sentiment.

"With the SNAP benefits being put on halt and with just the holidays in general, people are finding less food coming into their household and so they need us more," she said.

The rise in need is not limited to Carbondale. Other Catholic Social Services food pantries in Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton are also experiencing significant increases in requests for food assistance.

At Saint Joseph Food Pantry in Hazleton, 24 new families sought help during one week — the week of Nov. 3, 2025, contributing to a total of 169 families and 515 individuals served in just the span of the three days that pantry was open during that week.

Community advocates anticipate these increases will continue until the federal food assistance funds stabilize now that the federal government has reopened.

Despite the strain, Lyons said the local community has responded generously.

"The Upper Valley takes care of themselves. They take care of their community. They take care of their neighbors," Lyons said.

Draper added that community support makes an immediate difference.

"I've had people come in and say, 'What do you need, let me go and grab it,'" she explained. "We've had so much support."

Catholic Social Services encourages those who are able to donate non-perishable food, winter clothing, or to simply volunteer time. To make an online donation specifically for CSS food pantries, visit [dioceseofscranton.org/css/catholic-social-services](https://dioceseofscranton.org/css/catholic-social-services) and click on the "Donate Now" tab.



**Carbondale Food Pantry**

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| <b>AUGUST 2025</b>                   |
| <b>39 new families served</b>        |
| <b>794 RETURNING FAMILIES SERVED</b> |
| <b>SEPTEMBER 2025</b>                |
| <b>51 new families served</b>        |
| <b>783 RETURNING FAMILIES SERVED</b> |
| <b>OCTOBER 2025</b>                  |
| <b>46 new families served</b>        |
| <b>972 RETURNING FAMILIES SERVED</b> |





*Thank You to Everyone Who Has Supported the Catholic Ministries Appeal. We are currently at 65% of our Goal.*

*Visit [AnnualAppeal.org](http://AnnualAppeal.org) or call (570) 207-2250 to make a gift!*

**PARISH GOAL REPORT TO DATE (Nov. 15, 2025)**

|                                                     |                                  |                                                      |                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| All Saints Parish - Plymouth.....                   | \$13,547.00 / \$30,365.00 (45%)  | St. Brigid Parish - Friendsville.....                | \$23,193.00 / \$24,916.00 (93%)           |
| Ascension Parish - Forest City.....                 | \$15,739.00 / \$23,450.00 (67%)  | St. Carlo Acutis Parish - Olyphant.....              | \$42,183.00 / \$63,465.00 (66%)           |
| BVM Queen of Peace Parish - Hawley.....             | \$35,435.00 / \$54,575.00 (65%)  | St. Catherine of Siena Parish - Moscow.....          | \$81,889.00 / \$66,919.00 (122%)          |
| Christ the King Parish - Archbald.....              | \$53,607.00 / \$78,939.00 (68%)  | St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish - Swoyersville..      | \$42,733.16 / \$72,234.00 (59%)           |
| Corpus Christi Parish - West Pittston.....          | \$51,287.00 / \$92,812.00 (55%)  | St. Elizabeth Parish - Bear Creek.....               | \$3,635.00 / \$18,133.00 (20%)            |
| Divine Mercy Parish - Scranton.....                 | \$52,075.00 / \$52,732.00 (99%)  | St. Eulalia Parish - Roaring Brook Township....      | \$21,766.00 / \$55,799.00 (39%)           |
| Epiphany Parish - Sayre.....                        | \$54,914.05 / \$55,304.00 (99%)  | St. Faustina Kowalska Parish - Nanticoke.....        | \$25,792.13 / \$58,036.00 (44%)           |
| Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish - Hanover Twp.. | \$16,197.00 / \$26,405.00 (61%)  | St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish - Carverton.....       | \$15,881.43 / \$17,674.00 (90%)           |
| Gate of Heaven Parish - Dallas.....                 | \$21,685.00 / \$38,444.00 (56%)  | St. Gregory Parish - Clarks Green.....               | \$61,809.00 / \$103,117.00 (60%)          |
| Good Shepherd Parish - Drums.....                   | \$8,900.00 / \$36,027.00 (25%)   | St. Ignatius Loyola Parish - Kingston.....           | \$51,829.00 / \$80,603.00 (64%)           |
| Holy Child Parish - Mansfield.....                  | \$19,640.00 / \$28,060.00 (70%)  | St. John Bosco Parish - Conyngham.....               | \$48,873.00 / \$67,261.00 (73%)           |
| Holy Family Parish - Luzerne.....                   | \$36,179.42 / \$31,035.00 (117%) | St. John Neumann Parish - Lords Valley.....          | \$13,111.00 / \$22,112.00 (59%)           |
| Holy Name of Mary Parish - Montrose.....            | \$13,005.00 / \$20,785.00 (63%)  | St. John Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....                | \$34,118.00 / \$54,995.00 (62%)           |
| Holy Rosary Parish - Hazleton.....                  | \$17,688.00 / \$33,957.00 (52%)  | St. John the Baptist Parish - Larksville.....        | \$14,006.00 / \$33,844.00 (41%)           |
| Holy Spirit Parish - Mocanaqua.....                 | \$7,385.00 / \$21,973.00 (34%)   | St. John the Evangelist Parish - Honesdale.....      | \$48,613.00 / \$65,424.00 (74%)           |
| Immaculate Conception Parish - Scranton.....        | \$40,420.00 / \$48,632.00 (83%)  | St. John the Evangelist Parish - Pittston.....       | \$52,063.00 / \$55,467.00 (94%)           |
| Immaculate Conception Parish - Williamsport.....    | \$5,585.00 / \$31,530.00 (18%)   | St. John Vianney Parish - Montdale.....              | \$21,920.00 / \$38,919.00 (56%)           |
| Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish - Dushore.....      | \$18,185.26 / \$40,293.00 (45%)  | St. Joseph Mareello Parish - Pittston.....           | \$24,894.00 / \$43,981.00 (57%)           |
| Mary, Mother of God Parish - Scranton.....          | \$42,736.00 / \$55,367.00 (77%)  | St. Joseph Parish - Matamoras.....                   | \$30,026.00 / \$24,484.00 (123%)          |
| Most Holy Trinity Parish - Cresco.....              | \$19,665.00 / \$49,463.00 (40%)  | St. Joseph the Worker Parish - Williamsport....      | \$55,135.00 / \$77,986.00 (71%)           |
| Most Holy Trinity Parish - Susquehanna.....         | \$16,219.77 / \$29,015.00 (56%)  | St. Jude Parish - Mountain Top.....                  | \$71,626.00 / \$118,992.00 (60%)          |
| Nativity of Our Lord Parish - Duryea.....           | \$27,830.00 / \$46,700.00 (60%)  | St. Katharine Drexel Parish - Pleasant Mount..       | \$9,475.00 / \$16,117.00 (59%)            |
| Nativity of the BVM Parish - Tunkhannock.....       | \$18,610.11 / \$40,268.00 (46%)  | St. Leo Parish - Ashley.....                         | \$14,267.00 / \$42,544.00 (34%)           |
| Our Lady Help of Christians Parish - Dorrance....   | \$18,440.00 / \$21,228.00 (87%)  | St. Luke Parish - Jersey Shore.....                  | \$6,855.00 / \$21,752.00 (32%)            |
| Our Lady of Hope Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....         | \$14,815.00 / \$36,590.00 (40%)  | St. Luke Parish - Stroudsburg.....                   | \$88,874.26 / \$98,591.00 (90%)           |
| Our Lady of Lourdes Parish - Montoursville.....     | \$24,843.00 / \$44,141.00 (56%)  | St. Maria Goretti Parish - Lafflin.....              | \$22,700.00 / \$42,853.00 (53%)           |
| Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Dunmore.....      | \$26,150.00 / \$57,899.00 (45%)  | St. Mary of the Lake Parish - Lake Winola.....       | \$10,451.00 / \$12,667.00 (83%)           |
| Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Lake Silkworth..  | \$10,220.00 / \$25,400.00 (40%)  | St. Mary Parish - Waymart.....                       | \$23,465.00 / \$17,295.00 (136%)          |
| Our Lady of Peace Parish - Hazleton.....            | \$19,868.00 / \$68,275.00 (29%)  | St. Matthew Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....             | \$62,635.40 / \$85,088.00 (74%)           |
| Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish - Wyalusing...    | \$4,390.00 / \$19,874.00 (22%)   | St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish - Pocono Pines....       | \$17,805.00 / \$35,107.00 (51%)           |
| Our Lady of the Abingtons Parish - Dalton.....      | \$7,282.00 / \$12,599.00 (58%)   | St. Michael Parish - Canton.....                     | \$13,520.00 / \$20,283.00 (67%)           |
| Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish - Pittston.....    | \$9,858.00 / \$23,111.00 (43%)   | St. Michael Parish - Scranton.....                   | \$3,485.00 / \$24,290.00 (14%)            |
| Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception - Freeland..  | \$10,762.00 / \$30,207.00 (36%)  | St. Monica Parish - West Wyoming.....                | \$17,195.00 / \$25,312.00 (68%)           |
| Our Lady of the Rosary Parish - Carbondale.....     | \$45,504.05 / \$80,387.00 (57%)  | St. Nicholas-St. Mary Parish - Wilkes-Barre....      | \$48,120.72 / \$104,316.00 (46%)          |
| Our Lady of the Snows Parish - Clarks Summit....    | \$42,412.00 / \$90,939.00 (47%)  | St. Patrick Parish - Milford.....                    | \$45,587.00 / \$22,402.00 (204%)          |
| Our Lady of Victory Parish - Harveys Lake.....      | \$18,004.00 / \$38,157.00 (47%)  | St. Patrick Parish - Nicholson.....                  | \$10,477.00 / \$13,543.00 (77%)           |
| Our Lady of Victory Parish - Tannersville.....      | \$43,380.00 / \$55,538.00 (78%)  | St. Patrick Parish - Scranton.....                   | \$18,801.00 / \$65,815.00 (29%)           |
| Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish - Brodheads ville..  | \$50,842.00 / \$83,638.00 (61%)  | St. Patrick Parish - White Haven.....                | \$2,415.00 / \$21,646.00 (11%)            |
| Prince of Peace Parish - Old Forge.....             | \$10,419.00 / \$28,214.00 (37%)  | St. Paul Parish - Scranton.....                      | \$29,367.00 / \$57,471.00 (51%)           |
| Queen of Angels Parish - Jessup.....                | \$10,455.00 / \$26,058.00 (40%)  | St. Peter Parish - Wellsboro.....                    | \$26,576.00 / \$36,284.00 (73%)           |
| Queen of the Apostles Parish - Avoca.....           | \$11,346.00 / \$12,567.00 (32%)  | St. Peter's Cathedral - Scranton.....                | \$76,405.00 / \$56,503.00 (135%)          |
| Resurrection Parish - Muncy.....                    | \$8,720.00 / \$42,304.00 (21%)   | St. Pius of Pietrelcina Parish - Hazleton.....       | \$20,442.00 / \$69,058 (30%)              |
| Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Dupont.....          | \$11,920.00 / \$33,534.00 (36%)  | St. Rita Parish - Gouldsboro.....                    | \$10,427.00 / \$12,461.00 (84%)           |
| Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Peckville.....       | \$49,355.11 / \$66,780.00 (74%)  | St. Robert Bellarmine Parish - Wilkes-Barre....      | \$20,535.00 / \$34,181.00 (60%)           |
| SS Anthony & Rocco Parish - Dunmore.....            | \$28,335.00 / \$54,163.00 (52%)  | St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish - Scranton.....        | \$34,018.00 / \$60,421.00 (56%)           |
| SS Cyril & Methodius Parish - Hazleton.....         | \$29,035.00 / \$43,903.00 (66%)  | St. Therese Parish - Shavertown.....                 | \$49,602.00 / \$76,497.00 (65%)           |
| SS Peter & Paul Parish - Plains.....                | \$40,206.00 / \$81,699.00 (49%)  | St. Thomas More Parish - Lake Ariel.....             | \$26,973.00 / \$51,125.00 (53%)           |
| SS Peter & Paul Parish - Towanda.....               | \$77,535.00 / \$28,799.00 (269%) | St. Thomas the Apostle Parish - Elkland.....         | \$8,830.00 / \$10,494.00 (84%)            |
| St. Andrew Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....               | \$4,990.00 / \$19,248.00 (25%)   | St. Vincent de Paul Parish - Milford.....            | \$16,865.00 / \$35,583.00 (47%)           |
| St. Ann Basilica Parish - Scranton.....             | \$22,663.00 / \$58,345.00 (39%)  | Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Dickson City | \$42,095.00 / \$50,772.00 (83%)           |
| St. Ann Parish - Shohola.....                       | \$12,884.00 / \$22,038.00 (58%)  |                                                      |                                           |
| St. Ann Parish - Williamsport.....                  | \$12,281.00 / \$49,149.00 (25%)  |                                                      |                                           |
| St. Boniface Parish - Williamsport.....             | \$45,655.00 / \$75,345.00 (61%)  |                                                      |                                           |
|                                                     |                                  | <b>TOTAL TO DATE (as of Nov. 15, 2025)</b>           | <b>\$2,927,848.87 / \$4,500,000 (65%)</b> |

# Catholic Social Services to operate City of Scranton's Code Blue Shelter

SCRANTON – The City of Scranton and Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton formally announced on Nov. 13 that CSS will staff and operate the city's Code Blue shelter at the Weston Field House for the 2025-2026 winter season.

The shelter, located at 982 Providence Road, opens on nights when the temperatures are expected to fall below 20 degrees or when winter conditions create dangerous windchills. Last winter, Scranton issued approximately 70 Code Blue alerts, with an average of about 15 individuals seeking shelter at Weston Field each night.

"We are proud to continue providing a Code Blue shelter here at Weston Field," Scranton Mayor Paige G. Cagnetti said. "The City and each of the partner organizations in our Unsheltered Task Force, which includes Catholic Social Services, remain committed to addressing the changing needs of those without stable housing in Scranton."

Catholic School Services has served individuals experiencing



**Joe Mahoney, CEO of Catholic Social Services, center, speaks during a press conference on Nov. 13, announcing his agency will operate the City of Scranton's Code Blue shelter this fall and winter at Weston Field House. (Photo/Eric Deabill)**

homelessness in Scranton for more than three decades through Saint Anthony's Haven, the city's only year-round emergency shelter for adults.

In 2024, Saint Anthony's Haven provided 5,567 nights of shelter to 549 individuals.

While the facility offers 20 beds for men and six for women, CSS officials noted that the additional space at Weston Field is essential on extremely cold nights.

"A shelter is one of our core programs. It is Gospel-based – this is what we do," Joe Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, explained. "We provide emergency shelter 365 nights a year at Saint Anthony's Haven, but on especially cold nights, we would need more room. Being able to house up to 50 (people) here will give us that space we need."

Mahoney emphasized the collaboration required to launch

the new partnership.

"Nothing happens in a vacuum," he said. "We were able to come together and get this done."

Representing the Diocese of Scranton, Father Gerald W. Shantillo, Vicar General, thanked the City and partner agencies for their cooperation.

"We are just so grateful that we could all work together to address this issue," Father Shantillo said. "We are going to do our best to let people who are vulnerable and in need know that we love them as a community, and we're going to help them get through the difficult times that they have."

Jessica Spangenberg, Program Supervisor for Saint Anthony's Haven, who will help organize the Code Blue shelter for Catholic Social Services, said the Weston Field location is well-suited for individuals who typically travel on foot.

"Most of our population is on foot. It's not far from Saint Anthony's Haven. It is also in a similar vicinity to the Community Intervention Center," she noted.

Code Blue guests will have access to restroom facilities, hot beverages, as well as meals prepared by Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen.

Spangenberg said volunteers will play a vital role in evening setup, morning cleanup, meal distribution, and laundry support. CSS personnel will oversee overnight staffing.

"We can use all the help we can get," Spangenberg said. "Nothing is too small. An hour or two of volunteer time makes a difference."

She also addressed common misconceptions about those experiencing homelessness.

"Anybody can be in this position. Most working-class people are one emergency, one crisis, one paycheck away," she said. "Shelter, warmth, and food are not luxuries. They are basic human rights, and it takes a community effort to provide them."

To volunteer to help with the Code Blue shelter, contact Spangenberg at JSpangenberg@cssdioceseofscranton.org or call (570) 342-1296, ext. 2715.

## Community support needed for 'Gifts for Kids' Program this Christmas

SCRANTON – Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton is once again hoping to make Christmas special for thousands of area children through its annual Gifts for Kids program.

The agency is currently seeking donations of toys and gifts to provide to children in Scranton, Carbondale, and Hazleton. Program coordinators say they are experiencing an increase in the number of families registered for assistance heading into the 2025 Christmas season.

In Carbondale, 280 children have already registered for the program – an increase of 10-15 children compared to last year.

"Our distribution is going to be on Tuesday, Dec. 9 for

registered families," Jolette Lyons, Catholic Social Services Director of Lackawanna County Offices, said. "Anyone who missed registration – including grandparents who might need something – we're having a second-chance giveaway on Dec. 10 from 8 a.m. to noon at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church."

In Carbondale, registered parents or guardians will have the opportunity to "shop" for their children, selecting one large gift, two smaller gifts, stocking stuffers, coats, hats, gloves, socks, puzzles, books, and games. All items are new and unwrapped to allow families a dignified and personalized shopping experience.

Dominique Draper, who

helps to coordinate the Christmas program in Carbondale, said it provides critical support to families already struggling with rising grocery costs.

"It's so easy to get down on yourself when you're going through hard times," she said. "Our mission is to make sure everybody who walks through these doors feels understood and welcome."

In Scranton, the Christmas Gifts for Kids program is conducted in partnership with Friends of the Poor and Catherine McAuley Center, ensuring a coordinated response to families in need.

Across all three locations, CSS is asking the public to help



restock its supply of toys and gifts. The community can donate in several ways:

- Amazon Wish Lists (Scan the QR Codes and the toys will be sent directly to CSS offices)
- Monetary Donations

• Toy Drives through local parishes or community groups

"The local community has already started donating," Lyons said. "Our local parishes, agencies and everyone is always so generous."



# Parish serves more than 14,000 meals each year to neighbors in need

EAST STROUDSBURG – On a recent Saturday afternoon, the smell of meatballs and sauce filled the air inside the church hall at Saint Matthew Parish. Conversation and laughter were also heard as people from all walks of life shared a meal together – neighbors, families, and even those experiencing homelessness.

With a similar scene playing out on every Thursday and Saturday – the importance of the parish's community meal is clear and more important than ever.

For some guests, the meals are a refuge from the streets. For others, they are a cure for loneliness or provide a way to stretch limited budgets as food prices rise.

"I'm 81 years old now, and I thought my life would be getting easier as I got older, but it's not," Irene Shields, a longtime East Stroudsburg resident who comes to the parish for meals each week, said. "Between the high rent and high food costs, there is no money left for anything."

Living only a block and a half away from the church, Shields feels loved and cared for by its parishioners.

"It is a great relief to just get out of the house sometimes and then to be fed, I don't have to cook, I don't have to clean," she said.

Saint Matthew Parish has offered a community meal for more than a decade, beginning with a single Saturday dinner, but since the COVID-19 pandemic, the program has expanded to three meals a week, serving more than 14,000 meals each year.

Guests can currently enjoy lunch and dinner on Saturday, as well as a Thursday evening meal.

For Charlie C., who once experienced homelessness, the meal program became a place of stability and even healing.

"In 2015, I lost somebody. She died and I lost my mind for a little while," he explained. "Being homeless around here, and having places like this to come, it is really great. You can stay here all day. It is really great to have."

Others, like Patty Hill of East Stroudsburg, relied on the meals as food assistance became harder to access at the beginning of November when SNAP benefit funding issues grabbed headlines.



**Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg opens the doors of its church hall for a community meal three times each week. Over the course of the last year, the parish has served 14,000 meals to members of the community. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

"We have to rely on the churches and the food pantries for food if we want to survive," she said.

At the heart of the ministry is Lisa Hoey, the parish's community meal director, and a team of volunteers who have led the program for years.

"The need for this program continues to grow within the community. It's not just about the homeless. It's about families, it's about the elderly. We see quite a mix here at Saint Matthew's and we're very blessed with every one of them," Hoey said.

On Saturdays, guests are invited to stay the whole afternoon in the church hall – to rest, share fellowship, and even watch a movie between meals.

"They're able to come in, drop their stuff and sit and socialize," she added. "They're not being chased out after they finish a cup of coffee."

Under Hoey's direction, teams of volunteers take turns preparing and serving meals each week. Some people cook or bake, while others simply spend time playing cards or talking to guests.

"It's an incredible group of people. They're very, very giving of their time and talent," she explained.

For Father Don Williams, pastor of Saint Matthew Parish, the community meal program is a direct expression of the Gospel in action.

"Nothing that we do upstairs in our beautiful church would make any sense unless we're connecting it with a life

of service," Father Don said. "Opening our doors to invite the homeless in and members of our community to serve the poor and those who are struggling really gives substance to the Eucharist that we celebrate."

Father Don said one of the most beautiful parts of the program is seeing both parishioners and those in need come together at the same tables.

"It is a blessing to the parish," he added. "It's messy and hard and it's not always perfect ... but everyone is treated with dignity. We welcome each other as Christ."

Father Brian J.T. Clarke, assistant pastor, added that at the end of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, we hear how God will look at each of us – whether we fed the hungry, clothed the naked and cared for those in need. He said the parishioners of Saint Matthew Parish consistently strive to do that.

"We recognize that times are tough for so many people economically and in their families," Father Clarke said. "We hope that everyone knows that they can find refuge, warmth, and a nutritious meal here."

## ***Knights of Columbus donate coats to children in the greater Hazleton area***



CONYNGHAM - The Knights of Columbus, Our Lady of Fatima Council 8613, of Saint John Bosco Church in Conyngham, and Good Shepherd Church in Drums, recently held a Coats for Kids Drive for the needy of the greater Hazleton area.

More than 80 new coats were donated by the Council.

Council members are currently collecting items for this year's Cross Catholic Outreach 'Box of Joy' program. This marks the sixth year that the Council has joined with Cross Catholic Outreach to bring smiles and hope to children who might otherwise go without a Christmas gift.

The Knights will also sponsor a holiday blood drive on Thursday, Dec. 11 in the Saint John Bosco gym. All are invited to make an appointment.

The Conyngham Council has been named a Star Council for the third year in a row. Men from the greater Hazleton area are welcome to become members. The Council meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. in Saint John Bosco Hall.



## 'Hope in the Body of Christ' unites faithful at Saint Jude Parish mission



**Father Stephen Robbins, Associate Vocation Director for the Diocese of Camden, N.J., incenses the Blessed Sacrament during a parish mission at St. Jude Parish on Oct. 27, 2025.**

MOUNTAIN TOP — Parishioners filled Saint Jude Church for three nights in late October as the Mountain Top community celebrated its annual parish mission in honor of its patron, Saint Jude, the patron saint of hope and impossible causes.

The three-night mission, held Oct. 26-28, centered on the theme "Hope in the Body of Christ" — echoing both the Church's ongoing Jubilee Year of Hope and the recent National Eucharistic Revival. Each evening focused on a unique aspect of that theme: "It is the Body of Christ," "You are the Body of Christ," and "We are the Body of Christ."

The opening Mass was celebrated by Father Tom Dzwonczyk, a newly ordained priest for the Diocese of Scranton who once served Saint Jude Parish as a seminarian and deacon. The second evening featured a Holy Hour with Adoration, music, confessions, and a talk by Father Stephen Robbins, Associate Vocation Director for the Diocese of Camden, N.J. The mission concluded on the Feast of Saint Jude, with Mass celebrated by Father Joe Evanko, pastor, followed by a parish potluck dinner.

"The mission continues the spirit of the Eucharistic Revival and reminds us that not only do we get to receive the Body of Christ — but we too get to participate in the Body of Christ as a community," Sean Savage, Director of Faith Formation, said. "Particularly coming out of COVID,

we've noticed that people come to Mass, but we lost that communal element of being together."

Attendees said the mission offered the opportunity for both spiritual renewal and community fellowship.

Mary Ann Wallace, a new parishioner of Saint Jude Parish, found the Monday night Adoration to be very moving with its music.

"It's just wonderful to see everybody turn out," Wallace stated. "We have three Masses at this church. We know everybody that goes to the 4 p.m. Mass on Saturday, but we don't know the people that come on Sunday, so it was a nice opportunity to meet other people."

Thomas Lavan, a parishioner of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish (Saint Mary's), agreed.

"I think it is a good way to get people together and that is what church is all about, community," Lavan said.

As Saint Jude Parish prepares for Advent, they are hoping that parishioners remain engaged.

"We want people to not just run out of church. We want them to be able to stay in our beautiful narthex, to be able to gather and commune together," Savage said. "That is the aim of this (mission), to remind people of 'who' they are receiving, 'who' they are becoming, and how 'we' should interact together as the Body of Christ."

## All Saints Day Mass celebrated at Bradford County parish



WYALUSING - On Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Bradford County was visited by several saints.

The children of the parish's CCD classes dressed as various saints and were introduced to parishioners during the homily.

The children were also invited to participate in Mass by serving as readers, altar servers, ushers, and gift bearers.

## Pike County parish dedicates memorial to unborn victims of abortion



MILFORD - The Knights of Columbus John Paul II Council 13935 and Our Lady of Guadalupe Assembly 2605 held an unveiling ceremony for a memorial dedicated to the unborn victims of abortion on Sunday, Oct. 27, at Saint Patrick Church in Milford.

The ceremony was officiated by Father Joseph Manarchuck and remarks were given by Antonio Perito, the Council Life Director.

Dignitaries from the Knights of Columbus Pennsylvania Central District were in attendance, along with the Pennsylvania State Council Executive Team.

Perito called on all people to remember the victims of abortion, have mercy on their mothers, and promote the Gospel of Life through support of local pregnancy resource centers. He also advocated for pro-life and pro-family policies, and encouraged people to be compassionate and understanding to mothers and families in need.

The night ended with a community dinner where Elvia Toombs, Director of Tri-State Family & Pregnancy Center, spoke to the group on the personal, familial, and community effects of abortion.



# North Scranton parish offers heartfelt gratitude to local veterans

SCRANTON – The faithful of Mary, Mother of God Parish gathered on Sunday, Nov. 9, for a special Mass honoring the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Patriotic touches throughout the 11 a.m. Mass celebration created a celebration not only rooted in faith – but also in gratitude.

While many parishes throughout the Diocese of Scranton commemorate Veterans Day with special liturgies, this community goes above and beyond, not only recognizing veterans during Mass but also reaching out with gifts, visits to the homebound, and a home-cooked meal for residents of the nearby Saint Francis Commons veterans facility.

“We have the freedom to worship, or not worship, because of those who sacrificed so much. They gave so much of their lives and many never came home. It is the least we can do. We’ll do this every year,” Father Cyril D. Edwards, pastor of Mary, Mother of God Parish, said. “It’s a way to teach patriotism, to teach gratitude in the context of worship. It was really beautiful. We had a huge crowd at the Mass.”

Before the liturgy began, there was a moving procession that featured eight



**Victoria Siess assisted her grandfather, Adam Ambrogio, with carrying a flag during a procession before a special Mass honoring veterans at Mary, Mother of God Parish on Nov. 9, 2025.**

parish veterans carrying flags representing each branch of the military.

Seeing one of the veterans, Adam Ambrogio, who was accompanied by his granddaughter, Victoria Siess, brought many in the crowd to tears.

“I was crying like a baby,” Donna Zupp, a member of the parish’s Service

and Coordinating Team, admitted. “Some of these gentlemen have been doing it for a couple of years. Sadly, we have had a couple who have done it that are no longer with us or weren’t able to carry the flag.”

Other parish veterans who participated in the procession were Larry Butler, Bob Jones, Vince Carden, Joe O’Connor, Mike Gavin, Jerry Walsh, and Joe Fadden.

In the pews, even the youngest parishioners joined in the celebration, waving small American flags.

“The service and community teams were looking for a special event that would have a powerful impact on all different ages. We owe our veterans an infinite amount of gratitude,” Father Edwards explained. “Seeing people crying as I walked down the aisle at the end of Mass, you can see that they were touched.”

Jerry Walsh, a parishioner and veteran of the Army Reserves’ Signal Corps 305, said he was “very honored” to participate.

“I really appreciated everybody that was in the church,” he said. “I know they were very pleased to see the flags and the way we presented them.”

The celebration didn’t end with Mass. Parish volunteers prepared gift bags for

local veterans who attended. They also delivered 20 bags to parish veterans who are homebound or in nursing homes. Each bag included a homemade scarf, a grocery store gift card, and chocolate – small tokens meant to remind recipients that their service is never forgotten.

At the back of the church, a “Table of Thanks” offered parishioners a chance to write messages of gratitude, which will remain on the altar throughout November.

“My son is a captain in the United States Army Reserves, so this is something that is very dear to my heart,” Jennifer Pitts, a parish volunteer who helped lead the committee that organized the event, said. “It was very emotional today. It was beautiful.”

The parish’s outreach also extends to Saint Francis Commons, a Scranton veterans’ facility operated by Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton.

While parish volunteers regularly visit the facility with coffee and donuts, the Marian Society of the parish prepared and served a “Thanksgiving-style” dinner there on Nov. 12 – one more way to express gratitude.

“It is a blessing to take care of them and to be able to honor them,” Zupp said.

## Young adults engage in Q&A with newly ordained priests at Theology on Tap

EXETER – More than 30 young adults from across the Diocese of Scranton gathered Thursday evening, Nov. 13, at Sabatini’s Bottle shop for the latest Theology on Tap session. Theology on Tap is a monthly series designed to offer young adults a place for faith, conversation, and community.

This month’s gathering took on special significance as it featured the Diocese’s two newly ordained priests, Father Thomas Dzwoneczyk, and Father Andrew McCarroll. Instead of offering traditional witness talks, the priests took part in an open question-and-answer session, inviting attendees to ask anything about their discernment, seminary formation, and life in ministry.

Bridget Guarnieri, who helps coordinate the Theology on Tap series, said the change in format was intended to spark more engagement.

“It gave us a chance to get to know

them better and gave them a chance to tell their story,” she said.

The approach worked. A wide variety of questions were asked and the candid responses surprised those in attendance.

“Hearing the challenges that they have to go through, like they said, their job is not just Sunday. It is every day. It’s midnight hours. I think tonight really opened up everybody’s eyes to what it is like to be a priest, and I think we gained a deeper respect for their vocation.”

The Theology on Tap sessions provide a chance for young adults to have drinks, eat pizza, and create a shared sense of community.

“I think community as Catholics is truly important,” Joseph Merolla, a parishioner of the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, said. “Social media claims to bring people together digitally, but in reality, I think it leads to isolation, so having events like this really give Catholics



**More than 30 young adults attended Theology on Tap on Nov. 13, 2025.**

a chance to connect with one another.”

Gina Morgese, a parishioner of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Carbondale, agreed.

“It is great to be around the energy of the young church and just be reminded that we are not alone,” she said. “I get to connect with people my age who are passionate about our Lord.”

For first-time attendee Lucas Popielski,

a parishioner of Saint Gregory Parish in Clarks Green, the night offered him a new perspective of the newly ordained priest he sees at his parish each week.

“It was nice to see the priest outside of the church, doing something a little different than what I’m used to seeing him do,” Popielski explained.

Theology on Tap sessions follow a college semester schedule, so there will be one more event this year.

The final session of 2025 will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11, and will feature Rob Williams, Executive Director of Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton. Williams will speak on the theme, “Christ no longer has a body but yours,” focusing on service and involvement in local ministries.

Attendees are invited to bring donations such as food items, gloves, and socks to support individuals in need during the winter months.

# Parishioners turn gratitude into action during '40 Days of Service' to honor pastor

KINGSTON – Parishioners of two parishes in Luzerne County recently came together in a unique way – participating in various service projects to honor the 40th anniversary of their pastor.

Between Sept. 15 – Oct. 24, the parishes of Saint Ignatius Loyola, Kingston, and Holy Family, Luzerne, held a '40 Days of Service' effort to recognize the 40th anniversary of Monsignor David L. Tressler.

The effort started with a simple idea, which led to conversations among parishioners, and eventually led to a joint committee being formed with people from both parishes.

“Our first committee meeting was in July, as this effort required the bulk of planning early on,” committee member Debbie Lyons said. “People responded very graciously knowing that this would honor Monsignor in a thoughtful and unique way.”

With no pressure on anyone to participate, parishioners were provided a list of 18 ideas and opportunities that they could consider – including planned service dates at Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre or the Weinberg Food Bank in Jenkins Township.

Individuals were also invited to perform any service project that was particularly meaningful to them.

Throughout the 40 days, countless acts of kindness were carried out – including daily prayers, rosaries, novenas – to honor Monsignor Tressler. People documented their plans and turned them in, so they could be shared with Monsignor Tressler.

“People obviously have great love and appreciation for their pastor, who has shown them his sincere pastoral approach either in their time of need or throughout daily life in the parishes,” Lyons explained. “I personally heard many stories of their gratitude and having a way to ‘give back’ in a unique way as parish communities.”

At the beginning of November, Monsignor Tressler published a page-long reflection in the parish bulletin, expressing his “profound humility and heartfelt gratitude” for all those who participated in the 40 Days of Service project.

“The response from our parish communities was overwhelming—a radiant testament to the generosity, compassion,



**These are just a small sample of photos from parishioners of Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish, Kingston, and Holy Family Parish, Luzerne, participating in a '40 Days of Service' effort to recognize the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Monsignor David L. Tressler.**

and deep faith that dwell within our hearts,” Monsignor Tressler wrote. “Your prayers, acts of kindness, and generous offerings of time, talent, and treasure reflect the living faith of our parishes.”

Some of the material generosity and service given to the community as part of the '40 Days of Service' project included:

- Donations to Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen, Holy Family Food Pantry, Weinberg Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, and Fork Over Love
- Collections of school supplies, backpacks, and books, along with monetary and book donations to the Hoyt Library supporting students and lifelong learners
- Contributions to the Butcher Scholarship Fund and sponsorships for religious education students ensuring that the light of faith continues to shine in the next generation
- Blood donations at Holy Redeemer High School
- 400 meals were donated through Fork Over Love to children at Head Start and the Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre to feed children in Msgr. Tressler's name
- Personal care items delivered to veterans at Saint Hedwig's Veterans Village, as well as other veterans in the local community
- Donations of money and gift cards which were provided to the parishes to assist those in greatest need in the community

Organizers of the '40 Days of Service' effort found that many parishioners of the two linked parishes were able to deepen their

relationships while serving side-by-side.

“New friendships were made, parishioners joined in and worked well together, people took ownership in many different ways, all with a common mission of service and love. The campaign to honor one special person became a vehicle for serving many others in our local community,” Lyons stated.

Because of the huge outpouring of love and support through this volunteer effort, parish leaders have already started conversations about how to keep the momentum going.

“Our ministries have always provided donations to those in need, and because

people felt so good going into the community to give their time and energy with this effort, our initial plan is to select one location to start, perhaps yearly. Both parishes would come together in service, youth and adults,” Lyons added.

Overwhelmed by the outpouring of love, Monsignor Tressler also encouraged parishioners to continue their gestures of mercy and love, which he called the “true heartbeat of our faith.”

“Each (act of kindness) – whether seen or unseen – has helped ensure that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ remains alive and active in our parishes,” Monsignor Tressler wrote.

## Gala to honor Passionist Father Rick Frechette

SCRANTON — “An Evening with Father Rick Frechette” is planned for late December to honor the renowned Passionist priest, well known for his ties to the Basilica of the National Shrine of Saint Ann in West Scranton and his humanitarian work in Haiti as a missionary priest-doctor.

The gala event will be held Saturday, Dec. 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Constantino's Catering, 1385 Lackawanna Trail, Clarks Summit. Tickets cost \$125 per person.

Over the years, faithful of the Scranton Diocese have come to know Passionist Father Rick Frechette as a popular guest preacher for the Annual Solemn Novena to Saint Ann, hosted each July by the Passionist religious community at Saint Ann Shrine Basilica.

Ordained for the Congregation of the

Passion in 1979, Father Rick soon began his work with the “Little Brothers and Little Sisters” international organizations, which established orphanages in Mexico, Central and South America, and Haiti.

Following several assignments throughout Central America, Father Rick began his philanthropic ministry in Haiti, where he founded an orphanage and has dedicated the last 35-plus years of his priestly service.

He also established the Saint Damien Hospital for children in Haiti.

Father Rick will celebrate the 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, Dec. 28, at the Basilica of Saint Ann.

For more information and reservations for the “Evening with Father Frechette,” contact Patty Rowland at (570) 840-9304.



# Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Scranton hosts dinner in Williamsport

WILLIAMSPORT - More than 20 people attended a dinner with the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, at the John Ryan Brewery in Williamsport recently.

Catholic Foundation board member Paul Rooney hosted the event.

The Bishop provided attendees with an overview of the Catholic Foundation and the goals for the next several years.

Executive Director for the Catholic Foundation, Mark DiPippa, shared information about the great wealth transfer that will happen in the next five years.

According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, more than \$418 billion is expected to transfer between generations across the Commonwealth by 2030.

Lycoming County has an estimated \$2.2 billion and Tioga County has an estimated \$510 million.

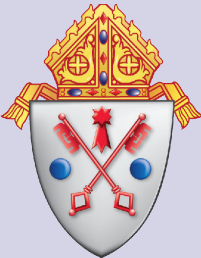


DiPippa shared that he would like to see parishioners and friends of the Diocese of Scranton commit to allocating at least five-percent of their wealth in their estate plans to the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Scranton.

To learn more about the Catholic Foundation, contact Mark DiPippa by phone/text at (570) 575-8813 or email MDipippa@catholicfoundationscranton.org.

## Notice to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Scranton

**Joseph Sudano**, formerly an incardinated deacon in the Diocese of Scranton, has been dispensed from the clerical state, effective September 15, 2025, and is no longer authorized to provide ministry to Catholics.



In 2024, Mr. Sudano chose to leave the Catholic Church and exercise ministry within the Episcopal Church.

Mr. Sudano remains prohibited from representing the Catholic Church in any capacity. Catholic members of the Christian Faithful are not to approach Mr. Sudano for diaconal ministry in any capacity.

## Aviso a los Fieles Cristianos de la Diócesis de Scranton

José Sudano, anteriormente diácono incardinado en la Diócesis de Scranton, ha sido dispensado del estado clerical, con efecto a partir del 15 de septiembre de 2025, y ya no está autorizado para ejercer ministerio alguno con los católicos.

En 2024, el Sr. Sudano decidió dejar la Iglesia Católica y ejercer el ministerio dentro de la Iglesia Episcopal.

El Sr. Sudano sigue teniendo prohibido representar a la Iglesia Católica en cualquier capacidad. Los miembros católicos de los fieles cristianos no deben acudir al Sr. Sudano para recibir ministerio diaconal en ninguna circunstancia.



## BISHOP BAMBERA'S SCHEDULE

- November 23** - Mass of Christ the King for Diaconate Retreat  
Saint Ann Monastery, Scranton, 11:15 a.m.
- November 25** - School Mass for Good Shepherd Academy  
Kingston, 9:00 a.m.
- November 26** - Family to Family Food Basket Blessing  
Scranton Cultural Center, Scranton, 7:45 a.m.
- November 29** - Diaconate Ordination Mass  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- November 30** - Mass for the First Sunday of Advent  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- December 1** - Advent Day of Reflection for Priests  
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Scranton, Noon
- December 3** - School Mass for Wyoming Area Catholic School  
Exeter, 9:00 a.m.
- December 4** - School Mass for Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School  
Dunmore, 9:00 a.m.
- December 7** - Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.
- December 9** - School Mass for Saint Jude School  
Mountain Top, 9:00 a.m.
- December 10** - School Mass for Our Lady of Peace School  
Clarks Green, 9:00 a.m.
- December 12** - Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass  
Saint Nicholas Church, Wilkes-Barre, 6:00 p.m.
- December 14** - Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass  
Saint Matthew Church, East Stroudsburg, 2:00 p.m.
- December 21** - Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- December 23** - Advent Mass for Chancery Staff  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- December 24** - Vigil Mass of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Eve)  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 4:00 p.m.
- December 25** - Midnight Mass of the Nativity of the Lord  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, Midnight
- December 25** - Mass of the Nativity of the Lord  
Gino Merli Center, Scranton, 9:30 a.m.
- December 28** - Closing Mass for the Jubilee Year of Hope  
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:15 p.m.



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



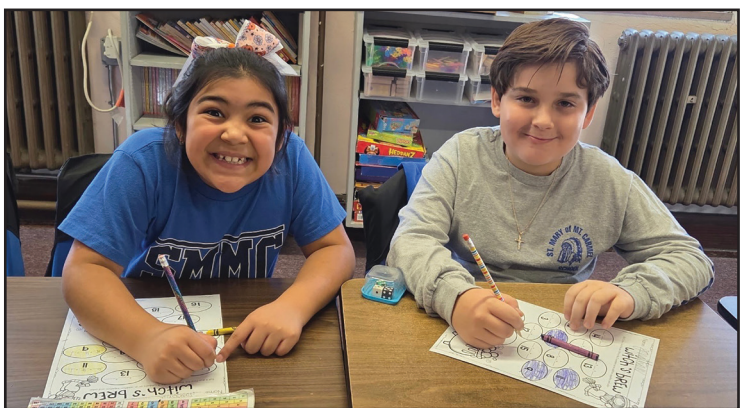
The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated Mass with the students and faculty at **All Saints Academy in Scranton**. In his homily, the Bishop reminded students that everyone can be a saint — just like teenager Saint Carlo Acutis. The first step is that we must love Jesus and then we must share His love and the gifts we have with others.



Students at **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** spent quality time in quiet prayer during the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with guidance from school chaplain, Father Brian J.T. Clarke.



First graders and their seventh grade buddies at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** created “Fall Into Kindness” wreaths. Older students helped their buddies write different ways we can spread kindness.



Fourth grade students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** remind all of us that math is fun! On “Fun Fact Friday,” students were practicing their multiplication facts by playing a variety of dice games such as Pop Its, Dominoes, and Tetra Tower.



In this season of giving, students at **Epiphany School in Sayre** lent a hand peeling apples to make homemade applesauce for the school-wide Thanksgiving lunch.



The winners of the Halloween coloring contest from **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton** proudly show their special artwork. Special thanks to the school cafeteria staff for sponsoring this contest!



The Kiwanis Club students at **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** have put together a Blessing Box for the local community. The Blessing Box, which was generously donated by the Klinefelter family, is a community-supported outdoor pantry filled with non-perishable food items, personal care products, and other essential supplies for those in need.



The National Junior Honor Society at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** sponsored a service venture in which every Falcon made a card of thanks and appreciation for a veteran. Connor and Joey, eighth grade Falcons and officers of the NJHS, personally delivered the cards to the Veterans Center.





The Key Club at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** hosted a “Howl-O-Ween” Party - a Halloween puppy social to raise funds and awareness for Blue Chip Animal Shelter. Pictured are Key Club president Reese Woytowich with her dog, Chloe, Officer Benson of the W-B Area Police Department, and Mrs. Cassandra Miller, Director of School Counseling, and her dog, Yupi.



Students at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** honored local military members, past and present, at their annual Veterans Day celebration.



Members of the junior class at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** show their spirit during the school's Halloween dress down day.



The fourth grade class at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** celebrated All Saints' Day with a very special Mass. In preparation, students researched various saints and wrote reports with a variety of saints represented from St. Cecelia to St. Francis of Assisi.



From painting sugar skull rocks in Spanish III to building La Ofrenda with the World Language Club, students from **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore** came together to celebrate and honor Día de los Muertos.



Karly Welgosh, Sophie Medico and Mia Morgan, fifth grade students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, along with their classmates had a “sweet” science lab where they created ice cream in a bag.



It's Turkey Time! Maila, Makayla, and Ivy, Kindergarten students at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport**, practiced writing their names while creating these cute turkey crafts.



The students and faculty of **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** were thrilled to welcome GSA alum Father Michael Boris for their All Saints' liturgy. Father Michael is a 2010 graduate of GSA and is also assistant pastor of Saint Ignatius and Holy Family Parishes. What a blessing!

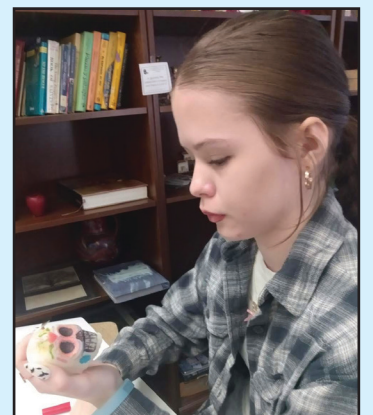


Students at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** show a small portion of their annual collection for Veterans' Promise, a local organization that supports former military members and their families.



Captain Anthony Williamson stopped by the primary campus at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** to speak to the PK and Kindergarten students in anticipation of Veterans Day. Williamson, who is a parent of one of the SCSP students and currently serves at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, taught the students how to correctly salute and explained why we celebrate Veterans Day each year.

Alison Crosby, a freshman at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport**, paints a candy skull in Spanish class as part of the school's All Souls Day celebration.





# Diocese of Scranton welcomes three new Echo Apprentices

SCRANTON – The Diocese of Scranton has welcomed three new Echo Apprentices as part of its ongoing collaboration with the University of Notre Dame.

Now entering its third cohort in the Diocese, this unique two-year program allows the graduate-level students to combine academic studies with actual parish-based ministry, helping to prepare the young adult Catholics for leadership roles in the church.

In August, Veronica Hill, Kim Berning, and Katie James all arrived in northeastern Pennsylvania from various parts of the country, bringing their faith and enthusiasm.

Each of the new Echo Apprentices will be working in a parish or ministry setting and will be mentored by local clergy.

## VERONICA HILL

**Placement:** *Saint John the Evangelist Parish, Pittston*  
**Hometown:** *Glendale, AZ*  
**Home Diocese:** *Tucson*

With a background in biology and biochemistry, Veronica Hill brings a scientific mind and a missionary heart to her ministry.

A graduate of the University of Arizona, Veronica has experience leading weekly Bible study programs and even spent last summer as a summer missionary in Philadelphia where she cultivated relationships with the homeless.

She was drawn to the Echo Program for its unique combination of theology coursework and hands-on parish experience.

"It is meaningful to listen and learn in the classroom," she shared, "but to have the opportunity to teach in schools and work in parishes as part of our formation takes this degree to the next level."



**In an ongoing collaboration with the University of Notre Dame, three new Echo Apprentices began working in parish and ministry settings in the Diocese of Scranton in August. They include, from left: Kim Berning, who is working with King's College Campus Ministry; Katie James, who is working at Christ the King Parish in Archbald; and Veronica Hill, who is working at Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Pittston. (Photo/Eric Deabill)**

At Saint John the Evangelist Parish, Veronica is eager to explore many facets of ministry – from senior outreach and religious education to social justice projects.

"The parish community has already made me feel so welcome and I cannot wait to see what the Lord has prepared for these next two years," she added.

## KIM BERNING

**Placement:** *King's College Campus Ministry, Wilkes-Barre*  
**Hometown:** *Lenexa, KS*  
**Home Diocese:** *Kansas City*

Kim Berning arrives in the Diocese of Scranton with a robust background in ministry, accounting, and leadership.

A graduate of Creighton University with degrees in accounting and management and a theology minor, Kim spent time with the Apostles of the Interior Life in Texas and Italy and has worked extensively with youth and family RCIA.

"I chose the Echo Program because it offers an opportunity for in-depth study and challenge, enabling Echo students to actively share what they learn," she said. "I believe this program prepares students for a career in ministry, but more importantly it prepares students to embrace the vocation of ministry."

At King's College, Kim is diving into a vibrant community of students and will be involved in guiding OCIA, leading retreats, assisting with liturgies, and mentoring through faith-sharing groups like Sisters in Faith.

"Working with college students is a unique experience that I'm enjoying," she said. "The King's community has been incredibly welcoming and it's exciting to join the campus ministry team as they move into a new space."

Though she's new to Pennsylvania, Kim is already making the most of it.

"I've loved exploring the culture, even taking a coal mining tour and discovering the area through hikes," she explained.

## KATIE JAMES

**Placement:** *Christ the King Parish, Archbald*  
**Hometown:** *Webster, MA*  
**Home Diocese:** *Worcester*

With a degree in computer science and a minor in mathematics from Champlain College in Vermont, Katie James is no stranger to logic and systems. But it is her heart for ministry and formation that led her to say "yes" to being an ECHO Apprentice.

"After serving as a Totus Tuus missionary – a Catholic summer catechetical youth program – I discovered a deep desire to grow in my knowledge of God through the study of theology," Katie explained. "Echo stood out to me because it combines rigorous theological study with hands-on ministry experience."

At Christ the King Parish in Archbald, Katie will be focused on catechesis, youth ministry, and family faith formation. She is particularly passionate about meeting people where they are and helping them to encounter Christ in daily life.

"I am incredibly excited to be serving at Christ the King Parish," Katie explained. "As an early admit to the Echo Program, I spent over a year waiting to receive my diocesan and parish placement. During that time, I prayed intentionally each day for my future community members, mentor, and parish ... I've already seen so many of those prayers beautifully answered."

Having driven past Scranton countless times on family road trips, Katie now finds herself happily settled in the very place she once simply passed by.

"It's a bit surreal," she joked. "I had no idea I'd one day get to call this place home!"

# Changing world calls for new commitment to Catholic schools, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Catholic education, which has changed over the centuries, must continue to evolve to help young people face the challenges not only of technology but of confusion about the meaning and purpose of life, Pope Leo XIV said.

"I call upon all educational institutions to inaugurate a new season that speaks to the hearts of the younger generations, reuniting knowledge and meaning, competence and responsibility, faith and life," he wrote in an apostolic letter.

Titled "Disegnare Nuove Mappe Di Speranza" ("Drawing New Maps of Hope"), the letter was issued only in Italian Oct. 28.

It marked the 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Catholic Education.

In the letter, Pope Leo formally declared St. John Henry Newman "patron of the church's educational mission alongside St. Thomas Aquinas."

The pope formally proclaimed St. Newman a "doctor of the church" Nov. 1 in recognition of his contribution to "the renewal of theology and to the understanding of the development of Christian doctrine."

Even in the face of the digital revolution and the advent of artificial intelligence, Pope Leo said, Catholic schools and universities show "a surprising resilience."

When they are "guided by the word of Christ, they do not retreat but press forward; they do not raise walls but build bridges. They respond creatively, opening new possibilities for the transmission of knowledge and meaning," he wrote.



# Hispanic Ministry Convocation focuses on creating Diocesan Ministry Plan

SCRANTON — Representatives from nearly a dozen parish communities across the Diocese of Scranton gathered on Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025, for a Hispanic Ministry Convocation that marked a key step in the process of creating a new Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry.

The Convocation, held at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Scranton, brought together parish leaders, pastors, and the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, to review months of consultation and discern concrete goals and action steps for the growing Hispanic community.

“The purpose of the Convocation is the last, final step in the consultative process for our Hispanic Ministry Pastoral Plan that we are working on,” Felix Martinez, Diocesan Director of Hispanic Ministry, said.

Over the last year, parish “consultative assemblies” have been held in each community where Hispanic ministry is present, allowing parishioners to identify their most pressing needs and priorities.

The consultations consistently highlighted themes such as spiritual growth, cultural integrity, family life, leadership development, and parish integration.

“We wanted to hear from them to see what are the most important objectives and needs of the Hispanic community,” Martinez added. “Most of the goals that were proposed, many agreed that they should be included in the pastoral plan. We’re really happy that we’ve made it to this point and are looking forward to the outcome.”

In between morning and afternoon work sessions, participants gathered for Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter. Bishop Bambera preached on the vital role that Hispanic Catholics play in the life of our local Church.



**Felix Martinez, Diocesan Director of Hispanic Ministry, addresses the Hispanic Ministry Convocation on Nov. 15, 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

Calling the gathering “a day of great pride,” the Bishop thanked participants for their “hard work and effort” in shaping the pastoral plan and emphasized that the Hispanic community is “a vital part of our Diocese.”

“The depth of your faith both encourages and challenges all believers,” he said in his homily.

The Bishop reflected on the Church’s long-standing commitment to migrants and, drawing on the recent Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi te of Pope Leo XIV, reminded attendees that migrants and refugees are “brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected, and loved.”

While addressing Convocation participants outside of Mass, Bishop Bambera highlighted a recently released special message on immigration from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“We rarely, as bishops, issue special messages,” he said, explaining that the last such statement was issued 13 years ago.

“We understand what so many of our brothers and sisters are going through in our land today,” Bishop Bambera said. “You need to know that we stand with you and for you.”

Throughout the day, parish representatives had conversation and discussion to assess proposed goals and identify practical steps that can better serve Hispanic Catholics and strengthen parish life.

For Evelyn Bodden of Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg,

the convocation was both informative and encouraging.

“The warmth and the love that they’re showing for the Hispanics was very impressive, very touching, and we’re all on board,” she said. “It has been a great day here. All the parishes together, getting to know all the deacons and priests. It is an amazing experience to see the love of Christ among us.”

Irene Rodriguez from Most Holy Trinity Parish, Cresco, said her discussions focused especially on children, catechesis, and better connections among parishes.

“We’re deciding what is best for our churches, for the sake of our children and the Hispanic community,” Rodriguez said. “We need the smaller parishes to come together, especially those that do not have Spanish speaking pastors or Mass. We need to have them come with us and keep us in communication.”

Martinez said the pastoral plan will incorporate the goals affirmed at the Convocation.

“The Pastoral Plan that we’re working on is very important,” he said.

Once finalized, the Hispanic Ministry Pastoral Plan will guide Diocesan and parish efforts to accompany Hispanic Catholics, foster greater integration in parish life, support families and youth, and promote leadership and service throughout the Diocese of Scranton.



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# Sisters of Christian Charity elect new general leadership

PADERBORN, GERMANY—The Sisters of Christian Charity (SCC) recently announced the election of Sister Mary Joseph Schultz, SCC, as the Congregation’s thirteenth Superior General.

The election took place during the 25th General Chapter, which was held from Aug. 25 to Sept. 14, 2025, in Paderborn, Germany.

Sister Mary Joseph was elected on Sept. 8, 2025, and will now lead the international Congregation – with Sisters in North America, South America and Germany – succeeding Sister Maria del Rosario Castro, SCC.

The role of the Superior General is to provide spiritual and administrative leadership to the Sisters of Christian Charity globally, continuing the mission of their foundress, Blessed Pauline von Mallinckrodt.

During her 53 years as a Sister of Christian Charity, Sister Mary Joseph has held roles in education, pastoral ministry and leadership.

A native of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Sister Mary Joseph earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from Felician University in Lodi, N.J.,



**Sr. Mary Joseph Schultz, SCC**

and a Master’s Degree in Pastoral Ministry, with a concentration in Youth Ministry, from Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J.

For seven years, Sister Mary Joseph served as the President of Assumption College for Sisters in Mendham (now in Denville), N.J. Her teaching career includes:

- Elementary Schools: St. Nicholas (Jersey City, NJ); St. Joseph (Mendham, NJ); Holy Family (Florham Park, NJ); St. Patrick (Chatham, NJ); St. Cecilia (Rockaway, NJ); and St. Mary (Pittston, PA).

- High Schools: Delone Catholic High School (McSherrystown, PA); Bishop Hoban High School (Wilkes-Barre,

PA); Central Catholic High School (Reading, PA); and Central Catholic High School (Allentown, PA).

Prior to her election as Councilor General from North America in 2019, Sister Mary Joseph served as a Pastoral Associate at Sts. Peter and Paul in Hoboken, N.J., and at the Church of Christ the King in New Vernon, N.J. She has also served at St. Paul Inside the Walls Center for Evangelization in Madison, N.J., and in Provincial Leadership in Mendham, N.J.

The General Chapter also elected new Councilors General on September 10, 2025: Sister Mary Amata Reifsnnyder, SCC, (succeeding Sister Mary Joseph as North American Councilor General), Sister Clara Schmiegel (Germany), and Sister Maria Adriana Mateos (South America).

Sister Mary Amata is a graduate of Bethlehem Catholic High School in Bethlehem, PA, and earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA.

A Sister of Christian Charity for thirteen years, Sister Mary Amata is a Registered Nurse, certified in Ambulatory Care, who has worked in various healthcare settings.

# Sister professes perpetual vows



**Members of the IHM Leadership Team with Sister Giovana at her final profession liturgy on Nov. 15, 2025, at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton. Pictured, from left: Sisters Terri Jordan, Kathryn Clauss, Judy O’Brien, Giovana Fuentes Bendivez, Susie Armbruster, and Grace Surdovel.**

SCRANTON - Sister Giovana Fuentes Bendivez, IHM, professed perpetual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience as a Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at a Eucharistic celebration on Nov. 15, 2025, at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

Sister Giovana is a native of Arequipa, Peru.

She served with the Sisters

of IHM in Sicuani, Peru, prior to joining the community in 2016.

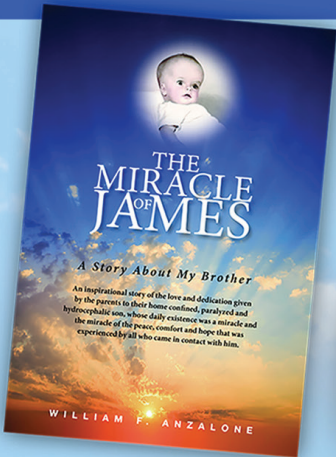
Sister Giovana is a trained psychologist and presently serves with the Association of Latin American Missionary Sisters, a network supporting and empowering Latina sisters in their ministry for the Church and society in the United States and is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas.

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# Retirement Fund for Religious Collection to be held Dec. 13-14

SCRANTON - The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) is announcing that the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held in parishes throughout the Diocese of Scranton on the weekend of Dec. 13-14.

In 2024, Catholics across the Diocese of Scranton contributed \$70,104.60 to the collection, mostly through their home parishes.

"The generosity of U.S. Catholics continues to make a profound difference in the lives of aging religious," John Knutsen, NRRO director, said. "This year, we invite all Catholics to help provide the care and dignity these women and men of faith so richly deserve."

Rising health-care costs and the absence of traditional retirement plans have placed

significant financial strain on many religious communities.

The Retirement Fund for Religious helps address this need, supporting more than 21,000 religious over the age of 70.

In 2024, the average annual cost of care was about \$56,600 per person, with skilled nursing care averaging \$96,000.

Since its establishment in 1988, the collection has raised over \$1 billion, with nearly \$900 million distributed for direct care and over \$103.7 million allocated to retirement planning projects.

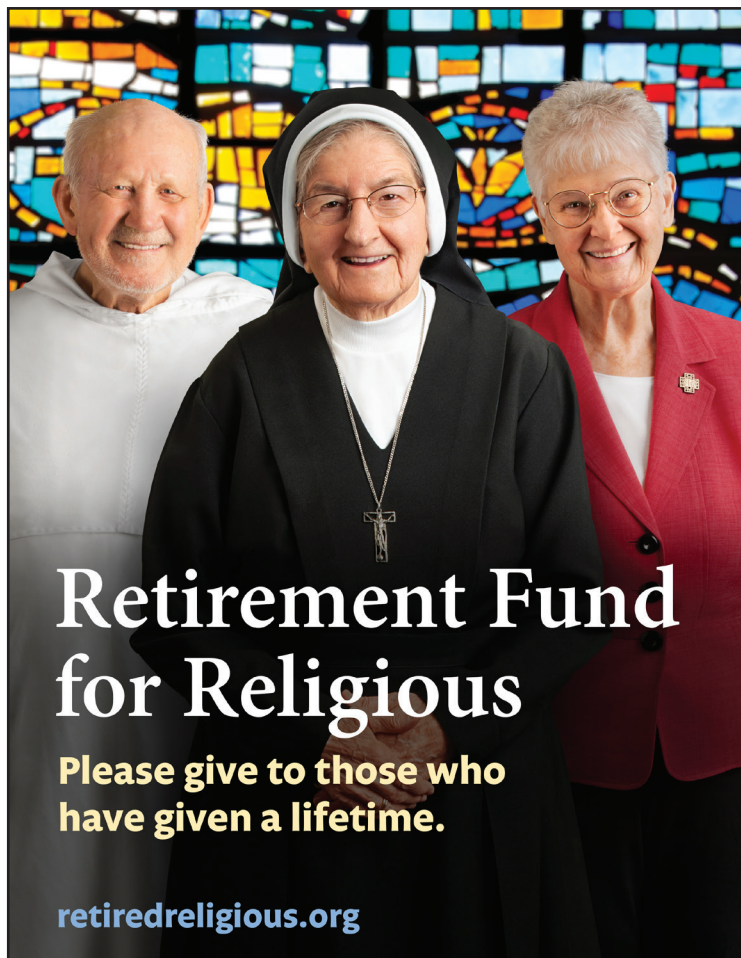
Since 2009, the annual total cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded \$1.1 billion.

In 2024, the appeal raised over \$28.1 million, providing

financial assistance for the retirement needs of 266 U.S. religious communities.

Beyond financial aid, the collection supports educational programs, empowering religious communities to plan for their long-term needs.

For more information on the collection, visit [retiredreligious.org](http://retiredreligious.org).



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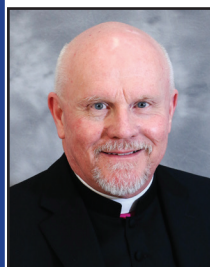
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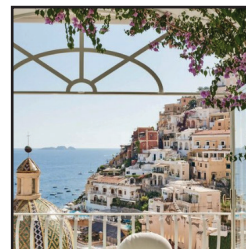
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## Lackawanna, Luzerne parishes collaborating for Advent service

Four regional Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Scranton are continuing their annual tradition of collaboration in presenting two devotional programs during the Advent season.

"Welcome the Light," an Advent service of word and song, will be presented at churches in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties during the Second Week of Advent. Both services are open to the public free of charge.

The performances mark the 16th year for the collaborative effort among the parishes in the two neighboring counties, which join together to enhance the joyful anticipation of Christmas.

The first service will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 6:30 p.m., hosted at Saint Anthony of Padua Church, 208 Smith St., Dunmore.

The second program will be presented on Thursday, Dec. 11, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Holy Family Church, 574 Bennett St., Luzerne.

Music for the Advent programs features a combined choir from Holy Family Parish, Luzerne, and Saint Ignatius Loyola Parish, Kingston; and the Dunmore parishes of Saints Anthony and Rocco and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as well as several soloists and an

instrumental ensemble.

The Directors of Music at the participating parishes are Linda Houck, Joseph Moffitt and Geri Seitzinger, respectively.

"Welcome the Light" offers an opportunity to embrace the season of Advent and its spirit of preparation for Christmas through Scripture readings and musical selections.

For more information about the upcoming Advent word & song events, contact the parish offices at Holy Family, Luzerne (570) 287-6600; Our Lady of Mount Carmel (570) 346-7429; or Saints Anthony and Rocco, Dunmore (570) 344-1209.

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## Parish to host 'National Night of Prayer for Life'

HUNLOCK CREEK — Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, 2011 State Route 29, Hunlock Creek, will serve as the host for a National Night of Prayer for Life, coinciding with the observance of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The four-hour devotion begins on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Monday, Dec. 8, at 9 p.m. and continues until 1 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 9, the Memorial of Saint Juan Diego, which commemorates the first apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Mexican peasant farmer in 1531.

### **Secular Carmelite Order gatherings**



PITSTON — During the late summer season, the Holy Annunciation Secular Carmelite Order welcomed two new fully professed members into the secular order, and ladies from the devotional community participated in a weekend retreat at Holy Family Renewal Center in Nanticoke.

The number of fully professed Holy Annunciation Secular Carmelites grew to eight, with the new members making their definitive (final) promise during the joyous ceremony, officiated by Father Scott Boghossian, pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Freeland.

Pictured in attendance in the top photo are, front row from left: MaryLou Potoskie, Mary Nesbitt, Father Boghossian, Kathy Stella and Gina Romancheck. Back row, from left: Carol Matz, Janet Corrigan, Nichole Tranguch, Michelle Shibler, Martin Sowa and Ryan McNulty.

"Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity and Silence" was the theme for the Secular Carmelite Order's September retreat in Nanticoke. Serving as spiritual assistant for the day was Father William Asinari, assistant pastor of Saint Jude Parish, Mountain Top.

Retreat participants shown in the bottom photo are, first row from left: Kathy Stella, Nichole Tranguch, Father Asinari and Gina Romancheck. Back row, from left: Janet Corrigan, Michelle Shibler, Carol Matz and MaryLou Potoskie. The Holy Annunciation Secular community gathers on the second Sunday of the month from noon to 4 p.m. All adult Catholics, 18 years and older, are welcome; for more information, call Gina Romancheck, OCDS moderator, at (570) 956-9272.

Observed to atone for the sin of abortion that claims the lives of thousands of children in the womb each year in the United States, the National Night of Prayer for Life service will include Eucharistic adoration, Rosary recitation, and

prayers of reparation and healing for our nation and the world.

For more information, call (570) 332-2963.



## *Apostleship of Prayer*

### Papal Intention for November 2025

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As we do always, and especially at this time of year, we reflect on our blessings and we offer all of you our sincere gratitude for helping us to carry forth our mission!



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Last month, I had the opportunity to visit Notre Dame Elementary and High Schools in East Stroudsburg for a Mission Mass.

Mission Masses are an opportunity for me to pray with our students for the missions, to remind them of their ability to help those less fortunate, and to thank them for the ways they support the Pontifical Mission Societies as Catholic school students.

After Mass, Father Brian J.T. Clarke, the school chaplain, and I visited some students in the elementary school's younger grades. In one of the classrooms — a Montessori class filled with pre-k and kindergarten — I had a conversation that stuck with me and really made me think.

Father Clarke asked the children, "What does it mean to

be poor?" There was silence. No one raised their hand. The children looked confused, unsure of how to answer. But when the question was switched to, "What does it mean to be rich?" the room came alive with ideas!

"It means you have lots of money!"... "You have a big house!"... "You can go to Disney World!" The answers continued, and they had no difficulty imagining what it's like to have more than enough.

I walked out of that classroom smiling, but also reflecting on their responses. These children weren't being rude or unaware; they simply didn't have a personal understanding of poverty. In some ways, that's a blessing for them.

This experience highlighted a larger truth for me: if we aren't careful, we can overlook the needs around us and forget how fortunate we are.

As Thanksgiving approaches, it's a good time to pause and appreciate the good things in our lives: faith, family, food, health, shelter, and peace. Not everyone is as fortunate. Many people struggle every day, and as members of the Body of Christ, we are called not only to be thankful but also to help those in need.

Poverty isn't just something we see on TV or hear about far away. It exists right in our own communities. In every town and parish, families are having a hard time putting food on the table, elderly individuals are choosing between buying medicine and paying bills, and children are going to bed hungry. Their struggles may

not always be visible, but they are very real.

And if we look beyond our borders, the situation can be even worse. In places where our Church provides support, such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America, many communities live without clean water, basic medical care, or even a nearby church where they can worship and gather. Our missionaries, whether they're priests, religious sisters or brothers, or lay volunteers, work in these areas under difficult conditions, providing not just spiritual support but also practical help and hope.

We can start by paying attention. Look around your parish community. Talk to people involved in local charities, such as Catholic Social Services or your parish and community food pantries. Ask your pastor where help is most needed.

Then, take action. Make an extra donation, drop off groceries, invite someone who might be alone to your Thanksgiving dinner, support missionary efforts, and pray for those in need. Teach your children and grandchildren about kindness through your actions and examples.

Thanksgiving should be more than just a holiday; it can be a way of life. True gratitude leads to compassion and caring for others.

Those children at Notre Dame Elementary may not yet understand what poverty means, but they know what it feels like to be rich. If we guide our young people well, they will learn that true wealth comes from sharing what we have — freely, joyfully, and often.

## MISSION MESSAGE

### What Does Rich Mean?: A Thanksgiving Challenge

**By Shannon Kowalski**  
**Diocesan Director,**  
**of Pontifical Mission Societies**





# World Mission Sunday showcases universality of Catholic Church

SCRANTON — In his more than 15 years as leader of the Diocese of Scranton, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, said he could not recall a local liturgy that more powerfully radiated the universality of the Catholic Church than the World Mission Sunday Mass celebrated on Oct. 19 at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

“I don’t think I have ever experienced a Mass in this Cathedral in all of my years as Bishop that has reminded us of the fact that our hands reach across oceans and countries to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord,” the Bishop said at the close of the liturgy. “May we continue to live in that spirit!”

The Mass, which drew a diverse crowd of religious sisters and lay faithful, featured both the Cathedral choir and a Congolese choir that sang in Swahili. Their voices highlighted the richness of the global Church – not just in song – but in shared mission.

While Bishop Bambera served as principal celebrant of the World Mission Sunday Mass, the homily was delivered by the Most Rev. Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi, Bishop of Sunyani, Ghana – a longtime friend of the Scranton Diocese.

He called on the faithful to rekindle their missionary spirit and recognize their shared role in the Church’s global mission.

“This task of evangelization to all corners of the earth was given, not only to the pope or bishops and religious, but to all of us,” Bishop Gyamfi said.

He also reminded those in attendance that the Church’s mission is far from complete.

“There are still vast areas of the world where people have never heard the name of Jesus,” he shared. “I come from one such area. There are still children growing up without a church to



**The Most Rev. Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi, Bishop of Sunyani, Ghana, blesses a young child following the World Mission Sunday Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Oct. 20, 2025. (Photo/Mike Melisky)**

worship in, a priest to baptize them, or a catechist to guide them.”

Bishop Gyamfi offered a powerful scriptural image from the first reading: Moses, whose arms were held up by Aaron and Hur, to ensure victory in battle. Likewise, he said, Bishops need their priests, and the Church needs every lay person, to sustain the mission.

“Working together, we win,” he said. “Each of us has a role to play.”

The impact of that shared mission is critically important for the Diocese of Sunyani.

In recent years, financial and spiritual support from Scranton has helped fund schools, health clinics, assisted with seminarian tuition, and assisted with chapel construction in some of the most remote corners of Ghana.

Bishop Gyamfi recalled how Bishop Bambera, on visits to Sunyani in 2022 and 2023, saw firsthand the impact of that support.

“On behalf of our priests, clergy, religious, and the lay faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Sunyani, I express my sincerest gratitude and profound appreciation for helping us,” Bishop Gyamfi added. “You may

never come there (Ghana), but your contributions go far and make an impact.”

There are currently eight priests from the Diocese of Sunyani serving as pastors, assistant pastors, or administrators in parishes throughout the Diocese of Scranton. These men are among more than 20 international priests currently serving locally.

As the celebration concluded, Bishop Bambera expressed his admiration for Bishop Gyamfi’s words and the profound reminder they offer.

“You are not only a dear friend and colleague to me, but your presence here reminds us of the great relationship that we have with the Diocese of Sunyani,” Bishop Bambera noted.

Shannon Kowalski, Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Diocese of Scranton, said people often think missionaries are elsewhere spread across the globe – but there are missionaries right here in Scranton.

“Today’s Mass was a vibrant illustration of what World Mission Sunday is meant to be,” she said.

Kowalski hopes people will be inspired by Bishop Gyamfi’s final words of challenge.

“The Lord calls us to go to the corners of the world,” Bishop Gyamfi said. “What have you been doing? What can you do?”

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### Notice Regarding Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor

It is the policy of the Diocese of Scranton to report any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement. If you are a victim of sexual abuse committed by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton, you are encouraged to immediately report the matter to law enforcement. If any priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton has cause or reason to suspect that a minor has been subjected to any form of abuse, including child sexual abuse, the matter will be reported to law enforcement.

It is also the policy of the Diocese to adhere to all civil and state regulations. To this end, the Diocese is equally committed to adhering to the norms of the *Code of Canon Law* and to upholding the tenets of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which includes supporting victims of sexual abuse in their pursuit of emotional and spiritual well-being. As such, information regarding an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor should also be reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mary Beth Pacuska at (570) 862-7551.

### Aviso al 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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November 13, 2025



## Prayer Requests for Priests

November 20, Father Philip Rayappan; November 21, Jesuit Father James Redington; November 22, Father Gregory Reichlen; November 23, Father August Ricciardi; November 24, Father Frederick Riegler; November 25, Jesuit Father Angelo Rizzo; November 26, Father Alex Roche; November 27, Monsignor Walter Rossi; November 28, Monsignor Dale Rupert; November 29, Holy Cross Father Brogan Ryan; November 30, Father Dominic Sabi; December 1, Pope Leo XIV; December 2, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; December 3, Father Arbogaste Satoun; December 4, Father Kenneth Seegar; December 5, Monsignor John Sempa; December 6, Father Gerald Shantillo, V.G.; December 7, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Joseph Sibilano; December 8, Monsignor Constantine Siconolfi; December 9, Father Shawn Simchock; December

10, Father Robert Simon; December 11, Father Andrew Sinnott; December 12, Father Joseph Sitko; December 13, Father Phillip Sladicka; December 14, Father Stephen Stavoy; December 15, Father Scott Sterowski; December 16, Jesuit Father Daniel Sweeney;

December 17, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Raymond Tabon; December 18, Father Philbert Takyi-Nketiah; December 19, Father John Terry; December 20, Father Fidel Ticona; December 21, Father Peter Tomczak; December 22, Jesuit Father Sean Toole.



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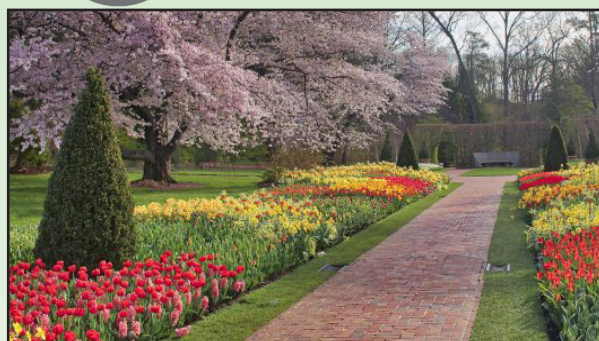
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## '40 Days for Life' Rosary gathering during Respect Life Month



Faithful of the Scranton Diocese gathered throughout the month of October for their 40-day pro-life vigil in the front of the offices of Planned Parenthood on Main St. in Wilkes-Barre. Rosary prayers were offered for the special intentions of an end to abortion and the closure of the Planned Parenthood location. The respect for life campaign, which takes place on weekday mornings at scheduled times throughout the year, draws attention to the evil of abortion through prayer & fasting, constant vigil, and community outreach.

## Knights' 'Tomb of the Unborn' marks anniversary

On Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 5, a prayerful commemoration marked the 29th anniversary of the Knights of Columbus "Tomb of the Unborn," located at the top of Mount Olivet Cemetery in Carverton. Father Tom Petro, chaplain of the Greater Pittston K of C Assembly 948, celebrated the Order for Visiting a Cemetery and led the praying of the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, joined by 30 faithful of the Scranton Diocese. Erected in 1996 by the Wyoming Valley Fourth Degree Knights, the Tomb was made possible primarily through the funding efforts of several area Knights of Columbus assemblies.



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## Catholic Happenings

**Parish Night at the Races** — NOV. 21, hosted by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore; parish fundraising event begins at 6 p.m. Race horses available for \$20 each; winners receive \$100. Race special: \$100 horse for a chance to win \$500 cash prize. Call Dean Homer at (570) 928-8932.

**Concert: "Countdown to Christmas"** — NOV. 23, hosted by St. John Bosco Parish in Conyngham; begins at 3 p.m. in St. John Bosco Church, 573 State Route 93, Sugarloaf. Featuring the Hazleton Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. Free admission.

**Family Advent Wreath Event** — NOV. 23, sponsored by St. Monica Parish in West Wyoming; Advent wreath-making program for family home devotion and decoration begins at 3 p.m. in the church hall. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Amy Tomsak, parish religious education coordinator, at (570) 693-1991.

**Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service** — NOV. 23, hosted by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore; held in conjunction with other area churches. Sunday ecumenical program for Thanksgiving holiday begins at 2 p.m. in St. Basil the Great Church, Dushore. All are welcome.

**LGBTQ Spiritual Support Group Gathering** — NOV. 23, sponsored by Mary, Mother of God

Parish in Scranton; support group meeting for the spiritual needs of LGBTQ community held at 2 p.m. in the former Holy Rosary School, 312 William St., North Scranton. Group plans to provide support & fellowship, including information on speakers and other community resources. All are welcome to attend; refreshments will be served. For more information, call (570) 342-4881.

**Weekly Pierogi Sale & Basket Raffle** — NOV. 23 & 26, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Church, 1309 West Locust St., West Scranton; pierogi sale and theme basket raffle held each week following the church's Sunday 11 a.m. Mass and Wednesday 9 a.m. Mass. Packages of homemade pierogi cost \$10 per dozen.

**Lessons & Carols Service** — NOV. 30, hosted by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore; presented by the parish music director, musicians, and vocalists. Holiday Lessons & Carols program begins at 2 p.m. in St. Basil the Great Church, Dushore.

**Venerable Father Patrick Peyton Monthly Rosary** — DEC. 3, hosted by the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton; Rosary devotion is held on the first Wednesday of each month following the 12:10 p.m. Mass at the Cathedral. Recitation of Rosary prayers is offered for the special intention

*Continued on Page 30*

## Apostleship of Prayer

Papal Intention for December 2025

**For Christians in Areas of Conflict** —

Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.

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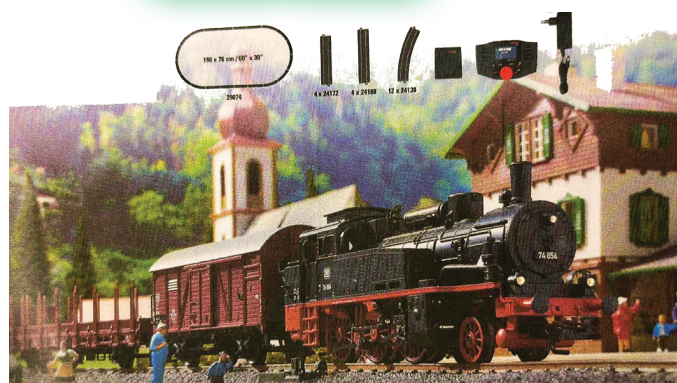
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## Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

Continued from Page 29

of furthering the cause for canonization of Venerable Father Patrick Peyton.

**Charismatic Mass & Prayer for Healing — DEC. 4**, sponsored by the Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal; Mass with healing prayer begins at 7 p.m. at Queen of Angels Parish church in Jessup. Guest celebrant: Father Tim Kennedy. All are welcome.

**Bilingual Advent Prayer Brunch — DEC. 6**, sponsored by the Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal; hosted at 10:30 a.m. at Queen of Apostles Parish Hall, Avoca. Guest speakers: Father Gus Ricciardi and Deacon Luis Rivera. Suggested donation: \$20. All are welcome.

**“Light Up for Christ” Tree Lighting — DEC. 6**, hosted by Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore; annual Christmas tree lighting program outside of St. Basil the Great Church, Dushore, follows the weekend 4 p.m. Vigil Mass. Event also includes caroling and snacks.

**Traditional Lithuanian Christmas Eve Dinner: “Kucios” — DEC. 6**, sponsored by Knights of Lithuania Council 143 in Pittston; begins at noon in the Monsignor Bendik Center, Church St., Pittston. “Kucios” dinner open

to all members and the general public. For more information/reservations, call Janet Palladino (570) 655-4761.

**Feast of St. Nicholas Celebration — DEC. 7**, hosted by the Slovak Heritage Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania; celebration begins at 2 p.m. in St. Ignatius Church at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish, 339 North Maple Ave., Kingston. The Sunday afternoon event features Slovak Christmas carols and sharing of Christmas memories & traditions, concluding with Slovak hospitality and refreshments. All are welcome; for more information, contact Anna Hudock at (570) 510-1655.

**One-Day Pilgrimage: “Shrines of Philadelphia” — DEC. 9**, sponsored by Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup; round-trip bus

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### ‘Living Mission Rosary’ offered in Jessup



Students in the Faith Formation Program at Queen of Angels Parish in Jessup are shown with their pastor, Father Gerard McGlone, during their “Living Mission Rosary” devotion to commemorate October as the Month of the Holy Rosary and in honor of Blessed Mother Mary as Our Lady of the Rosary.

### 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.

### Elder Law

- Guardianships
- Asset Protection Planning
- Medicaid Application Assistance

### Estate Administration

#### Probate :

Settle all estate matters and distribute inheritances.

#### Inheritance Tax :

Utilize all discounts and proper deductions.

Meet all requirements and deadlines.

- Powers of Attorney • Living Wills • Wills
- Trusts Guardianships • Asset Protection Planning
- Medicaid Application Assistance

### Estate Planning

- Powers of Attorney • Living Wills
- Wills • Trusts Guardianships



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# Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese of Scranton

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transportation with departure at 7:30 a.m. from Holy Ghost Church. Pilgrimage sites include: National Shrine of Saint Rita of Cascia; Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal; and the Philadelphia Christmas Markets. Excursion also includes celebration of Mass, Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, private prayer time, guided shrine tours, shopping & fellowship. Cost: \$60 (bus ticket only). For reservations & information, call (570) 489-2353.

**Christmas Cookie Walk** — **DEC. 13**, sponsored by St. Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church in Old Forge; 10 a.m. to noon at the parish hall, 317 Charles St., Old Forge. Homemade cookie varieties include wedding cookies, ricotta, thumbprint, pepper, chocolate chip, peanut butter kisses, nug rugalach, and more. Cost: \$12 per pound. No pre-orders accepted.

**14th Annual Christmas Cookie Walk** — **DEC. 13**, hosted by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, 420 Main Road, Hanover Twp.; held from 10 a.m. to noon. Cost: \$10 for container of 20 cookies; \$40, large platter (80 cookies); and \$55, extra-large platter (120 cookies). Complimentary coffee, tea and cocoa provided. All orders must be placed by Dec. 3; call (570) 814-6444 or visit: [www.exhc.org](http://www.exhc.org).

## 'Eucharist' exhibit in need of new guardianship

Gloria Calabro, custodian of the International Eucharistic Miracle Exhibition in the Diocese, is seeking new caretakers for the display.

Anyone interested in assuming the duties of guardianship may contact Gloria at (570) 479-1175.

**Catholic Youth Center (CYC) Toyland Bingo** — **DEC. 14**, benefitting the childcare programs at the Wyoming Valley CYC, 36 S. Washington St., Wilkes-Barre; doors open at the CYC at noon and games begin at 1 p.m. Featuring four special prizes: New York City Toy Shopping Trip, Nintendo Switch 2, E-Bike, and Giant Lego Set. Event includes food for purchase, cash & basket raffles, and entertainment by DJ Rob Sax. Cost: \$25 (in advance), \$30 (at door); includes three cards/20 regular games. Limited seating. For advance tickets, contact the CYC or Mary Stec at: [mstec@cycwb.org](mailto:mstec@cycwb.org).

**Monthly Meeting of the Lay Carmelites** — **DEC. 20**, hosted by Our Lady of the Mountains Lay Carmelite Community on the third Saturday of each month; gatherings are held from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary/Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin. For more information, contact Chris at (570) 239-8094.

**Byzantine Church Christmas Bazaar** — **DEC. 20 & 21**, hosted by Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup; held in Holy Ghost Hall at La Salle Academy, 309 First Ave., Jessup. Begins with Christmas Cookie Walk (Saturday) from 10 a.m. until sold out; includes Themed Basket Raffle (Saturday) at 1 p.m. Also features Olive Wood Carvers from the Holy Land (Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 8:45 a.m. to noon); purchase exquisite olive wood carvings and icons handcrafted in Bethlehem, in support of Christian families in the Holy Land.

**St. Joseph Fraternity of Third Order Secular Franciscans** — **DEC. 21**, Lay Franciscan Canonical Order meets on the third Sunday of each month;

meetings hosted from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary/Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin. All interested men, women and visitors are welcome. For more information, contact Michele at (570) 807-7996.

**Twelve Days of Christmas Cash Raffle** — **DEC. 25-JAN. 5**, sponsored by Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish in Hanover Twp.; cash prizes drawn daily on Facebook. Each ticket costs \$20 for chance to win \$10,500 in cash prizes. For more information & tickets, call (570) 823-6242 or visit: [www.exhc.org](http://www.exhc.org).

**2026 Three-Month Lottery Cash Raffle** — **JAN. 1-MARCH 31**, sponsored by Gate of Heaven Parish, 40 Machell Ave., Dallas; lottery cash raffle tickets cost \$20 each, covering the first three months of 2026 (January thru March). Winners determined by exact match of the PA Lottery nightly (7 p.m.) drawing of the Pick 3 number. Winning payouts: Monday-Friday, \$35; Saturday, \$50; and Sunday, \$75. Bonus prizes: New Year's Day (Jan. 1),

\$100; Valentine's Day (Feb. 14), \$100; and St. Patrick's Day (March 17), \$100. Tickets available at the Gate of Heaven Church weekend Masses or by calling the parish office (570) 675-2121.

**"Nazareth Group" Days for High School Girls** — **JAN. 17**, hosted by the Capuchin Sisters of Nazareth in Tunkhannock and Williamsport; Saturday programs are presented by the Nazareth Group. 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. Day's program fosters faith, friendship, and increased love of Jesus through prayer and talks. 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.



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Contact: Mark DiPippa, Executive Director  
Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Scranton  
300 Wyoming Ave, Scranton, PA 18503

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## The Catholic Light

**MAILING LABEL - Please be sure to enclose this label with any address changes and mail to The Catholic Light, 330 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503**

### Registration open for Bold and Beloved Retreat

SCRANTON - Registration has opened for the Bold and Beloved Women's Retreat which will be held on Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2026.

This year's retreat will feature keynote speaker Annette Bergeon, CEO of Endow Ministries. Endow is an apostolate built on the belief that the deepest transformation of heart and mind a woman can experience is through intimate relationships in a small group format.

This retreat is designed for all adult women. It will take place



**DIOCESE OF SCRANTON** Office for Parish Life

## Bold and Beloved

Women's Retreat

*Inspired by the teaching of St. Hildegard of Bingen*

**January 30-February 1, 2026**

For more information, call (570) 207-2213 x1100

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

Register at [dioceseofscranton.org](http://dioceseofscranton.org)

**EARLY BIRD SPECIAL**  
through  
**DECEMBER 5TH!!!**

\*Registration closes January 16, 2026\*

Annette Bergeon  
Keynote Speaker

Michael Corsini  
Worship Leader

at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center in Dalton. available through Dec. 5.

For more information or to

Early bird registration is register, visit [dioceseofscranton.org](http://dioceseofscranton.org).

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