

# Young disciples recognized for service at final Bishop's Youth Award Mass

SCRANTON – The final Mass honoring recipients of the 2026 Bishop's Youth Award brought together young people from the Eastern and Western Pastoral regions of the Diocese of Scranton on Sunday, March 22, 2026, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The liturgy marked the conclusion of three celebrations held throughout March recognizing eighth- and twelfth-grade students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to their Catholic faith through service in their parishes, schools, and communities.

For many of the students recognized at the final Mass, the celebration was both an honor and an opportunity to witness the faith of their peers.

"I'm really excited to be here and to see a lot of people who contribute to the Church," Angelica Barcia, a senior at Delaware Valley High School and parishioner of Saint Patrick Parish in Milford, said. "Especially in today's world, people are tempted to do things that are not Christ-like, so it's very important to celebrate the people who are doing that."

Barcia, who serves as a catechist, lector, and youth group member in her parish, said her faith has helped keep her grounded.

"No matter what else is going on in the world, I have Jesus, and that is all that



**Elijah Watson from Saint Michael Parish in Canton receives his Bishop Youth Award at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on March 22, 2026. (Photos/Mike Melisky)**

really matters," she added.

Zachariah Levin, a homeschooled senior from Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville, described receiving the award as an opportunity to "bear witness to God's goodness" and inspire others.

Levin, who has recently been accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Scranton, said his growing involvement in parish life helped him recognize God's call.

"I've seen a lot of the hurt and pain that goes on in the world, but also the benefit of God's grace," he said. "It is a great benefit in our life to be Catholic."



**Father Dan Toomey, Pastor of Epiphany Parish in Sayre, delivers the homily at the third Bishop Youth Award Mass.**

For Anna Tokarz, a senior from Saint Peter Parish in Wellsboro, the gathering itself was especially meaningful.

"It feels really nice to be around other kids who are Catholic, because I don't experience that a lot in my public school, so it's really nice being around people with like-minded thoughts," Tokarz explained.

Eighth-grade recipients also reflected on the importance of faith in their daily lives.

"It helps me make better decisions and overall makes me a better person," Lya Peguero of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish

in Hazleton, who participates in her parish choir and youth group.

"When you think, 'What would God do?' it really helps shape every decision you make," Lillian Kuchar, an eighth-grade student at Holy Family Academy in Hazleton, added.

During the Mass, Father Dan Toomey, pastor of Epiphany Parish, Sayre, encouraged the young people to recognize their unique role as witnesses to Christ in the world.

"You are the presence of Christ in this world," Father Toomey said in his homily. "This Mass is about continuing to pray for God's movement in your hearts and minds."

Sharing his own vocation story, Father Toomey spoke about discerning God's call later in life after serving as an Army officer, reminding students of the importance of listening for God's voice.

"Continue to listen to how God is calling you to be an individual person. He has created you and given you the Holy Spirit," Father Toomey added.

## Bishop celebrates Mass at Marian Catholic High School in Tamaqua



TAMAQUA - On Wednesday, March 25, 2026, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, visited Marian Catholic High School in Tamaqua, Schuylkill County, to celebrate Mass with students for the Solemnity of the Annunciation.

Following Mass, Bishop Bambera posed for a photo with many of the students who attend Marian Catholic High School but reside and belong to parishes within the Diocese of Scranton.

## Mueller Family McDonald's donates \$10,000 to Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation

SCRANTON - Carol Mueller and Christina Curran of the Mueller Family McDonald's presented a check for \$10,000 to Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation on Friday, March 20, 2026.

The donation was a result of the annual Fry Fundraiser that kicked off National Catholic Schools Week Jan. 25, 2026, and ended Feb. 15, 2026. A total of 21 Mueller Family McDonald's locations in Bradford, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties participated by donating a portion of every large order of french fries sold during that period.

"We are so grateful to the Mueller family for their generosity and commitment to supporting families in need. This support is needed more than ever and ensures an excellent faith-based education is affordable and available to those desiring to attend one of our schools," Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education/Superintendent of Schools, said.

Shown above at the check presentation are, from left: Carol Mueller, Christina Curran, and Kristen Donohue.



*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.*



Sixth, seventh and eighth-grade students at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** take a moment to celebrate the amazing season of the Holy Redeemer High School Girls' Basketball Team, which finished as runner-up in the PIAA Class 3A State Title Game.



J.J. Galvin, Cullen Papiercavich and Michael Hudzinki, students at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea**, earned awards at Cub Scout Pack 316's annual Blue and Gold Banquet. Father Thomas Petro, Executive Director of the Cub and Scout's BSA Program in Avoca, is pictured with the students.



Sixth graders from **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** attended the Diocesan Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on March 31 and posed afterward for a photo with Father Jose Kuriappilly.



**Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** had a large number of students who marched in the Stroudsburg Saint Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday, March 22, 2026. Thank you to Papillon & Moyer for providing a flatbed and Mrs. Spain for providing the balloon arch for this year's float.



Students at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** created Lenten crosses as a meaningful way to reflect on faith, sacrifice, and the journey toward Easter.



David Mazaika, a fifth-grade student at **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**, holds a flower that was grown by his teacher, Mr. John Mardyniak, who passed away suddenly on March 23, 2026.



Eighth-grade students from **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** learn about the Seder meal and Passover. Through it, they saw how Jesus celebrated the Passover at the Last Supper and how He used it to give Himself in the Eucharist as the new Passover lamb who saves us from sin and brings us to eternal life.



Walking with Christ, step by step, guided by seventh and eighth-grade students at **All Saints Academy in Scranton** as a public display of faith, love and sacrifice.



Seniors at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore** performed the Living Stations of the Cross for the student body prior to Easter break. The beautiful performance brought the Passion of Our Lord to life for students and faculty.



During Holy Week, on Tuesday, March 31, seniors at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** presented a beautiful and powerful dramatization of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection.



Brayden Antonello and Lily Holtz, eighth-grade students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, participate in the annual Living Stations meditation as part of Holy Week.



Seventh-grade students at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** reverently brought the Living Stations to life, demonstrating a beautiful expression of faith, reflection, and dedication. Each station was thoughtfully presented, allowing the school community to walk alongside this meaningful journey in a powerful and moving way.



The eighth-grade class of **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** presented the Living Stations on Palm Sunday to the school and community.



Mila Rouse, Cameron Roth and Moises Rodriguez, second graders at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre**, present the Living Stations of the Cross on March 27 inside Saint Nicholas Church.



Eighth-grade students from **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** reverently brought the Stations of the Cross to life at the Church of Saint Gregory in preparation for Easter. Audrey Krupovich portrayed Mary, and Patrick Donohue portrayed Jesus.



Sixth-grade students from **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** perform the Living Stations of the Cross.



Fourth-grade students at **Epiphany School in Sayre** lead the Stations of the Cross with Father Dan Toomey, pastor of Epiphany Parish.