



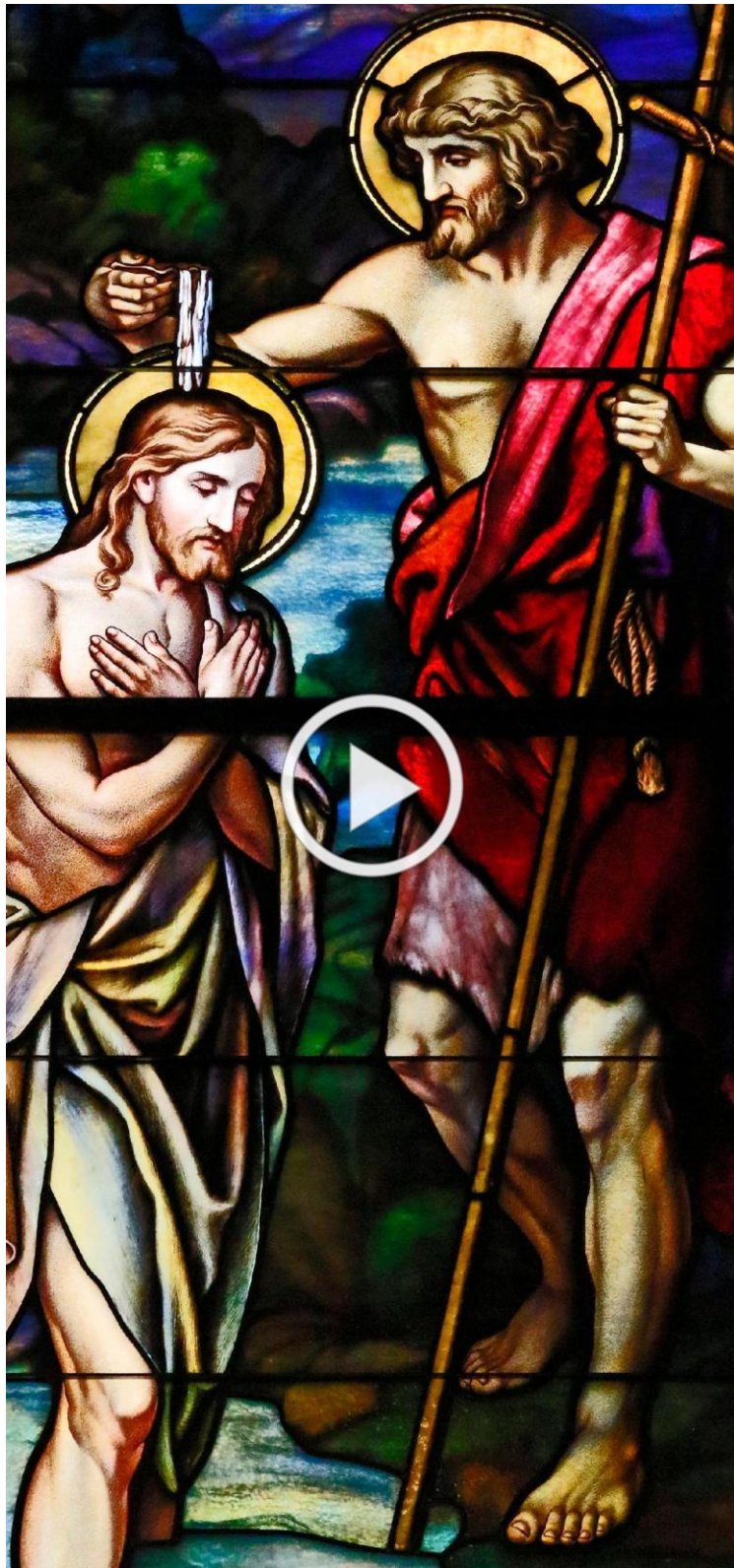
The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

January 8, 2026

**Bishop Bambera's reflection for
the Baptism of the Lord**



And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

This Sunday, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which brings the Christmas season to a close.

The Feast commemorates Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, marking the beginning of His public ministry and revealing Him as the beloved Son of the Father.

In a video reflection for this weekend, Bishop Bambera reflects on the fact that this Feast Day should be an important reminder to all those who have been baptized into the Body of Christ.

"Just as His Baptism is the threshold into Jesus' public ministry, so too does our baptism initiate us into the mission of Christ to welcome the outcast, to care for the sick, and to proclaim the good news of our faith," Bishop Bambera explained.

As the liturgical season of Christmas concludes, the Bishop challenged all of us to reflect more deeply on the meaning of our own baptism.

[Click Here to Watch and Share Bishop Bambera's Video Reflection from the Diocese of Scranton YouTube Channel](#)

**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.

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

**Reverend Connell A. McHugh
(1946-2026)**



REMEMBERING

Reverend Connell A. McHugh

PASTOR EMERITUS, GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, DRUMS
SACRAMENTAL MINISTER, HOLY ROSARY PARISH, HAZLETON

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light
shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful
departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

A Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for Rev. Connell A. McHugh, Pastor Emeritus of Good Shepherd Parish, Drums, and Sacramental Minister of Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton, on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, at Holy Rosary Parish, 240 South Poplar Street, Hazleton.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will be the principal celebrant of the 10:00 a.m. funeral Mass.

Father McHugh died on Jan. 4 after faithfully serving the Diocese of Scranton for 54 years.

[Click Here to Read the Obituary of Rev. Connell A. McHugh](#)

Diocesan Tribunal restructures to better serve divorced and Spanish-speaking Catholics



As the Jubilee Year of Hope drew to a close, the Diocese of Scranton has placed renewed emphasis on one of its quiet, but critical, ministries – the Diocesan Tribunal.

Often working without fanfare or attention, the Tribunal assists the Bishop in matters of canon law related to marriage – including declarations of nullity (commonly known as annulments), dispensations, and permissions that help couples prepare for the sacrament of matrimony.

Father Thomas J. Petro, J.V., J.C.L., the newly appointed Judicial Vicar, said a series of significant reforms and new staff appointments aims to make the Tribunal “more accessible, more pastoral, and more responsive to the needs of the People of God.”

Father Petro said the changes respond not only to pastoral realities in parishes but also to themes raised repeatedly during Synod on Synodality listening sessions – particularly the desire for greater accompaniment for those who are divorced, those who feel distant from the Church, and newly arrived Spanish-speaking Catholics.

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

**The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage
is back in 2026 - with a patriotic
twist**



The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is back for 2026 with a special route that will travel the East Coast from St. Augustine, Florida, to Portland, Maine, ending in Philadelphia, organizers announced Jan. 8.

The pilgrimage – the third of its kind – will begin in May on Memorial Day weekend and end July 5. This year’s pilgrimage celebrates America’s 250th anniversary with the theme “One Nation Under God,” and its route incorporates key sites in the history of the country and its Catholics.

Organizers described the pilgrimage as “a nationwide call to renewal, unity and mission rooted in the Eucharist.”

In a Jan. 8 media release announcing the route, organizers noted that 2026 marked the 75th anniversary of the lobbying campaign, led by the Knights of Columbus, to add the phrase “One nation under God” to the nation’s Pledge of Allegiance.

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

'I am here to listen' Pope Leo tells Cardinals at start of consistory



With 170 red hats present in Vatican City, the extraordinary consistory of cardinals started at 3:30 p.m. Rome time with *Veni Creator Spiritus* sounding in the Synod Hall inside the Vatican City walls. They later moved to round tables in the Paul VI Audience Hall, where the cardinals held group discussions.

In opening remarks, Pope Leo XIV met the cardinals with one crucial message: “I am here to listen.”

“As we learned during the two Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops of 2023 and 2024, the synodal dynamic implies a listening par excellence,” the pope told the cardinals. “Every moment of this kind is an opportunity to deepen our shared appreciation for synodality.”

Calling the meeting “highly significant,” and voicing expectations that the gathering will be one of the defining moments of his papacy, the pope said. “This day and a half together will point the way for our path ahead. We must not arrive at a text, but continue a conversation that will help me in serving the mission of the entire Church,” he said.

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Pope Leo calls on Catholics to rediscover Vatican II teachings



The teachings of the Second Vatican Council are still “the guiding star” the Catholic Church is meant to follow, Pope Leo XIV said.

Rereading all of its teachings “is a valuable opportunity to rediscover the beauty and the importance of this ecclesial event,”

he said Jan. 7, and because its work remains “a guiding principle for us today.”

“We have yet to achieve ecclesial reform more fully in a ministerial sense and, in the face of today’s challenges, we are called to continue to be vigilant interpreters of the signs of the times, joyful proclaimers of the Gospel, courageous witnesses of justice and peace,” he said.

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

Archbishop Hebda calls for prayers after woman shot dead by ICE officer in Minneapolis



Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda is continuing his call for prayers after police said a woman was pronounced dead following a shooting involving a federal agent in Minneapolis Jan. 7.

“Following this morning’s deadly shooting in Minneapolis, I reiterate my plea for all people of good will to join me in prayer for the person who was killed, for their loved ones, and for our community,” Archbishop Hebda, head of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, said in a statement following the incident, referring back to his request for prayers on Dec. 23 as immigration enforcement efforts in the Twin Cities drew concerns from some about attending Christmas Masses.

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As Maduro faces New York trial, uncertainty lingers for Venezuelan migrants



As deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro made his first appearance Jan. 5 in a New York courtroom on narco-terrorism charges after the Trump administration carried out what President Donald Trump called on social media “a large scale strike against Venezuela,” uncertainty about immigration status lingered for some Venezuelan migrants in the U.S.

Astrid Liden, communications officer for the Hope Border Institute, a group that works to apply the perspective of Catholic social teaching in policy and practice to the U.S.-Mexico border region, and a Venezuelan-American, told OSV News, “In recent years, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans have sought protection in the United States, many passing through the US-Mexico border. Millions of Venezuelans live abroad due to the situation in Venezuela, and we share their hope in the end of the reign of Maduro, whose rule led to the displacement of so many.”

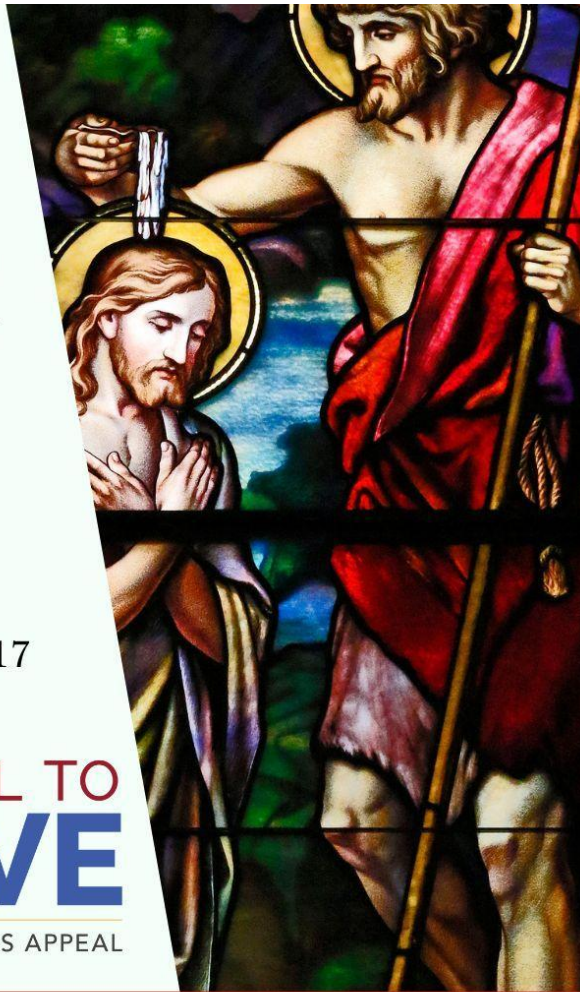
However, she added, “The recent end of TPS for Venezuelans by the Trump administration sets a very dangerous precedent and puts hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans at risk.”

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

**As the Baptism of the Lord
approaches, donate to the Catholic
Ministries Appeal**

***“This is my
beloved Son,
with whom I
am well
pleased.”***

Matthew 3:17



As the Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord, we are reminded that baptism is not only a moment in the past, but a lifelong call to discipleship and service. The Catholic Ministries Appeal is a powerful way to unite our gifts to support ministries that serve the poor and care for the sick.

Make a gift today at AnnualAppeal.org

The Catholic Ministries Appeal is one of the most meaningful ways we can live out our baptismal promise as part of a Diocesan family.

Through the Appeal, we unite our gifts to support ministries that no one parish could sustain alone - caring for our retired priests, forming future clergy, assisting those struggling with poverty, providing pastoral care in hospitals and prisons, and strengthening faith formation across the Diocese of Scranton.

[Click Here to Donate to the Catholic Ministries Appeal](#)

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