



The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

December 18, 2025

"God is Here, Everywhere"
Bishop Bambera's 2025 Christmas Message



Dear Friends in Christ,

In words echoed by Saint Matthew in his account of the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah sets the stage for God's redemptive plan:

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.”

On January 6, 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, will conclude the great Jubilee Year of Hope by closing the Holy Door in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome. In Catholic tradition, the Holy Door represents the passage to salvation – the entryway to God’s mercy which was opened to humanity by the incarnation of Jesus – the ultimate and supreme act by which He comes to meet people. Traditionally, Popes have closed the Holy Door as they proclaimed, “Deus qui in omni loco” (“God is here, everywhere”).

These words, which reflect those of Isaiah and Matthew, are the essence of the mystery of faith that we embrace as Christians and the heart of all that we celebrate during Advent and Christmas. They are both the foundation for our hope as believers in Christ and the motivating force of discipleship: “God is here, everywhere.”

In his homily for the First Sunday of Advent, Pope Leo reflected on the reality of God’s abiding presence in our lives, upon the hope that is ours through the incarnation and the responsibility incumbent upon all believers to live in the spirit of Christ’s redemptive love.

The Holy Father said, “The fruits of God’s action in our lives are a gift not only for us, but for everyone ... serving as a reminder that the joy of goodness is contagious ... We find in them an invitation to renew the power of our own witness of faith. Saint John Chrysostom spoke of the allure of holiness as a sign more eloquent than many miracles. He said: ‘The miracle happens and passes, but the Christian life remains and continually edifies ... Let us therefore watch over ourselves, so that we may also benefit others.’”

The Holy Father concluded, “If we truly want to help the people we meet, let us keep watch over ourselves by cultivating our faith with prayer and with the sacraments, living it consistently in

charity, and casting off works of darkness and putting on the armor of light.”

Sadly, however, while we are quick to embrace the hope that we are given through the birth of Jesus, we are often reluctant to heed his invitation to authentic discipleship. We fail to make as our own the message of salvation proclaimed throughout the ages by the life, love, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus. We’re reluctant to heed Jesus’ invitation to walk in his footsteps. We wonder why we are unsettled and peace in our lives, our homes and our world seem so elusive. We question why God can’t provide us with a way out of suffering and pain in Ukraine, in the Middle East, in Nigeria, at our borders, in the lives of our immigrant sisters and brothers, in our neighborhoods, in our families and in our hearts. And we miss the treasure that has been given to each of us through faith.

My friends, for all the upheaval that we confront in our lives, the good news and blessing of Christmas is that “God is here, everywhere.” He has already provided us a way forward with hope if we are wise and humble enough to trust in his presence, to embrace the message of salvation born in Bethlehem, and to walk with him as faithful disciples, making the pattern of his life our own for the sake of a broken world.

During these cherished days, may we give thanks for countless numbers of blessings. May we pray for peace in our world and in our hearts. And may we open our lives to the grace and mercy of God won for us through the child named Emmanuel – God with us!

With gratitude for the privilege of serving as your Bishop and with prayers for a holy and blessed Christmas for you, your family and all you hold dear, I am

Faithfully yours in Christ,

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

[Click Here to Read and Share Bishop Bambera's Christmas Message from the Diocese of Scranton Website](#)

Parish Mass Times for Christmas available on Diocesan website

Celebrate Christmas!

Parish Mass Times for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
can all be found online at dioceseofscranton.org



This Christmas, you are encouraged to invite your friends and neighbors into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

One of the best ways to begin - is to invite them to celebrate Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Masses with you.

The Diocese of Scranton Communications Office has compiled a full listing of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Mass times for all 103 parishes across the Diocese of Scranton.

Feel free to share this information and encourage everyone to "Come Home for Christmas!"

[Click Here for the Full Listing of Christmas Mass Times Across the Diocese of Scranton](#)

Catholic Television Christmas Mass broadcast schedule

Catholic Television Christmas Schedule

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

5:30 p.m.

Live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

5:00 p.m.

Live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Evening Prayer

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00 p.m.

Live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, Bishop Bambera celebrates the Vigil Mass for the Nativity of the Lord

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

6:00 p.m. (Rebroadcast on Thursday at 4:00 a.m.)

Pope Leo XIV presides over the Christmas Midnight Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

10:00 p.m.

Choral Meditations & Mass of Christmas Eve from Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

6:00 a.m. (Rebroadcast at 3:00 p.m. & 11:30 p.m.)

Live from St. Peter's Square, Pope Leo XIV gives the Christmas "Urbi Et Orbi" message and blessing

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

10:00 a.m. (Rebroadcast at 5:00 p.m.)

Live from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, Mass for the Nativity of the Lord on Christmas Day

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

Noon

Solemn Mass of Christmas from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC

Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton will be broadcasting numerous Masses to help the sick and homebound celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord.

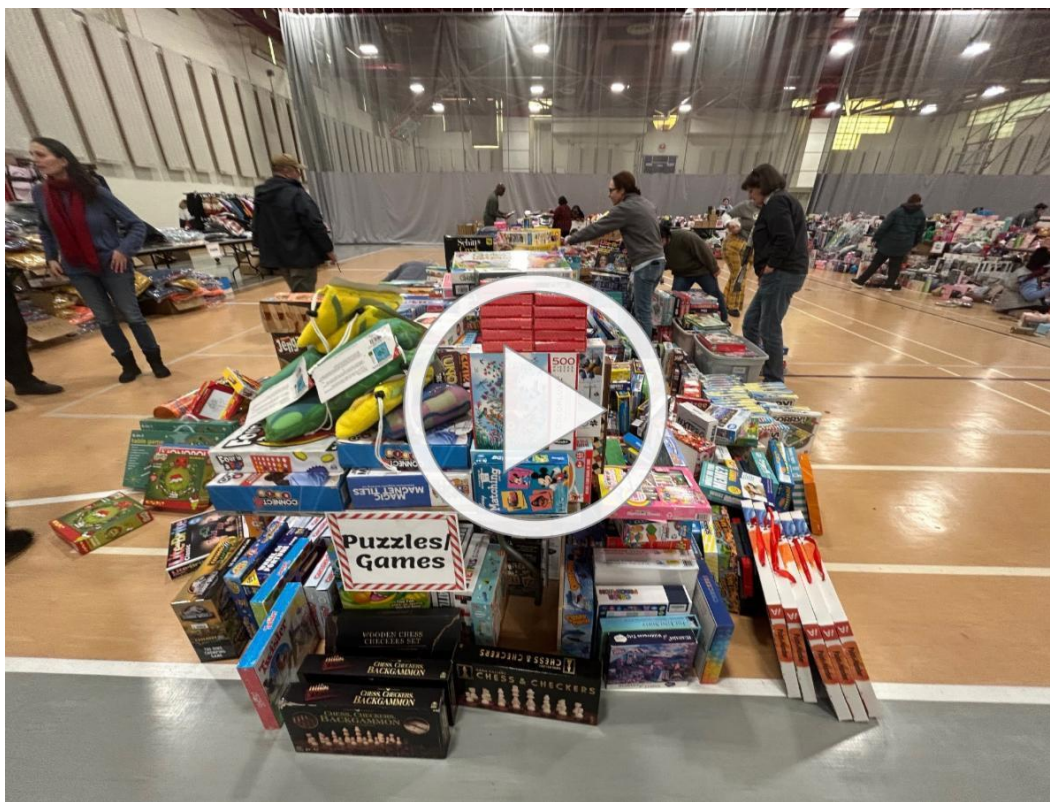
On Christmas Eve, Wednesday, Dec. 24, Bishop Bambera will celebrate the Vigil Mass for the Nativity of Our Lord from the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. This Mass will be televised live. At 6 p.m. on the same day, you're invited to join us as Pope Leo XIV presides over the Christmas Midnight Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.

On Christmas Day, the 10:00 a.m. Mass from the Cathedral of Saint Peter will also be broadcast live.

For the full schedule, click on the link below.

[Click Here to See the Full Catholic Television Broadcast Schedule](#)

Catholic Social Services, partners help distribute toys for 5,000 kids in Scranton



SCRANTON - Through the continued partnership of Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton and the Friends of the Poor and Catherine McAuley Center, roughly 5,000 children in

the greater Scranton area will wake up with presents under the tree on Christmas morning.

On Tuesday, Dec. 16 and Wednesday, Dec. 17, the organizations hosted their annual 'Gifts for Kids' distribution at The University of Scranton.

Pre-registered families were invited to shop for toys for their children at the event - which takes hundreds of volunteers to put together each year. The gifts are all donated by parishes, schools, individuals and businesses throughout the community.

[Click Here to Watch a Video from Catholic Television from the 2025 Gifts for Kids Toy Distribution](#)

Christmas creche, tree are signs of hope, Pope Leo XIV says



The Nativity scene and the Christmas tree are signs of faith and hope, Pope Leo XIV said.

“As we contemplate them in our homes, parishes and town squares, let us ask the Lord to renew in us the gift of peace and fraternity,” he said, calling for prayers for all those who suffer because of war and violence. “We must eliminate hatred from our hearts.”

The pope was speaking Dec. 15 during a meeting with the government representatives, artisans and donors responsible for providing the Christmas decorations in the Paul VI Audience Hall and in St. Peter’s Square.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Catholic News Service](#)

Wreaths Across America ceremony honors veterans at Cathedral Cemetery



Despite cold temperatures, dozens of people gathered at Cathedral Cemetery on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, for an annual event to honor the men and women who served our nation and now rest there.

Families, volunteers, and area veterans all participated in the 2025 Wreaths Across America ceremony this year.

“This is a magnificent event,” Mary Alice Fenwick, location coordinator for the Cathedral Cemetery’s Wreaths Across America event, said. “This is our fifth year doing the event here. We are blessed to be able to try to pay tribute to the men and women who gave everything for us.”

The Fenwick family has helped to coordinate the Wreaths Across America effort each year at Cathedral Cemetery. Mary Alice Fenwick, along with her daughter Megan and granddaughter Molly.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from The Catholic Light](#)

Parishes across the Diocese of Scranton honor Our Lady of Guadalupe



The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated widely across the Diocese of Scranton this month, as parishes gathered to honor the Blessed Mother under her title as Patroness of the Americas.

Observed annually on Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe commemorates the appearances of the Blessed Mother to Juan Diego in 1531.

Her image, miraculously imprinted on the tilma of Juan Diego, became a powerful sign of God's love and mercy, leading to the spread of the Gospel throughout the Americas.

Nearly 500 years later, her message continues to inspire prayer, unity, and hope.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from The Catholic Light](#)

Pope accepts resignation of Cardinal Dolan; names Bishop Hicks of Joliet, Ill., as successor



In one of the most anticipated U.S. episcopal appointments of his pontificate so far, Pope Leo XIV has accepted the resignation of Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and named as his successor Bishop Ronald A. Hicks of Joliet, Illinois.

The resignation and appointment were announced by the Vatican on Dec. 18.

Cardinal Dolan was named archbishop of New York by Pope Benedict XVI on Feb. 23, 2009, and three years later Pope Benedict elevated him to the College of Cardinals.

On Feb. 6, he turned 75, the age at which canon law requires bishops to submit their resignation to the pope.

Cardinal Dolan previously served as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and has held several national leadership roles, including chair of the USCCB's pro-life and religious liberty committees. He served as chairman of Catholic Relief Services, and currently serves as a member of the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches and the Dicastery for Evangelization.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Our Sunday Visitor](#)

'Enough' of antisemitic violence, say Pope, Archbishop after Australia attack



After two gunmen targeted Jewish beachgoers at an event celebrating the first day of Hanukkah in a terror attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Pope Leo XIV said he is "deeply saddened" by the attack he called "horrific."

In a Dec. 15 telegram signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the pope said he is praying for those recovering and those grieving “the loss of a loved one,” hoping that “those tempted to violence will undergo conversion and seek the path of peace and solidarity.”

“Enough with these forms of antisemitic violence!” Pope Leo said earlier on Dec. 15, speaking with the groups that donated this year’s Vatican Christmas tree and Nativity scene. “We must eliminate hatred from our hearts,” he highlighted.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Our Sunday Visitor](#)

Mass shooting at Brown University a tragedy that strikes at heart of Providence community



The violence that erupted at the Brown University's campus Dec. 13 was more than a national headline; it was a deeply personal tragedy that struck at the heart of the Providence community.

The Saturday shooting at the Ivy League University, which claimed the lives of two students, Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov and Ella Cook, and injured nine others, prompted a response from Providence Bishop Bruce A. Lewandowski, who offered prayers for all affected by this tragedy.

The violence unfolded just after 4 p.m. during the university's final exam period in the Barus and Holley building, which houses the School of Engineering and the Physics Department. As of Dec. 17, the police were still looking for the suspected shooter, and two victims had been discharged from the hospital. Seven remained hospitalized, with six patients in stable condition and one in critical condition but stable.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Our Sunday Visitor](#)

YOUR GIFTS MATTER
Support the 2025 Catholic Ministries
Appeal!

***“They shall name him
Emmanuel”***



**On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, help bring
Christ's presence to others through the Catholic
Ministries Appeal!**

Support the 2025 Appeal at AnnualAppeal.org

[Click Here to Learn More about or Donate to the 2025 Catholic
Ministries Appeal](https://AnnualAppeal.org)

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