



The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

March 19, 2026

312 people from Diocese of Scranton expected to enter the Catholic Church this Easter



Due to the threat of an impending winter storm, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, cancelled the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion traditionally held at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on the First Sunday of Lent.

With the announcement, Bishop Bambera directed that the ceremonies for those seeking full communion in the Catholic Church this year be celebrated in local parishes that weekend, if possible, or during the Second Sunday of Lent weekend.

“I’ve asked our Pastors to celebrate this cherished ritual within your parishes,” the Bishop related in the preface of a prepared text of his homily meant to be delivered in person in the venerable Scranton Cathedral on Feb. 22. “While disappointed, we all have much for which to be grateful as we pray for the well over three hundred catechumens and candidates from parishes throughout our eleven counties who have answered the Lord’s call to discipleship.”

As Bishop Bambera indicated, the 2026 Rite of Election numbers are most impressive.

The 137 catechumens — those who have never been baptized in the Christian faith — and 175 candidates — baptized Christians who desire full communion in the Church through Eucharist and Confirmation — outnumber by more than 100 the 207 catechumens and candidates from last year’s Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion.

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The Risen Lord brings hope in a time of fear and suffering

Bishop Bambera's 2026 Easter Message



“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.”

Dear Friends,

These words from Saint Matthew’s Gospel that will be proclaimed during the great Vigil of Easter, confronted the first followers of

Jesus on the very day of his resurrection and boldly affirmed God's promise to save his people.

Yet despite such powerful words of faith that we read in the scriptures and proclaim whenever we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist, the reality of life at times can consume us with grief, pain and fear. These days are no exception.

Once again, we approach Holy Week and Easter with our world engulfed by war and suffering – in Iran, throughout the Middle East, for four years in Ukraine, and in far too many places to name around the world. At this very hour, men and women in our armed forces are in harm's way as they seek to secure a more peaceful existence for all. Right here, in our own land, immigrants who have become our neighbors and friends, fear for their well-being as their hopes for a better life for themselves and their families are dashed. Antisemitism has once again raised its ugly head. And amid such upheaval and pain, we have our own stories to tell of the crosses that we carry – crosses made of grief and loss, illness, addiction, loneliness and sin...

[Click Here to Read Bishop Bambara's Full 2026 Easter Message](#)

**Finding Peace in Challenging Times:
Lenten Holy Hours drawing strong
turnout**



Hundreds of Catholics from across the Diocese of Scranton are gathering in churches throughout the region this Lent, filling pews for special evenings of prayer, reflection, and Eucharistic devotion as the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, leads Lenten Holy Hours in each of the Diocese's 12 deaneries.

At Divine Mercy Parish in Scranton, the church was nearly filled as parishioners from multiple parishes came together to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. At Saint John Bosco Parish in Conyngham, more than 300 people attended the Holy Hour for the Hazleton Deanery.

For many participants, the experience has been both powerful and deeply personal.

"It made me feel connected," said Angel Parra of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Scranton after attending the Holy Hour at Divine Mercy Parish. "As a young Catholic, I don't have many

friends around my age who are Catholic. Just being around that many people praying together was a really refreshing experience.”

The Holy Hours began Feb. 19 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Wyalusing and eight more have taken place since that time. The final three Lenten Holy Hours will all take place within the next week.

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

[Click Here For the Full Schedule of 2026 Lenten Holy Hours with Bishop Bambera](#)

**More than 500 young adults
honored for living their faith**



More than 500 young people from across the Diocese of Scranton are being recognized this Lent for their commitment to faith and service as recipients of the 2026 Bishop's Youth Award.

The honor, presented annually since 1996, recognizes eighth- and twelfth-grade students who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to their Catholic faith through volunteer service in their parishes, schools, and communities.

This year's recipients are being celebrated during three special Masses throughout March at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

"While today is exciting and it's an honor to receive this award, it is a reminder to all of us that whether we're going into high school or later years in life, we have to continue doing the service that we've done to receive this award," Kevin Vincent Jr., a senior at Holy Cross High School and member of Saints Anthony & Rocco Parish in Dunmore, said.

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**One week left to vote in Rectory, Set,
Cook!**



There is now only one week left to vote in the Diocese of Scranton's popular pastor chef cooking competition, Rectory, Set, Cook!

Because of the generosity of people across northeastern Pennsylvania (and beyond), the friendly competition has already raised more than \$125,000 from more than 1,400 donors.

This year, the fundraiser could potentially surpass \$1 million in total funds raised since the initiative first launched in 2022.

Rectory, Set, Cook! invites priests from the eleven counties of the Diocese of Scranton to step into their kitchen as "pastor chefs," creating cooking videos and encouraging supporters to vote for their favorite dish through online donations.

Half of all funds raised benefit hunger and homelessness initiatives of Catholic Social Services. The remaining half goes directly to the participating priest's parish.

This year's competition continues through 4 p.m. on Friday, March 27.

[Click Here to Watch all the Rectory, Set, Cook! videos and Support Your Favorite Pastor Chef](#)

Parade Day in Scranton begins with prayer at Cathedral



Hundreds of faithful gathered at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on March 14 to begin one of the region's most beloved traditions – Scranton's annual Saint Patrick's Parade – with prayer and thanksgiving.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant and homilist for the annual Parade Day Mass, which has long marked the official start of one of the largest Saint Patrick's Day parades in the country.

In his homily, the Bishop reflected on the enduring example of Saint Patrick, who returned to Ireland after escaping slavery to preach the Gospel.

“God takes us as we are and uses us as instruments of peace in building his Kingdom,” Bishop Bambera said, noting that Patrick's life reminds Christians of their call to forgiveness, reconciliation, and service to others.

The Mass drew members of Irish cultural organizations, civic leaders, and parade participants, including visitors from Scranton's sister city of Ballina in County Mayo, Ireland.

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Pope Leo XIV calls for Middle East ceasefire



Pope Leo XIV called for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East and condemned the “atrocious violence” of the U.S.-Israeli-led war on Iran, which has spread across the region.

After praying the Angelus with pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square March 15, the pope expressed his alarm about the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and called for “lasting solutions to the serious ongoing crisis for the common good of all Lebanese people.”

“In the name of the Christians of the Middle East and of all women and men of goodwill, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict: Cease fire! Let the paths of dialogue be reopened,” he said.

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In a return to tradition, Pope Leo moves into new home in the Apostolic Palace



Pope Leo XIV moved into his new apartments at the Vatican's Apostolic Palace March 14, the Holy See Press Office announced that afternoon in Rome. Pope Leo's new quarters include several rooms, among them the private study — where the pope appears at the window to lead the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square every Sunday — a library and a small chapel. According to Italian media, the apartment also includes a home gym.

With Pope Leo's return to the Apostolic Palace, his rooms will be different from those of Pope Benedict XVI, the last pope to live in that space. Instead of occupying the traditional papal living quarters, Italian media has reported that Pope Leo will live in a loft, or attic, above the "Third Loggia," or top floor, of the building. Vatican media has reported that Pope Leo will live with

his private secretaries, Msgr. Edgard Rimaycuna and Father Marco Billeri.

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Pope Leo XIV calls Bishops to Rome to discuss marriage and family in October



Pope Leo XIV announced March 19 that he is asking the presidents of all bishops' conferences around the world to convene in Rome in October to renew and deepen the Church's discussion on marriage and family in light of "Amoris Laetitia."

The pope issued the invitation at the end of a message marking the 10th anniversary of the signing of "Amoris Laetitia," Pope

Francis' post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the pastoral care of families published after the 2014 and 2015 Synods on the Family.

“In light of the changes that continue to impact families, I have decided to convene the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences from around the world in October 2026, in an effort to proceed, in mutual listening, to a synodal discernment on the steps to be taken in order to proclaim the Gospel to families today, in light of Amoris Laetitia and taking into account what is currently being done in the local Churches,” Pope Leo said.

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Registration opens for National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's public events



The image features a map of the Eastern United States with a white line tracing a pilgrimage route. The route starts at St. Augustine, Florida, and travels north through Savannah, Charlotte, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and ends at St. Augustine. Other cities marked along the route include Charleston, Richmond, Camden, Paterson, Arlington, Baltimore, Springfield, Fall River, Providence, Boston, Portland, and Manchester. To the right of the map is a blue graphic with a circle of yellow stars at the top. The text reads: "NATIONAL Eucharistic Pilgrimage", "ONE NATION UNDER GOD", "St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Route", and "May 24 – July 5, 2026". At the bottom right, it says "Presenting Sponsor: relevant radio" with a logo.

Registration for public events during the 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage opened March 18, revealing abundant opportunities for Catholics to join the nine “perpetual pilgrims” traveling the East Coast route from Florida to Maine that culminates in an Independence Day weekend celebration in Philadelphia.

The pilgrimage runs May 24-July 5. As in the two previous pilgrimages held in 2024 and 2025, the 2026 pilgrims and their chaplains will accompany the Eucharist throughout the route, even as they travel in their van. Public pilgrimage events focus on the Eucharist with Mass, adoration and processions, as well as charitable service and fellowship.

The public can register to attend pilgrimage events at eucharisticpilgrimage.org.

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