



The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

January 15, 2026

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins Sunday

For Pope Leo XIV, Christian unity is not just an ideal, but an imperative



As the Catholic Church prepares to join Christians around the world in commemorating the 2026 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the theme chosen also reflects Pope Leo XIV's hope of unified humanity in an increasingly individualistic world.

"There is one body and one Spirit," drawn from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, is the theme.

Unity is “more than simply an ideal,” but a “divine mandate at the core of our Christian identity,” according to resource materials for the week published by the Vatican.

“It represents the essence of the Church’s calling - a call to reflect the harmonious oneness of our life in Christ amidst our diversity,” the materials stated. “This divine unity is central to our mission and is sustained by the profound love of Jesus Christ, who has set before us a unified purpose.”

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Ecumenical Prayer Service to be held Jan. 22 at Cathedral of Saint Peter

THERE IS
ONE BODY
AND
ONE SPIRIT,
JUST AS YOU ARE CALLED TO THE
ONE HOPE
OF YOUR CALLING

EPHESIANS 4:4

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2026

Ecumenical Celebration of God's Word

Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026

12:10 p.m.

Cathedral of Saint Peter, 315 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton

The Diocese of Scranton will once again mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an Ecumenical Celebration of God's Word, which will be held on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, at 12:10 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

Christians of all denominations are warmly invited to attend this prayerful gathering, which reflects the Church's ongoing commitment to unity among all followers of Jesus Christ.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as leader of prayer for the traditional ecumenical prayer service. Bishop Bambera is currently serving his final year as Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

The guest preacher for this year's prayer service will be Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, Regional Conference Minister, Penn Central Conference, United Church of Christ.

The Ecumenical Prayer Service will be broadcast live at 12:10 p.m. on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. It will also be made available on the Diocese of Scranton website, YouTube channel, and across all Diocesan social media platforms.

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Legacy of faith endures as Saint Adalbert Church celebrates final Mass



The pews of Saint Adalbert Church in Glen Lyon were filled one final time on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026, as approximately 350 faithful gathered at 2 p.m. for a Closing Mass for the affectionately-known “Church on the Hill.”

The Mass was celebrated by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, with Father James E. McGahagan, a native son of the community and longtime priest of the Diocese of Scranton, serving as homilist.

Throughout the liturgy, the voices of the Holy Spirit Parish choir echoed through the ornate interior built by hard-working Polish immigrants who sacrificed to establish a spiritual home for their community.

While the occasion was marked by sadness, the tone of the celebration consistently pointed toward gratitude, faith, and hope – themes echoed throughout the homily and remarks from Bishop Bambera.

“It is a bittersweet day – no doubt,” Bishop Bambera said following Communion. “But thank you for filling this church as it should be, to give honor and praise to God and thanksgiving for the blessing that this sacred space has been to so many of you.”

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A Calling in Color: Local artist using God-given talents to support the Catholic Foundation



From the window of the room where Austin Burke paints, he can see the spire of Saint Thomas Aquinas Church in Archbald, his home parish and spiritual anchor.

The view is not lost on him as he spends many mornings carefully sketching, mixing colors, and patiently bringing to life some of the most sacred and iconic church buildings across the Diocese of Scranton – one brushstroke at a time.

For nearly the past year, Burke has been quietly undertaking a remarkable act of stewardship.

The retired community leader has committed himself to painting Catholic churches throughout the Diocese, donating every completed work to benefit the Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Scranton.

More than a dozen churches have already been captured on canvas, representing communities from Dunmore, Stroudsburg, Williamsport, Wilkes-Barre to Scranton, with more to come.

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**Rectory, Set, Cook! will return for
its fifth season next month**



One of the Diocese of Scranton's most popular and creative fundraisers is returning for a milestone season, as Rector, Set, Cook! will launch its fifth annual competition next month – with the hopes of surpassing \$1 million raised since its inception.

The 2026 Rector, Set, Cook! campaign will officially kick off on Tuesday, Feb. 17, and continue through 4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 27, inviting everyone across northeastern and north central Pennsylvania to support priests-turned-“pastor chefs” as they cook – and compete – for a good cause.

Half of all funds raised through Rector, Set, Cook! benefit Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton, specifically supporting hunger and homelessness initiatives, while the remaining half goes directly to the participating priest's parish.

The new season will begin with a Launch Party on Tuesday, Feb. 17, from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Scranton. The 21-and-over event will feature food from local restaurants, musical entertainment from some of the pastor chefs, and a collaborative beer brewed by Breaker Brewing Company in partnership with Father Brian Van Fossen. Admission is \$20 at the door.

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Diocese to host National Marriage Week 'Swing Dance' on Feb. 7

NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK

Swing Dance

Feb
7th

Featuring
LIVE!
SWING FEVER DANCE BAND
With

Full Big
Band
17-Piece & Vocalists

DANCE INSTRUCTION FROM PHILIP SPINKA & JILL WETZEL



***MUST BE 18+ TO ATTEND**

Saturday, Feb 7th, 2026 * Diocesan Pastoral Center

**\$20 in Advance
\$25 at the Door**

330 Wyoming Ave, Scranton

**To Purchase your Tickets:
Visit dioceseofscranton.org**

or call

(570) 207-2213 ext 1133

**\$10 - ADVANCE TABLE RESERVATION OPTION
8 Seats/Table**

*** 4:00PM - 8:00PM ***

SWING DANCE INSTRUCTION 4-5PM

OPEN DANCE FROM 5-8PM

BRING YOUR OWN FOOD & DRINK!



In celebration of the vocation of marriage and National Marriage Week (Feb. 7-14), the Diocese of Scranton is hosting a Swing Dance on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Scranton.

The Swing Dance, which will take place in the Pastoral Center Auditorium, will feature the Swing Fever Dance Band from Limekiln, Pa., a 17-piece traditional Big Band, and swing dance instruction from local instructors, Philip Spinka and Jill Wetzel.

All people over the age of 18 are welcome to join us from 4 – 5 p.m. for the dance instruction from our local instructors and then enjoy open dance from 5 – 8 p.m.

Tickets to attend will be \$20 per person in advance, and \$25 at the door.

[Click Here for More Information on the Swing Dance or to Register for the Feb. 7 event](#)

Host-for-a-Day campaign supports mission to serve people in need



As many people continue to experience food insecurity, Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton has begun the 48th annual

Host-for-a-Day campaign to support its mission of feeding and clothing individuals and families in need.

For a donation of \$100 or more, an individual, family, business, community organization or faith-based group can help to fund a day's meal. Major sponsorship levels are also available starting at \$500.

In effect, each contributor becomes a "host" for a day. Contributors may then select a date on which they or someone they designate or memorialize will be recognized as helping to provide that meal.

Financial contributions to the Kitchen also help to fund other programs such as a Client-Choice Food Pantry and Free Clothing Store and weekly meals at parish locations and high-rise housing buildings in Carbondale and Olyphant, and also weekly meals at parish sites in Roaring Brook Township and Archbald.

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USCCB President exhorts faithful to heed MLK's call to be a 'drum major for justice'



Marking the Jan. 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, urged Catholics to reflect on how they are called to be "drum majors for justice" in their own communities. He drew on the slain Civil Rights leader's words and the Church's Gospel mission from Jesus Christ in a Jan. 13 statement released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Coakley reflected on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 sermon, "The Drum Major Instinct," and challenged the faithful to consider how leadership rooted in service and humility can shape efforts for justice, peace and righteousness today.

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**March for Life 2026 challenges
abortion with message 'Life is a Gift'**



CTV/EWTN
MARCH FOR LIFE COVERAGE

THURSDAY, JAN. 22
5:00 P.M.: OPENING MASS OF THE NATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL

FRIDAY, JAN. 23
8:00 A.M.: CLOSING MASS OF THE NATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL
9:30 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.: MARCH FOR LIFE COVERAGE
3:00 P.M.: LIFE FEST MASS

**Cathedral of Saint Peter Mass to broadcast at
5 p.m. and 7 p.m. only**

The 2026 national March for Life promises to bring tens of thousands of pro-life Americans to the nation's capital to celebrate the beauty of every human person, born and unborn, with the theme "Life Is a Gift."

"'Life is a Gift' is a universal message that speaks to the heart and cuts through the noise," Jennie Bradley Lichter, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund, told OSV News in emailed comments about the 53rd annual March for Life in Washington Jan. 23. "It invites our marchers to join the spirit of joy and celebration that is the March for Life — a spirit inspired by the inherent goodness and beauty of life itself."

She added: "Through this theme, we are showing the world that we are a movement of compassion for women and love for unborn children, united by the simple yet world-changing belief that, no matter the circumstances, every single life is a gift."

Every year, the national March for Life, which calls itself the "largest annual human rights demonstration in the world," takes place on or around the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which once legalized abortion nationwide. This year's event marks the fourth march since the

high court overturned Roe with the 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision.

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Pope delivers fierce defense of the unborn in address to Diplomatic Corps



Pope Leo XIV strongly defended the family, marriage and unborn life during his first-ever New Year's address to the diplomatic corps Jan. 9, telling the diplomats accredited to the Holy See that abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."

“The vocation to love and to life,” he continued, “manifests itself in an important way in the exclusive and indissoluble union between a woman and a man.”

“The institution of the family faces two crucial challenges today,” the pope said, naming “a worrying tendency in the international system to neglect and underestimate its fundamental social role, leading to its progressive institutional marginalization,” and “the growing and painful reality of fragile, broken and suffering families, afflicted by internal difficulties and disturbing phenomena, including domestic violence.”

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Diocese of Scranton
300 Wyoming Avenue,
Scranton, PA 18503-1279
(570) 207-2238

www.dioceseofscranton.org