



# *The Catholic Light*

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

April 9, 2026

## **Easter Vigil Masses bring 312 new members into the Church across Diocese**



At the Easter Vigil Mass inside Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Pittston, Sky Nicholson stood before a packed church, nervous but filled with anticipation.

“I have always had a relationship with God, but I was a bit hesitant to pursue that relationship,” she said. “I’m sorry that I waited this long.”

Sky Nicholson and her daughter, Serenity Rain Nicholson, were among those fully initiated into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil at the Pittston parish – an experience neither will soon forget.

“It was a beautiful experience. I really don’t have the words to explain it,” Sky added just minutes after being baptized, confirmed and receiving Holy Communion for the first time.

This year, 312 individuals have been welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church – up significantly from last year and reflecting a broader national trend.

At the Pittston parish alone, 10 catechumens and candidates were initiated during the Easter Vigil on April 4, 2026.

[Click Here to Watch a Video from CTV: Catholic Television of the Easter Vigil Mass at Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Pittston](#)

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**Easter hope endures amid a suffering world, Bishop Bambera says at Easter Masses**



The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, led the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton in celebrating the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4, 2026, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter, marking the Church's most solemn celebration of the Resurrection.

The liturgy began at 8:00 p.m. in the Cathedral Prayer Garden, where the Easter fire was kindled and the Paschal Candle lit, symbolizing Christ as the light of the world.

From there, the faithful processed in darkness to the Cathedral and once inside, their individual candles gradually illuminated the Mother Church of the Diocese.

Rooted in Scripture and rich symbolism, the Liturgy of the Word traced salvation history through a series of readings – from the story of creation in Genesis to the crossing of the Red Sea, the promises of the prophets, and ultimately the proclamation of the Resurrection from the Gospel of Matthew.

Preaching at the Vigil, Bishop Bambera centered his homily on the hope of the Resurrection amid a suffering world.

“Welcome on this night of the Resurrection – this night that lies at the heart of our lives as Christians,” the Bishop said. “This is the day the Lord has made.”

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## **Holy Thursday homily: Gethsemane teaches us to hand over what we cannot control**



The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper was celebrated April 2, 2026, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton, marking the beginning of the Sacred Triduum.

The liturgy recalled the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the priesthood, and Christ's call to service, as proclaimed in the Gospel of Saint John: "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

During the Mass, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, washed the feet of 12 individuals, reflecting Jesus' humble service to his disciples. The celebration also included the

Liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion, drawing the faithful into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice and love.

In his homily, Father Gerald W. Shantillo, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, invited the faithful to reflect on the depth of Holy Week, acknowledging that "Holy Week can be overwhelming, as we drink in the most intense moments of Jesus' life, death and resurrection."

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## **'Love has consequences': Good Friday homily centers on freedom and sacrifice**



Faithful of the Diocese of Scranton gathered at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Friday, April 3, 2026, to commemorate Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord, one of the most solemn liturgies of the Church year.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant, with Father Jeffrey Tudgay, Cathedral Pastor, delivering the homily.

The liturgy began in silence and included the proclamation of the Passion of Jesus Christ according to Saint John, along with the Solemn intercessions for the needs of the Church and the world.

The congregation also participated in the Veneration of the Holy Cross and received Holy Communion.

In his homily, Father Tudgay reflected on the relationship between love and freedom, emphasizing that “love has consequences” and must be freely chosen.

He noted that the Passion reveals “perfect love” and “perfect freedom” in the person of Christ, who endured betrayal, suffering, and death, yet responded with mercy and forgiveness.

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## **At Easter Mass, Pope Leo proclaims resurrection conquers 'the power of death'**



Pope Leo XIV offered Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square Sunday proclaiming that with Christ's resurrection "death has been conquered forever" and "no longer has power over us."

"Today all of creation is resplendent with new light, a song of praise rises from the earth, and our hearts rejoice: Christ is risen from the dead, and with him, we too rise to new life," the pope said.

Pope Leo declared that Easter "embraces the mystery of our lives and the destiny of history, reaching us even in the depths of death, where we feel threatened and sometimes overwhelmed. It opens us up to a hope that never fails, to a light that never fades, to a fullness of joy that nothing can take away."

Tens of thousands gathered under the bright Roman sun on April 5 in a flower-adorned St. Peter's Square for the first Easter Mass of Pope Leo XIV's pontificate. The square was transformed for the occasion by thousands of blooms in vivid colors on the stairs leading up to the Renaissance basilica.

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**At Colosseum, Pope Leo XIV carries  
the cross, leading thousands in  
Good Friday prayer for suffering  
world**



Inside the ancient arena of the Roman Empire that crucified Christ, Pope Leo XIV carried the cross through the darkness of night on Good Friday at Rome's Colosseum, leading about 30,000 in prayer for the sufferings of the modern world.

Torch flames flickered against nearly 2,000-year-old stone walls as crowds packed the streets around the Colosseum, praying alongside the pope through the traditional Via Crucis on the first Good Friday of his pontificate April 3.

The 70-year-old pope carried the cross through all 14 stations of the Way of the Cross, holding it directly in front of his face for nearly two hours as he prayed for victims of war, the defense of human dignity, the despairing and the lonely.

It was the first time a pope had carried the cross for every station in more than three decades. According to Vatican archival research communicated by Holy See Press Office Director Matteo Bruni April 3, St. John Paul II was the last pope to do so, carrying the cross from 1980 to 1994.

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## **Pope Leo praises ceasefire as 'genuine hope,' presses for dialogue, peace**



Pope Leo XIV welcomed the newly announced ceasefire in the Middle East as “a sign of genuine hope” after what he described as “hours of extreme tension,” while urging a return to negotiations and calling the faithful to prayer.

“Only by returning to negotiations can the war be brought to an end,” he said in remarks in Italian following his April 8 general audience in St. Peter’s Square.

His comments came just hours after a two-week ceasefire was reached between Iran and the United States, narrowly averting

further escalation. The agreement followed a stark warning from U.S. President Donald Trump late April 7, when he threatened to destroy Iran's critical infrastructure, saying "a whole civilization will die tonight" if Tehran did not reopen the Strait of Hormuz to oil and gas tankers. The ceasefire was announced roughly two hours before the White House's deadline.

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## Scranton parish invites all faithful to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday



Each year, on the Second Sunday of Easter, the Church celebrates Divine Mercy Sunday.

Mankind's need for the message of Divine Mercy took on dire urgency in the 20th century, when civilization began again to lose the understanding of the sanctity and inherent dignity of every human life.

Divine Mercy Parish on Davis Street in Scranton is welcoming all faithful to their celebration this year on Sunday, April 12.

Confessions will be heard from noon - 2 p.m. and the rosary will be prayed at 12:30 p.m.

Mass will be held at 2:00 p.m. with the Divine Mercy Chaplet following at 3:00 p.m.

The parish will also have individual blessings with a first-class relic of Saint Faustina and a social will follow in the parish hall.

[Click Here for More Information on Divine Mercy Sunday at Divine Mercy Parish in Scranton](#)

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**Rectory, Set, Cook! breaks record again, raises \$234,779 to fight hunger and homelessness**



The Diocese of Scranton is proud to announce the results of its fifth annual Rectory, Set, Cook! pastor chef cooking competition – and once again – the event has set a new benchmark for generosity.

At the close of this year’s campaign, Rectory, Set, Cook! raised a record-breaking \$234,779 from 2,031 donors, making this year’s competition the most successful in its five-year history.

Between Feb. 17 and March 27, 2026, the popular online fundraiser brought together priests from across northeastern and north central Pennsylvania in a friendly and creative culinary showdown, all in support of anti-hunger and anti-homelessness initiatives of Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton.

“This year’s Rectory, Set, Cook! once again showed the incredible generosity of our community,” Shannon Kowalski, Development Coordinator for Catholic Social Services, said. “Each year, this

event continues to grow, not only in the amount of money raised but the number of people who get involved and support our mission.”

[Click Here to Find Out the Top 5 Teams in this Year's Rectory, Set, Cook! Competition](#)

## **Sermon on the Integrity: Artemis II Mission pilot preaches Christ's command to love on lunar flyby**



As the astronauts of NASA’s first crewed lunar flyby in half a century reached their closest approach to the moon, the team’s pilot reminded the Earth of Jesus Christ’s command to love both God and neighbor.

“As we get close to the nearest point to the moon and farthest point from Earth, as we continue to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos, I would like to remind you of one of the most important mysteries there on Earth, and that’s love,” said astronaut Victor

Glover, pilot of the Artemis II mission, speaking to ground control April 6 from aboard NASA's Orion spacecraft Integrity.

"Christ said, in response to what was the greatest command, that it was to love God with all you are," said Glover. "And he also, being a great teacher, said the second is equal to it. And that is to love your neighbor as yourself."

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