

Pope Francis Appoints **Father Jeffrey J. Walsh** as the Sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan



FULL COVERAGE ON PAGES 14 & 15

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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VISION 2030

Creating Parish Communities Rooted in the Life of Jesus Christ

At the beginning of a new year, it is natural to look towards the future. For the last several years, the Diocese of Scranton and its churches have been focused on the future with a pastoral planning initiative known as the *Vision 2030 Blueprint Process*.

Vision 2030 will help our diocese meet the many opportunities and challenges of the coming decade. The main goal of *Vision 2030* is to create vibrant parishes rooted in the life of Jesus Christ.

This edition of *The Catholic Light* begins with 12 pages of information on *Vision 2030*, so all the faithful can learn more about the current realities we face together. Because of our Baptism, each one of us has an important role to play in the Church. The participation of each one of us is critical to proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel and sharing the love of Jesus Christ.



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with Our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

POLICY STATEMENT

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January 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

With the dawn of a new year, my prayer, like many of yours, is a prayer for peace: peace in our hearts, our families, our world, and within our Church. This season also affords us an opportunity to reflect upon where we have been – and more importantly – to look ahead to where we are going. As always, we give thanks to our generous God for the many blessings He has bestowed on us as we look forward to a future full of hope for us all (Jeremiah 29:11).

In 2019, you may remember that we began a pastoral planning initiative in the Diocese of Scranton with the goal of proactively looking at our local church in the present moment, while recognizing the opportunities and challenges ahead. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, this blueprint planning process has been ongoing. To make sure everyone in all of our parishes is familiar with this continuing effort, I want to share with you the following document, *Vision 2030: Creating Parish Communities Rooted in the Life of Jesus Christ*.

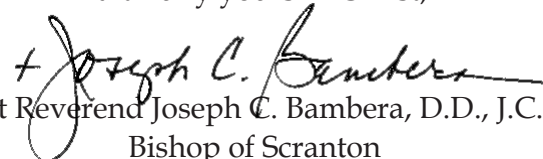
As you will see in the following pages, our Diocese faces significant challenges due to changing demographics in our 11 counties, from fewer people maintaining membership in our parishes to a diminishing number of ordained priests to serve our spiritual needs. At the same time, however, while our numbers have decreased over the years, the faith of our people continues to be strong and opportunities to proclaim the Good News of Jesus abound. With many people in our communities identifying as Catholic but not registered in our parishes and others not ascribing to any religion at all, our mission to invite them into our churches and show them the love of Jesus is more vital than ever. In so doing, through God's grace, our witness to Jesus will strengthen our parishes and also sow seeds for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life that are so necessary to the life and ministry of our Church.

Based on all of the information contained in this document, you will see that it is inevitable that changes will become necessary in some of our parishes. Although it is not our plan to modify all of our parish structures at one time, it is important for you to know that different things will prompt change at different times in different places. While change is never easy, the most effective pastoral planning processes take place when everyone is actively informed and engaged. All of us – clergy and laity alike – must be able to look at the realities we are facing honestly and objectively. Prayer and honest dialogue with all of you will help us discern what God's will is for us as a Diocese at this time in our history.

Because of our Baptism, each one of us has a role to play in the Church. In working together to create vibrant parish communities, we must all proclaim the Good News of the Gospel through our words and the service we offer to our brothers and sisters. Each one of us must become an 'eager evangelizer,' sharing our love and faith in Christ.

As we embrace our future over the next decade and beyond, may we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit as our surest helper and guide. I look forward to walking with each one of you in this ongoing pastoral planning process as together we work to keep our Church a strong and vibrant beacon of hope for all.

Faithfully yours in Christ,


Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton



VISION 2030

*Creating Parish Communities Rooted
in the Life of Jesus Christ*

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with Our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

— GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR OUR MISSION —

- WORD -

This principle is about putting our relationship with Jesus first in our own lives and in the life of our Church. Focusing on Jesus' invitation to "Come and follow me," we desire to help all people meet Christ and build God's Kingdom - not our own.

- WORSHIP -

The principle is about the celebration of the Eucharist as the heart of parish life. The Mass is the source and summit of our lives as Christians. In the Eucharist, Jesus draws close to us and strengthens us. Participation at Mass and receiving the Eucharist brings us the Father's faithful love.

- COMMUNITY -

This principle is about forming parishes with people of faith devoted to prayer, committed to one another and enlivened by the living God in our midst. Faith is not a private affair acted upon in isolation; it is a call to holiness with a community of people.

- SERVICE -

This principle is about becoming the bearers of the Good News and the disciples of Jesus Christ. As baptized Catholics, it is the responsibility of each one of us to follow Jesus and use our gifts and talents to show His humanity to the world.



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MISSION STATEMENT OF VISION 2030

The Vision 2030 Blueprint Process is a long-range pastoral planning process for the Diocese of Scranton. While looking proactively at the realities of our local church in the present moment, this process strives to meet the **opportunities and challenges** of the coming decade in order to create vibrant expressions of parish life rooted in the life of Jesus Christ.

— **LIVING OUR MISSION TOGETHER** —

The Vision 2030 Blueprint process is a prayerful and participative process. As we seek to bring new life to our mission to spread the Good News of the Gospel, every one of us has an important role to play. We do not have the luxury of sitting on the sidelines. By virtue of our Baptism, we must participate in this process in an informed way, putting aside emotion, working to determine how best our local community and the entire diocese moves forward. As baptized Catholics, we are all called to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. The mission of the Church is rooted in the mission of Christ who commanded everyone (clergy, religious and laity) to:

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

In order to create vibrant parish communities rooted in the life of Jesus Christ, all parishes should focus on:

- ◆ Helping people encounter Jesus
- ◆ “Mission” over “Maintenance,” especially in regards to feeding the poor, helping the vulnerable and comforting the lonely
- ◆ Reawakening the understanding and awareness of the Sunday Eucharist and the celebration of Sacraments
- ◆ Inviting people to take their faith more seriously and become more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ
- ◆ Accompanying young people in the creation of a hope-filled future
- ◆ Embracing new immigrants and individuals moving into our communities and diocese
- ◆ Encouraging lifelong faith formation
- ◆ Creating a sense of unity and community
- ◆ Increasing charitable works and outreach
- ◆ Promoting vocations to the priesthood, religious life and diaconate



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CHALLENGES WE MUST ADDRESS TO ENSURE THE CHURCH IS VIBRANT AND PRESENT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

A lot has changed not only in society - but also in the Diocese of Scranton during its more than 150-year history. By working together, we hope to strengthen the most vibrant expressions of parish life and to embrace the unavoidable changes which require us to respond in new ways.

As members of the Church of Scranton, we must work together in a way that we best live out our baptismal calling in both a world - and local environment - that continues to change. We must continue to respond to the needs of the People of God with changing resources and opportunities.

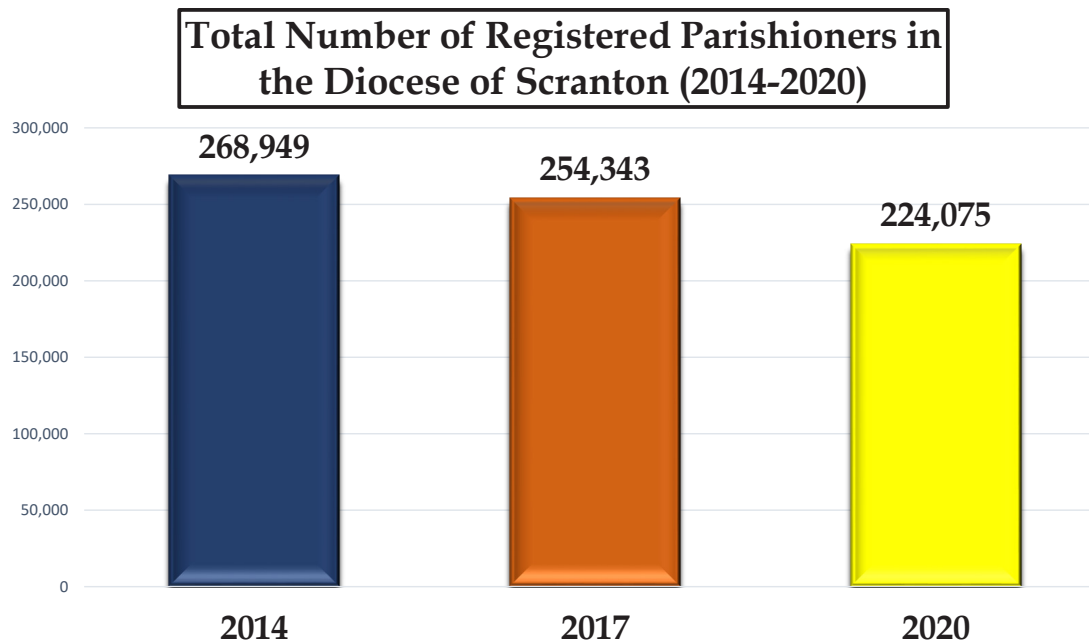
The following are some of the factors that will prompt change and response in our parishes:

1. Fewer Parishioners Supporting the Mission of the Church

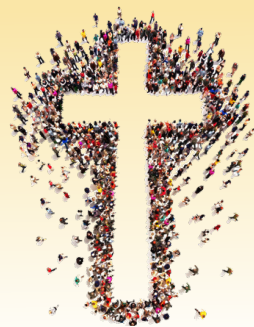
Long before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted parishes, regular weekend Mass attendance had been on the decline. As shown in the chart below, the total number of parishioners who are registered in all parishes of the Diocese of Scranton dropped by more than 16% between 2014 and 2020.

The total number of Baptisms, First Communions and Confirmations in the Diocese of Scranton also dropped during this time period.

In 2020, a custom demographics report from Mission Insite identified that there are more than 317,000 Catholic individuals within the 11-county geographic territory of the Diocese of Scranton. This gap between individuals who identify as Catholics, yet are not currently registered in a parish, is a challenge that must be addressed.



Source: Diocese of Scranton — Parish Report Statistics 2014-2020



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Creating Parish Communities Rooted in the Life of Jesus Christ

Parishes are meant to foster lives of holiness and discipleship among all their people. The following are some examples of societal changes that have impacted the number of parishioners who actively support the mission of the Church:

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Many of the most faithful Mass-going parishioners continue to get older and while some young people are moving out of the area for employment, others are not actively attending Mass and practicing religious beliefs. In many parishes, the number of funerals far outpace the number of Baptisms taking place.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

According to the Pew Research Center, individuals who profess no religious affiliation, “nones,” are now the largest subgroup in American society. In a study released in 2019, “nones” jumped from 17% of the adult population in 2009 to 26% in 2019. Catholics, meanwhile, slipped from 23% to 20% in 2019. While some young people embrace the concept of spirituality, they do not necessarily see the need for participation in Mass or the sacraments.

SADNESS AND PAIN

While the Church has always been a gathering of the wounded, it must acknowledge the sadness and pain caused by prior parish reconfigurations as well as the clergy sex abuse crisis. As acknowledged in Bishop Bambera’s 2011 Pastoral Letter, “Wounded and Loved, Regathering the Scattered,” we simply cannot embrace the hope of Easter without first experiencing Good Friday and the wounds of our lives and brokenness of our world.



2. Financial Challenges and Parish Infrastructure Needs

Many parish buildings were built in a different era and there are countless facilities with deferred maintenance needs and no planned funding stream for necessary repairs. The Diocese of Scranton must continue to evaluate where and how to best invest resources not only on a particular parish-level, but also the deanery and diocesan levels.

Parishes are much more expensive to maintain now than they were in the past. With a fewer number of parishioners supporting the mission of the church overall, parish offertories have not been able to keep up with current realities.

As of early 2021, 19 parishes have been found to have significant bills, insurance premiums, or medical premiums that need to be paid to the Diocese of Scranton. The Diocese of Scranton provides pastoral and temporal services for people, parishes and institutions in the Diocese and represents the faithful in the Diocese in the worldwide Church. Funding to help support the work of the Diocese itself is primarily provided through an assessment that is paid by each parish. Likewise, funding to help support the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System is provided through a schools assessment that is paid for by each parish. The resources provided by both parish and school assessments are carefully used to further the mission of the Church.



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3. Diminishing Number of Ordained Priests

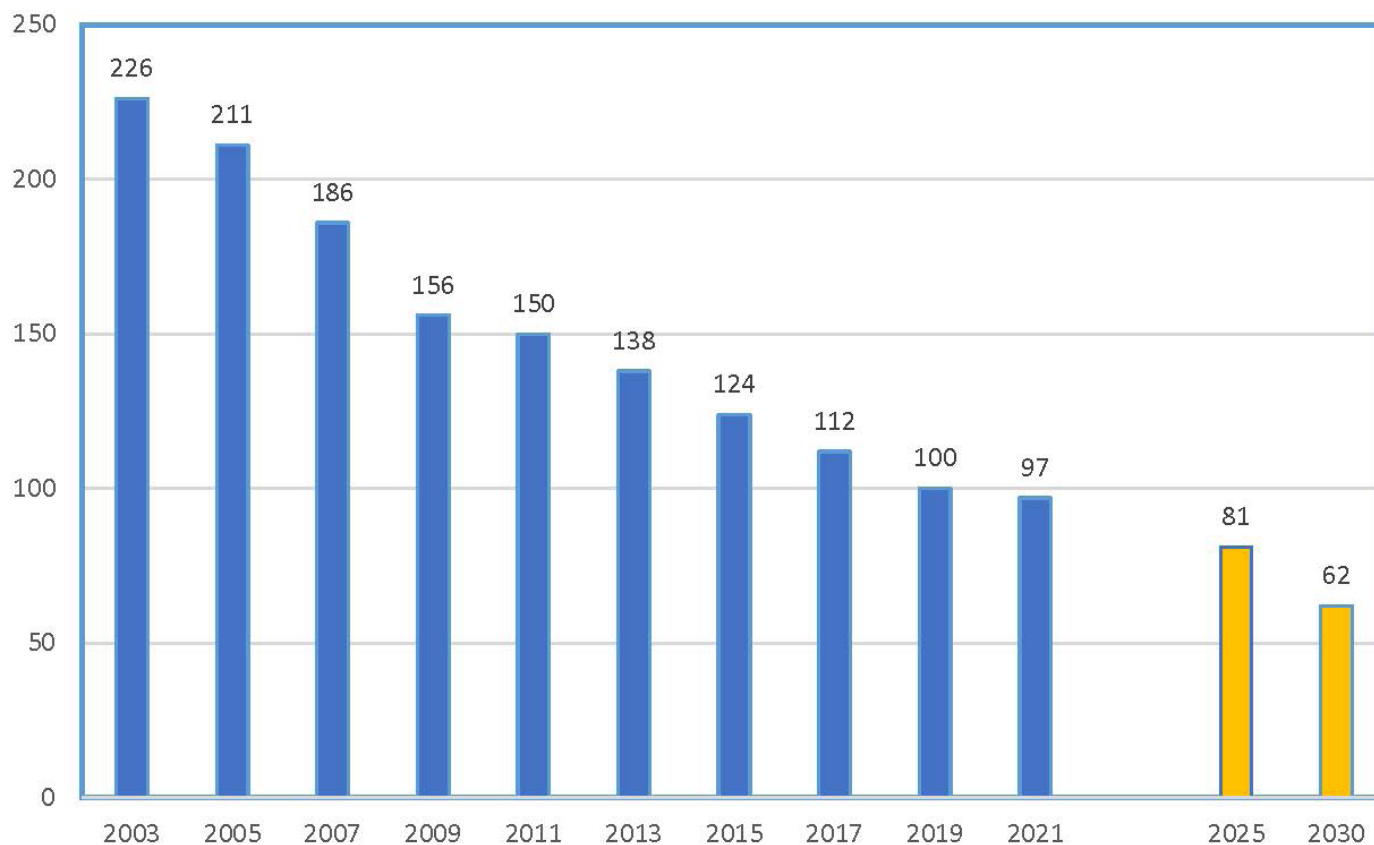
Over the coming decade and beyond, the Diocese of Scranton faces a decreasing number of priests. A fewer number of priests will represent a significant challenge to the entire diocese. Given the decline in people actively practicing their faith, there would naturally be fewer priests coming from our families. Changes will need to be prompted because of clergy retirement, infirmity or transfer.

The number of Diocesan priests in active ministry has decreased significantly over the last several decades. As indicated in the graph below, the Diocese of Scranton had more than 200 active priests in 2003. That number has consistently declined in subsequent years. In 2021, there were 97 diocesan priests active in the Diocese.

While various factors can influence any projections - including the number of seminarians ordained by the Diocese in the coming years - the following is of immediate concern:

- **16 priests are expected to reach the retirement age by 2025.**
- **19 additional priests are projected for retirement between 2025-2030**
(The retirement age is 75 in the Diocese of Scranton)
- **Because of health conditions known in 2021, 6 priests may not be able to continue in ministry until their expected retirement age.**

Diocesan Priests Active in the Diocese





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OUR PATH FORWARD TOGETHER EMBRACING HOPE AMIDST CHANGE

As Catholics, we believe the Holy Spirit guides us, especially during challenging times. The Diocese of Scranton, along with all of its people, are being given the privilege and responsibility to write our history for those to come.

As we embrace hope amidst change, we must focus on the following areas:

1. Inviting Participation in Parish Life

The clergy and lay faithful should strive to form vibrant and faith-filled parish families guided by our common witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. The parish is where most Catholics publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof to their communion with God and with one another. Parishes should be committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and aspire to lead others to grow in holiness and deepen their relationship with Christ.

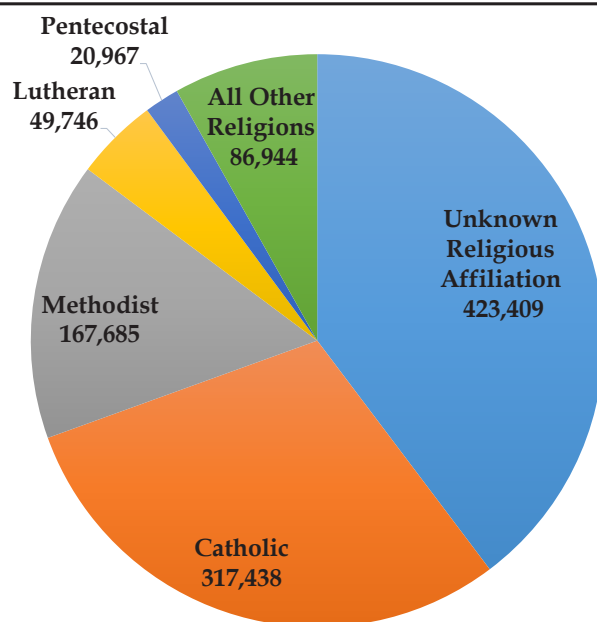
The opportunity for evangelization exists

While many focus on the number of people who are not in the pews, a custom demographics report from MissionInsite on the geographic territory of the Diocese of Scranton provides reason for hope.

Using census information and other data, the report found that 29.8% of the population (317,438 people) identify as Catholic in the 11 counties of the Diocese. That means there is work to do in getting individuals who identify as Catholics registered in a local parish, since currently only 224,075 people are registered with a parish.

More importantly, the report shows that the religious affiliation for nearly 40% of the population (423,409 people) is unknown. This data provides a tremendous opportunity for evangelization and creating the invitation to participate in the Catholic faith and parish life.

**Religious Affiliation of Individuals Living
in the Diocese of Scranton**



Source: Mission Insite Demographics
Report 2020



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There are numerous ways to invite participation in Parish Life including:

- ◆ Nurturing a more welcoming, hospitable environment
- ◆ Cultivating a sense of belonging throughout the parish family to encourage more active participation
- ◆ Clergy and lay leadership in the parish should make an intentional effort to be present not only in the parish itself but also the community itself. Meet potential parishioners where they are if they are not already attending Masses.
- ◆ Encourage everyone to give of their time, talent and treasure
- ◆ In a digital world, make sure your parish website is constantly updated and utilize new and emerging forms of social media to reach parishioners, evangelize, catechize and inform. If a parish places little or no emphasis on its digital footprint, they are not actively working to meet parishioners where they are and invite participation in parish life.

2. Supporting and Inviting Youth & Young Families to Make the Church their Second Home

The clergy and lay faithful should aspire to give special attention to our youth and young families, enabling them to meet the unique challenges of our modern world.

There are numerous ways to support and invite youth and young families including:

- ◆ Promoting and encouraging each young person to have a personal relationship with Jesus. This can be done in many ways through the guiding principles of Word, Worship, Community and Service. Some examples include: strengthening Eucharistic Adoration opportunities or other parish prayer opportunities geared to young adults at times that are convenient, holding faith formation opportunities for single young adults, performing parish service projects in conjunction with area non-profits and simply asking young men and women to take part in parish life activities.
- ◆ Promoting strong marriages and healthy families with the goal of making each household in the parish a vibrant domestic church
- ◆ Inviting young adults to have a voice in parish ministries, for example, personally inviting young married couples to share their witness to those couples who are newly engaged
- ◆ Simply taking the time to make youth and young families feel welcome. Take time to notice the single young adults when they attend Mass. At the end of Mass, include them in conversations and activities.





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3. Promote vocations to the Priesthood, Diaconate and Consecrated Life

The clergy and lay faithful must be dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life through prayer and education and to renewing our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations. As a diocese, pastoral care of vocations should shape our activities and be at the heart of diocesan pastoral planning.

As we embrace hope amidst change, we must create a culture of vocations by focusing on the following areas:

- ◆ Intentionally focusing on increasing vocations to the priesthood as well as the diaconate and religious life
- ◆ Joyfully celebrating the Sacraments, most especially the Eucharist, so each parishioner has a connection to a priest who serves them
- ◆ Making prayer for vocations essential throughout all of parish life
- ◆ Working on behalf of vocations involves encouraging individual young men to consider serving the Lord and His people as a priest.
- ◆ Celebrating and promoting the recruitment of seminarians at the parish level



4. Embrace Immigrants and Newcomers in Our Communities

Throughout Holy Scripture we are taught to open our hearts to others. The Diocese of Scranton and its parishes should create faith communities where every person feels seen, heard and welcomed.

Over the last two decades, the 11 counties of the Diocese of Scranton have seen many new immigrants and individuals moving into our communities. One example includes the Hispanic population. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic population in the Diocese of Scranton increased 846% over the last two decades. Every county in the Diocese of Scranton saw an increase in the number of Hispanic residents.



Total Hispanic Population in the Diocese of Scranton	2000	2010	2020
	12,798	65,241	108,209



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5. Matching Parishes and Worship Facilities with the Number of People and Resources Given to Support Our Mission

Given the decreasing number of parishioners who are practicing their faith, good stewardship calls for the responsible and repeated evaluation of all parishes and facilities throughout the Diocese of Scranton.

Change in our parishes will be prompted by different things at different times in different places. Implementation will be approached gradually as needs arise. There cannot be a “one size fits all approach.” Much of the planning process will be undertaken at the deanery level, which will allow for the unique needs of each community to be addressed.

In order to keep the mission of the Gospel alive throughout all 11 counties of the Diocese of Scranton, change in one area may be prompted by the overall needs of the diocese as well. The goal of any change will be to have a vibrant parish in as close proximity to our people as possible. The current footprint of parishes will need adjustment and that might mean change in your community. More often than not, changes in the Church have resulted in a reawakening and vibrancy of the faith. Christ’s Church continues to evolve and He promises it will be here when He returns, but it will look different from generation to generation. Throughout the process of any change, the faithful are encouraged to stay open-minded, remain focused on the Gospel and serving one another.

Some possible areas for discussion and pastoral planning that may occur in parishes over the next decade include:

- PARTNERSHIP WITH NEIGHBORING PARISHES -

Parishes retain their own pastors but begin partnering with others to share ministries and resources such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, youth groups and religious education with the goal to avoid duplication as much as possible.

- LINKED PARISHES -

Linking two or more parishes would involve the parishes sharing the same pastor. Such parishes, while independent, will by necessity cooperate more closely than parishes in partnerships. Linked parishes do many things cooperatively, such as programs, and are encouraged to work toward combining Pastoral Council meetings and establishing common committees where possible.

- ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF PARISH LEADERSHIP -

The Diocese of Scranton currently has several Parish Life Coordinators who are entrusted with the responsibility of leading a parish community in the absence of a priest serving as pastor. The Parish Life Coordinator provides pastoral and organizational leadership for a parish community and works with a Sacramental Minister, who is a priest authorized to provide for the liturgical and sacramental needs of the parish community.

- MERGER/CLOSURE -

In a parish merger, two or more parishes are united as one parish. Parishes may be considered for a merger when one or more of the parishes involved appears to lack the resources for long-term sustainability. This lack of resources might be financial in nature but might also apply to the number of active parishioners or the ability to maintain a safe and secure facility/property.

This option is most generally considered when the membership of a parish has so diminished that the community is unable to sustain the pillars of parish life in Word, Worship, Community and Service and/or financial and infrastructure needs cannot be met.



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By the essence of our Baptism, each person is called to take an active role in realizing the mission of the Vision 2030 Blueprint process. The laity, in an informed way based on data – and not simply emotion or sentimentality – must be directly involved in the process of creating vibrant parish communities rooted in the life of Jesus Christ. The participation of the faithful is not just to be invited and welcomed – but deemed critical. The laity and the clergy are co-responsible for the success of this mission. There must be equal participation and dialogue from all sides as this process moves forward.

The opportunities and challenges that the Diocese of Scranton faces are not unique to us alone. Many other dioceses are responding to similar circumstances. Locally, we must confront all situations that arise as a community of faithful disciples, relying on the Holy Spirit as our helper and guide.

The Vision 2030 Blueprint Process is not an outdated model of thinking of pastoral planning that should sit on a shelf, to be dusted off when situations arise. Instead, it should be a proactive initiative focused on being as responsive as possible to the mission of the Church.

While change to parish life and structure will be necessary during this process, this planning process allows for the unique needs of each deanery and even special circumstances within each deanery, to be brought forward. Consultation among the clergy and the laity - as well as the formulation of specific recommendations - will take time.

While any change prompted by this process may be difficult, this process aims to help all of the faithful grow more deeply in our faith. The Church of Scranton will continue to be vibrant and build on its past. The current reality of parish life will need to look different in some communities.



“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community”

(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 28)

Celebrating the Christmas season

Christmas is one of the most important days of the Church year, second only to Easter itself. It is the feast of the incarnation, the feast of God becoming flesh. It is a uniquely Christian teaching, the Divine choosing to become one of us. Because of this belief, God is not only Transcendent, but also wholly Immanent, Emmanuel (God-with-us).

The liturgical season of Christmas began with the Vigil Masses on Christmas Eve but did not conclude until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on Sunday, January 9, 2022. During this season, we celebrated the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflected on the gift of salvation that is born with him...including the fact that he was born to die for us.

During the Christmas season, Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated several Masses at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton. Below are excerpts from his homilies. All homilies can be found on the Diocese of Scranton website at www.dioceseofscranton.org. (Photos from Christmas Eve Vigil Mass/Mike Melisky)

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)- December 25, 2021

“When Jesus was born, he didn’t set himself apart from the ordinariness of human life, from family interactions, work and labor, or from recreation and play. No, Jesus immersed himself in the human condition of our world, for all of its beauty and peace, its brokenness and pain, its sin and suffering. He did so for a reason: to teach us how best to live – to provide us with a way forward in life – and to save us from being consumed with ourselves to lead lives that are selflessly focused on the well-being of our brothers and sisters.

“Two years ago, Pope Francis offered a reflection on the meaning and importance of the nativity scene depicting the birth of Jesus. Listen to his words: ‘Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God’s tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness... In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.’

“‘The nativity scene,’ the Holy Father goes on, ‘shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life ... It speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.’”



Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord - January 2, 2022

“The story of the magi, who finally arrive in Bethlehem with their unique and precious gifts and their rich attire is not merely a colorful tale with a happy ending. The magi’s arrival in Bethlehem triggered the unleashing of evil and hatred aimed at the newborn king. But it also revealed something else: Jesus’ message of hope was no longer the exclusive possession of a few but was extended to all peoples through his self-sacrificing life and unconditional love.

“While the scope of Jesus’ saving grace may seem quite reasonable to us, for many, the magi, as Gentiles, didn’t belong in Bethlehem. They were different. Many believed that only the chosen ones of Israel should have been recipients of God’s saving grace. But the magi – outsiders from the East – turned that understanding of God upside down. They were clearly welcomed and given a special place among those who came to worship Jesus, the newborn king of the Jews. They were welcomed primarily because they were seeking something more in life than the riches of this world. They listened to God in their dreams and in their hearts. They worshipped Jesus and opened their lives to his presence.”

The Baptism of the Lord - January 9, 2022

“It is our relationship with Jesus, first initiated in baptism, that becomes the focus of what we are about today. Jesus is set apart in his baptism as the anointed one of God – as the bearer of God’s unconditional love, forgiveness and mercy. In our own baptism, the same Spirit that rested upon Jesus descended upon us, compelling us to assume the work of the gospel in imitation of Jesus and in service of our brothers and sisters. Let the words of the Father spoken to Jesus in the Jordan River speak to your hearts: ‘You are my beloved Son. You are my beloved daughter.’

“Today’s feast both commemorates Jesus’ baptism and our own and calls us to embrace Jesus’ mission in our lives as his disciples. In other words, baptism is not just a mile marker or sacred tradition that we ritualize as Christians. It is a commitment on our part to reflect Jesus’ life of selfless service and unconditional love and to make it our own pattern for living.”



Pope Francis names Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh as Sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord

SCRANTON – On Dec. 21, 2021, Pope Francis appointed the Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Carbondale, as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord, Michigan.

Bishop-elect Walsh succeeds Most Reverend Steven J. Raica, J.C.D., D.D., who was installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama, on June 23, 2020. Since that time, Bishop Walter A. Hurley has been serving as the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Gaylord.

Bishop-elect Walsh's episcopal ordination and installation as Bishop of Gaylord are scheduled for March 4, 2022, at 2 p.m. in Saint Mary Cathedral, Gaylord.

“With gratitude to our Holy Father Pope Francis, and joy in the Lord, I am eager to begin a new chapter in my life of discipleship among the good people of the Diocese of Gaylord! I am also most grateful to God for 27 years of priestly ministry in the Diocese of Scranton. I have been inspired and challenged to grow in faith through various diocesan assignments and will forever prayerfully remember all the lay faithful, religious, deacons, priests and bishops with whom and for whom I have served,” Bishop-elect Walsh said.

“In particular, I would like to acknowledge the kind support of Bishop Joseph C. Bambera. The most important act of gratitude I can offer is for my parents, Jerome and Nancy (Doud) Walsh. They, as well as my deceased grandparents, have been the most significant formators of my life. I have been blessed with a solid, but by no means ‘perfect,’ family that also includes my two brothers, two nieces, one nephew, aunts and uncles and many close first cousins. Looking forward, I hope to bring a missionary spirit to my episcopal ministry under the mantle of Divine Providence. From ‘Penn’s Woods’ to the land of ‘Great Lakes,’ I trust God’s loving plan,” he added.

Bishop-elect Walsh was born on November 29, 1965. The son of Jerome and Nancy Walsh, he is a native of Scranton, Pa., and is a graduate of Scranton Central High School. He is one of three



Bishop-elect Jeffrey J. Walsh, standing, participates in an introductory news conference on Dec. 21, 2021, at Saint Mary Cathedral in Gaylord, Mich., the same day as his appointment as the sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord was announced. Bishop Walter A. Hurley, seated, has been serving as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Gaylord since June 2020. (Photo/Diocese of Gaylord)

children, with brothers, James and Joseph Walsh. He graduated from the University of Scranton in 1987 with a degree in Health and Human Resources. He went on to complete his priestly studies at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md., earning a Master of Divinity Degree.

Bishop-elect Walsh received a Master of Arts in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University in 1999 and a Master of Social Work Degree from Marywood University in 2010.

Bishop-elect Walsh was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Scranton by Bishop James C. Timlin at the Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, Pa., on June 25, 1994.

After ordination, Bishop-elect Walsh served as assistant pastor at Saint Rose of Lima Church, Carbondale, and the Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton.

In July 1999, he was appointed to his first pastorate at Saint Mary of the Lake Church, Lake Winola, as well as Director of Spiritual & Liturgical Formation at Saint Pius X Seminary.

From July 2004 - July 2006, he served as pastor at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Tunkhannock, until being appointed to serve as Episcopal Vicar for the Eastern Pastoral Region of the Diocese of

Scranton. In 2008, Bishop-elect Walsh became administrator of Saint Rita Church, Gouldsboro, and in 2009 was appointed administrator of Saint Anthony, Saint Bridget and Saint John the Baptist parishes in Throop.

In July 2010, Bishop-elect Walsh was appointed to serve as pastor at the Church of Saint John, East Stroudsburg.

In January 2015, he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Clergy by Bishop Joseph C. Bambera. While serving in that role, Bishop-elect Walsh also served as Sacramental Minister for Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish, Pittston.

In July 2020, he was appointed pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Carbondale. As Bishop-elect Walsh departs for Gaylord, Saint Rose of Lima

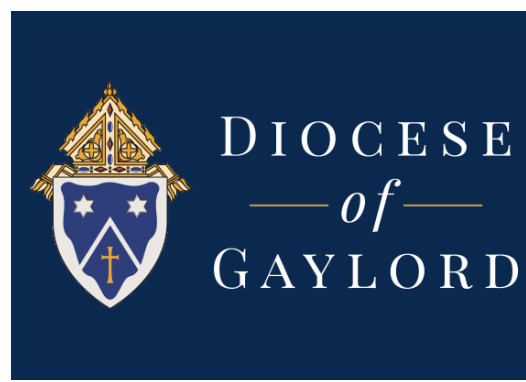
Parish just completed a large-scale renovation project on its nearly 150-year-old building.

During his years of pastoral ministry, Bishop-elect Walsh also served in a variety of Diocesan positions, including Director of Religious Formation at the former Sacred Heart High School in Carbondale and the former Bishop Hannan High School in Scranton. For five years he was chaplain at Saint Michael’s School and for 12 years (1995-2007) he served as chaplain to the Deaf Community.

Bishop-elect Walsh has also served as Diocesan vocations director, was director of youth and young adult retreats at Fatima Center, and served for one year as the Diocesan Deputy Secretary for Catholic Human Services. In 2007, he was also appointed to the Board of Directors of the Notre Dame Regional School System.

In reaction to Pope Francis’ appointment, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., Bishop of Scranton, commented, “With pride and gratitude to God, we celebrate Pope Francis’ appointment of Father Walsh to serve as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord. This announcement brings great joy in the Diocese of Scranton as the Holy Father has chosen a native son, nurtured and formed locally, to the office of episcopal leadership and service in the Church. Having known and served alongside Father Walsh for many years, he has shown himself to be a caring, compassionate and skilled pastor. His deep love for the Lord is evident in the loving service that he has shared with the flock of Christ entrusted to his care in a wide range of parishes, ministries and apostolates.”

Bishop Bambera continued, “Father Walsh has generously shared his talents and his love for the Church in so many ways, especially with our youth, elderly, the poor, sick and those on the periphery. While this appointment is somewhat bittersweet for many of us in the Church of Scranton, especially those of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and Saint Rose of Lima Parish, where Bishop-elect Walsh currently serves as pastor, we are grateful to God that he has chosen Father Walsh to serve the broader Church and particularly our brothers and sisters in the Church of Gaylord as bishop. Please join me in giving thanks for the years of priestly service that Father Walsh has shared so generously with the faithful of our Diocese and in asking the Lord Jesus to fill his heart with joy as he begins his episcopal ministry among the good people of Michigan.”



The Diocese of Gaylord is one of seven Roman Catholic Dioceses in the state of Michigan. His Holiness Pope Paul VI established it on July 20, 1971. The 11,171 square miles of the diocese includes the 21 most northern counties of Michigan’s lower peninsula, which are mostly rural in nature.

The total population of the Diocese exceeds 506,000, of which more than 44,000 are Catholic. The Diocese of Gaylord consists of 75 parishes, 16 Catholic schools and many closely related institutions.

“It’s amazing how much gratitude surfaces”

Bishop-elect Walsh introduced to Diocese of Gaylord

GAYLORD, Mich. – Father Jeffrey J. Walsh was sitting at Alfredo’s Pizza in Scranton in late December, celebrating his father’s birthday, when his phone rang.

It was a call that would eventually change his life.

“Your phone buzzes; you can feel it in your pocket. I looked at it and it was Washington, D.C.,” Father Walsh said. “I thought it was probably a robocall. I don’t think I know anybody in Washington, D.C., so I just let it go and finished the meal.”

When he got to his car, Father Walsh learned the person on the other end of the call was actually Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, asking to have a conversation.

“My heart sunk and I went to a place where I could call him,” Father Walsh added.

Archbishop Pierre was calling to inform Father Walsh that Pope Francis appointed him the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord.

Father Walsh recited the events leading up to his announcement as Bishop-elect in the Diocese of Gaylord at a news conference on Dec. 21, 2021, at Saint Mary Cathedral in Gaylord. It was the

first time Father Walsh was publicly introduced as “Bishop-elect.”

“It’s obviously not something you ever expect to happen in your life but here it is and I’m so grateful,” Bishop-elect Walsh said.

Bishop-elect Walsh thanked God, Pope Francis, Archbishop Pierre and many others for the trust they have placed in him as he delivered remarks.

“It’s amazing how much gratitude surfaces during something like this. There’s a lot of fear that comes as well but gratitude surfaces in such a powerful way and there is nothing more powerful than my gratitude to family,” he explained.

The Diocese of Gaylord livestreamed the news conference and the 30-minute program was broadcast live in the Diocese of Scranton on CTV: Catholic Television. That is how many people, including Bishop-elect Walsh’s parents, were able to view it.

During his introductory remarks, Bishop-elect Walsh was able to share his vocation story as well. After being educated in public schools and raised in the Catholic faith by his parents and grandparents, it was not



Bishop-elect Jeffrey J. Walsh is interviewed by a television news crew following his introductory news conference on Dec. 21, 2021.

until attending The University of Scranton when the opportunity really presented itself.

“I think I started to realize that faith was something more than what I could just take on a surface level. I heard my peers talking about faith and was challenged through a retreat to consider more deeply what faith meant in my life,” he explained. “I heard that voice. It’s really a matter of taking the first step to say ‘Yes Lord, here I am, let me give this a try.’”

Looking forward to his episcopal ministry, Bishop-elect Walsh hopes to mirror the vision of the Gospel.

“Something that is important to me, that governs my life, is the sense of God’s Providence and that has come very powerfully to me especially through the story of (Father) Walter Ciszek. You’ll hear me preach about him often. I’m a real advocate for his cause. He really came home from his experience of being a prisoner in Russia during the Second World War, convinced that is what God preserved him for, so that he could get that message of God’s Providence out to as many people – just trusting that even in the midst of difficulty, trials and sorrow – God has a plan,” Bishop-

elect Walsh said.

The news conference also featured a few ‘lighter’ moments.

Bishop Walter A. Hurley, who has been serving as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Gaylord for 18 months, recalled how when Archbishop Pierre called to inform him of Walsh’s appointment, he replied, “I have never heard of him before.” Likewise, when Archbishop Pierre called Father Walsh, he admitted to not knowing where Gaylord was.

“The only way you could describe this situation is this is a marriage made in heaven because we couldn’t come up with it on our own. It’s a special joy to welcome him today,” Bishop Hurley said, prompting a laugh from the crowd gathered at the news conference.

Before ending the news conference, Bishop Hurley thanked the people of the Diocese of Scranton.

“We’re grateful for the sacrifice that you make, so that we may have a new bishop here,” he said.

Bishop-elect Walsh’s episcopal ordination and installation has been set for March 4, 2022, at 2 p.m. in Saint Mary Cathedral in Gaylord.

Parishioners and friends send well wishes to Bishop-elect

CARBONDALE – Less than two hours after the news initially broke – Father Jeffrey J. Walsh was being appointed as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord – many of the Bishop-elect’s current parishioners already knew about the exciting announcement as they gathered for morning Mass on Dec. 21, 2021.

Even before the 8 a.m. liturgy at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, long-time parishioner Skip Scarpino made sure everyone arriving had heard.

“Did you hear the news?” he asked multiple people as they arrived on a beautiful Tuesday morning.

Scarpino had just learned the exciting information himself when someone showed him a Facebook post.

“I was shocked when I heard the news. I remember the first year Father Walsh was a priest, he was stationed here, him and I got to be very good friends. I’m happy for him,” Scarpino said.

Right after Father Walsh was ordained a priest on June 25, 1994, his first assignment was to serve as assistant pastor at Saint Rose of Lima Church.

“He is a good pastor. He takes care of his people,” Scarpino added. “Ever since then we kept in touch, every Christmas, so on and so forth, I’m happy for him. I wish him all the luck in the world.”

Parishioners Glenn and Anna Moskosky also remember Father Walsh from his first assignment more than 25 years ago at Saint Rose of Lima Church.

“I remember him when he first came to Saint Rose. It was his first assignment. He moved on and when he came back (in 2020) we were all excited about having him,” Glenn said.

The couple, who has been married 56 years, admit the announcement is bittersweet because they will once again have to send off Father Walsh – this time to the Diocese of Gaylord.

“They’re very lucky. He’s a very humble person, I believe, and he’s truly going to be missed,” Anna said.

“He’s very pious. I think he’s going to do a really nice job,” Glenn added. “He’s not only a very good priest but he’s a good friend.”

Continued on Page 17

MASS OF THANKSGIVING

AND

Sending Forth

FOR

BISHOP-ELECT JEFFREY J. WALSH

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

at 12:10 p.m.

Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton



Faithful encouraged to attend Vigil for Life Mass on Jan. 20

LAFLIN – All faithful of the Diocese of Scranton are invited and encouraged to attend a Vigil Mass for Life at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 20, at Saint Maria Goretti Parish, 42 Redwood Drive, Laflin.

During the special Mass – which is being held on the eve of the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. – prayers will be offered for a greater respect for human life.

The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as the principal celebrant and homilist at the Mass.

While in-person participation is highly encouraged, the Mass will also be broadcast on Diocesan social media platforms and CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton.

The date of the Diocese of Scranton’s Vigil Mass for Life is significant not just because it will take place before the annual March for Life on Jan. 21 – but also because it falls just before Jan. 22 – which is the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in the

United States. The Jan. 22 date is known as the annual “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children,” which Catholics are called to observe through prayer and penance.

“We invite everyone to join us in praying for the legal protection of unborn children and for the loving support for their mothers,” Shannon Kowalski, Diocesan Director of Service and Mission, said. “We will pray for our nation, public servants and that any woman experiencing a difficult pregnancy may find loving, life-affirming support.”

Anyone attending the Vigil Mass for Life is asked to bring a new pack of diapers to be donated to either the Saint Joseph’s Center Baby and Children’s Pantry or Shepherd’s Maternity House in East Stroudsburg, a facility that provides shelter, care and counseling for pregnant women which is operated by Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton.

This year could be critical in efforts to protect the unborn.

Later this year, the Supreme


Court will announce its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, an appeal by Mississippi to remove a lower court’s injunction on its law banning most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.

The case is seen as having the potential to upend the court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

During oral arguments, the majority of justices seemed willing to allow the Mississippi law, which has been blocked by a federal judge, but it was unclear if they would take this further and overturn *Roe*.

If the court ultimately sides with Mississippi, it could lay the groundwork for abortion restrictions from other states because it would be the first time the court would allow an abortion ban before the point of viability – when a fetus is said to be able to survive on its own.

The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that states cannot restrict abortion before viability, at around 24 weeks.



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
VIGIL MASS FOR LIFE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022
6:00PM | ST. MARIA GORETTI CHURCH, LAFLIN

CELEBRANT: MOST REV. JOSEPH C. BAMBERA
BISHOP OF SCRANTON

Join us in prayer on the eve of the 48th annual March for Life for a greater respect of all human life, from conception to natural death, and every moment in between.

We invite you to bring a new pack of diapers to be donated to Shepherd’s Maternity House and St. Joseph’s Center Baby and Children’s Pantry

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
DIOCESEOFSCRANTON.ORG

Annual March for Life still on this year in Washington

WASHINGTON (CNS) – The annual national March for Life – with a rally on the National Mall and march to the Supreme Court Jan. 21 – will go on as scheduled this year amid a surge in the omicron variant in the nation’s capital.

Outdoor events are not affected by the District of Columbia’s vaccine mandate for indoor gatherings, but participants should expect to wear face masks. Indoor events associated with the annual march will have to comply with city COVID-19 restrictions.

The national Pro-Life Summit, sponsored by Students for Life, is also scheduled to take place Jan. 22 at Washington’s Omni Shoreham Hotel. The event will feature former Vice President Mike Pence as its keynote speaker. Pence has been a frequent March for Life speaker, and in 2020 he introduced President Donald Trump at the event’s rally.

The March for Life has canceled its three-day Pro-Life Expo and is combining two planned Capitol Hill 101 panel discussions Jan. 20 into a single event. The

organization is still holding its annual Rose Dinner Gala.

March for Life never projects attendance figures, but an informal survey by Catholic News Service of a few groups planning to attend this year’s march indicates that the turnout may approach pre-pandemic levels.

Last year’s march was turned into a virtual event due to the pandemic and the violence at the Capitol on Jan. 6. Only an invited group of 80, joined midway by more than 100 others, marched from the nearby Museum of the Bible to just behind the Supreme Court. It was the first outdoor event in Washington since the Capitol violence, with both the Capitol and Supreme Court surrounded by high fences.

In previous years, total attendance for the rally and march up Constitution Avenue was estimated to be as high as 100,000.

“We have nearly 250 students and faculty headed to D.C.,” said Ed Konieczka, assistant director of university ministry at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. “That is five full

buses – our largest contingent since leading the march in 2017.”

A similar number was estimated by organizers of the bus caravan for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana.

However, the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, decided in December 2021 that the COVID-19 risk was too high to sponsor a bus caravan.

The march is held annually on a date nearest the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision, which legalized abortion.

The first march was held Jan. 22, 1974, organized by Nellie Gray, a government lawyer, and the Knights of Columbus. The idea was to form a “circle of life” around the Capitol and the Supreme Court. Jeanne Mancini assumed leadership of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund after Gray died in 2012.

This year’s theme is “Equality Begins in the Womb.” The rally is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. with a performance by singer Matthew West. The march starts at 1:15 p.m. after the political speeches are completed.

Pennsylvanians for Human Life Announce Buses to March for Life on Jan. 21

Hazleton PHL Chapter

The Greater Hazleton Area Chapter of Pennsylvanians for Human Life (PHL) will host a round-trip bus excursion to Washington, D.C., for participation in the 2022 National March for Life on Friday, Jan. 21.

For further information and reservation details, contact Carol Matz at (570) 956-0817; or Maryann Lawhon at 870-788-JOHN (5646).

Wyoming Valley PHL Chapter

Pennsylvanians for Human Life, Wyoming Valley Chapter, will sponsor a bus for those wishing to attend the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 21, with a morning departure from Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Swoyersville.

Transportation cost, which includes dinner, is \$65 for adults; \$35 for students. Student sponsors are most welcome and appreciated.

For more information and reservations, contact Chris Calore at (570) 824-5621.

Susquehanna Valley PHL Chapter

The Susquehanna Valley Chapter of Pennsylvanians for Human Life will sponsor a bus for those wishing to attend the March for Life. For a seat on the bus, call Evelyn Rall at (570) 398-0722. There is a non-refundable fee of \$25. The bus will depart from Beiter’s Home Center on Route 15, Williamsport, at 5:45 a.m.

Ecumenical prayer service to be held Jan. 19 to celebrate annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

SCRANTON — Faithful throughout the Diocese of Scranton will join with members of various Christian congregations of Northeastern Pennsylvania for an Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God on Wednesday, Jan. 19, at 12:10 p.m. in the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

The event highlights the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - celebrated each January since its inception in 1908 - which will be observed this year during Jan. 18-25.

The theme for the 2022 celebration is: "We saw the star in the East and we came to worship him." (cf. Matthew 2:2)

Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as both leader of prayer and homilist for the traditional ecumenical prayer service. Past chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Bishop Bambera has also served as Diocesan Director of Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations.

All faithful are welcome to attend the Jan. 19 Ecumenical Prayer Service at the Scranton Cathedral, as well as encouraged to participate in local Christian unity events throughout the weeklong observance.

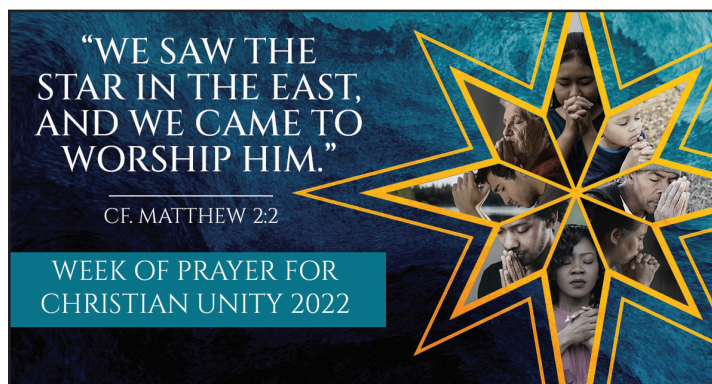
The prayer service will be broadcast live at 12:10 p.m. on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. It will also be made available on the Scranton Diocese website and across all diocesan social media platforms.

As the universal Catholic Church, including local dioceses, immerses itself deeply into the call for a new evangelization proclaimed by Pope Francis through the 2023 Synod of Bishops on Synodality, both ecumenism and interreligious dialogue have been given prominence in the discussion.

The Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality, the Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches, it is stated: "The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey."

Further, it addresses such key questions as: "What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? ... How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?"

According to Monsignor Vince Grimalia, Diocesan Coordinator for Ecumenical and



in ecumenical activities.

"It is an opportunity to renew and re-energize our commitment to Christian unity," Monsignor Grimalia said. "In a world with so much disunity, there is a need to overcome divisions and polarization and work to get nations and various ethnic, cultural and language groups to work together."

In accord with such strong beliefs for religious unity, the United Nations since 2010 has celebrated the first week of February as "World Interfaith Harmony Week."

During the observance, an "International Day of Human Fraternity" designated by the UN on Feb. 4 commemorates the signing of "A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on Feb. 4, 2019.

Interreligious Affairs, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity provides not only an opportunity for prayer for Christianity, but a time to learn more about various Christian churches and communities while offering motivation and commitment for participation



BISHOP BAMBERA'S SCHEDULE

- January 15** - Mass at Saint Martin of Tours Church
Jackson, 4:00 p.m.
- January 16** - Mass at Saint John the Evangelist Church
Susquehanna, 8:15 a.m.
- January 16** - Mass at Saint Lawrence Church
Great Bend, 9:45 a.m.
- January 19** - Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- January 20** - Mass for March for Life Vigil
Saint Maria Goretti Church, Laflin, 6:00 p.m.
- January 22** - Mass for the Filipino Community
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 6:00 p.m.
- January 23** - Mass for the Feast of Alta Gracia
Queen of Heaven Parish, Hazleton, 10:00 a.m.
- January 23** - Mass for the Feast of Alta Gracia
Annunciation Parish, Hazleton, Noon
- February 11** - World Day of the Sick Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- February 13** - Mass for Developmental & Intellectual Disabilities
Awareness Sunday
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- February 15** - Mass of Thanksgiving and Sending Forth for Bishop-elect
Jeffrey J. Walsh
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS

His Excellency, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, announces the following appointment, effective as indicated:

Rev. Brian J.W. Clarke, to Administrator *pro tem*, Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton, and Holy Name of Jesus, West Hazleton, effective January 3, 2022, until February 1, 2022.

Father Clarke will continue to serve as Pastor of Most Holy Trinity Parish, Cresco.

Rev. Kenneth M. Seegar, from Pastor, Saint Andre Bessette Parish, Wilkes-Barre, to Pastor, Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton, and Holy Name of Jesus Parish, West Hazleton, effective February 1, 2022.

Rev. Seth D. Wasnock, to Administrator *pro tem*, Saint Andre Bessette Parish, Wilkes-Barre, effective February 1, 2022. Father Wasnock will continue to serve as Pastor, Saint Maria Goretti Parish, Laflin.

Well wishes pour in for Bishop-elect Walsh

Continued from Page 15

Hundreds of people on social media echoed the feelings of Bishop-elect Walsh's parishioners in Carbondale.

Reacting to the news on the Diocese of Scranton's Facebook page, Lynn Cawley wrote, "Father Jeff Walsh is the epitome of a humble servant of God. Northeast PA is losing a great man!"

Martin Kearney added, "Scranton's loss in Northern Michigan's gain of a humble and prayerful servant. Pope Francis couldn't have chosen a better person."

In response to the overwhelming

number of messages, Bishop-elect Walsh wanted to thank everyone who posted a kind message or send him congratulations.

Bishop-elect Walsh said, "In gratitude for all the comments regarding my announcement as Bishop of the Diocese of Gaylord, I want to say thanks to all who took time to express congratulations/well wishes/kind remembrances via social media. My heart swelled with love as I read each comment and I felt truly blessed with the gift of friendship. As the adventure unfolds, the welcome mat will always be out in the wilds of northern Michigan to family and friends from NEPA. God Bless!"

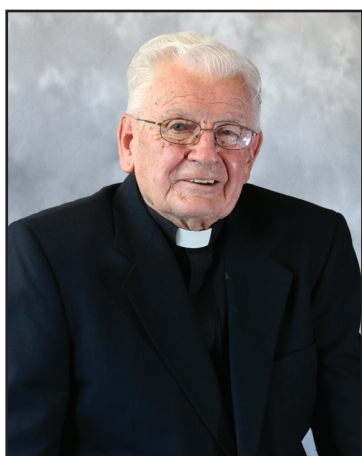
Monsignor Alexander T. Kulik remembered for decades of priestly service

WILKES-BARRE – Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated a Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial for Monsignor Alexander T. Kulik, Pastor Emeritus of Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Our Lady of Hope Parish, Wilkes-Barre, on Jan. 10, 2022.

Monsignor Kulik died on Jan. 5, 2022, at Marywood Heights, Scranton.

Monsignor Kulik, son of the late Frank and Jennie (Pesta) Kulik, was born in Avoca on April 1, 1929. He received his early education in the Avoca public school system. Monsignor Kulik graduated from Saint Mary's College, Mich., having received his bachelor's degree in June 1950. He continued his studies for the priesthood at Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood on June 5, 1954, by the Most Reverend Henry T. Klonowski, late auxiliary Bishop of Scranton.

Monsignor Kulik was assigned as assistant pastor at Saint Ann Church, Tobyhanna; Transfiguration, West Hazleton; and Nativity of the Blessed



Msgr. Alexander T. Kulik

Virgin Mary, Plymouth. He served as Professor at Saint Pius X Seminary, Dalton, and Director of Camp Saint Andrew and was then assigned as assistant pastor at Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Dickson City, and served in this capacity until his appointment as administrator of Corpus Christi Church, Montdale, in 1971.

Monsignor Kulik received his first pastorate at Corpus Christi, Montdale, in 1972, where he served for five years. In 1977, Monsignor

was appointed administrator of Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Wilkes-Barre, and then Pastor in 1983. He served in this assignment for over 21 years until his retirement and appointment as Pastor Emeritus in 2004.

He was elevated to Chaplain of His Holiness and named a Monsignor on Nov. 2, 1978, and Prelate of Honor by Pope Saint John Paul II on July 10, 1990.

In addition to his parochial duties, Monsignor also served as Chaplain of the Blakely Convalescent Home and Dean of the North Wilkes-Barre Deanery.

Monsignor Kulik celebrated the 60th Anniversary of his Ordination with a Pontifical Mass celebrated by Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, in 2014.

Monsignor is survived by a sister, Shirley Polaski, Clinton, N.J., and several nieces and nephews.

Monsignor was preceded in death by his twin brother, Daniel, and his brother, Reverend Francis J. Kulik.

Interment will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery, Dupont.

Most Rev. John F. Swantek, Retired Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, passes away

SCRANTON – A funeral Mass for the Most Reverend John Swantek, fifth Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, will be held on Saturday, Jan. 15, 2022.

Prime Bishop Emeritus Swantek passed away Jan. 7 at home surrounded by his family after an illness. He was 88.

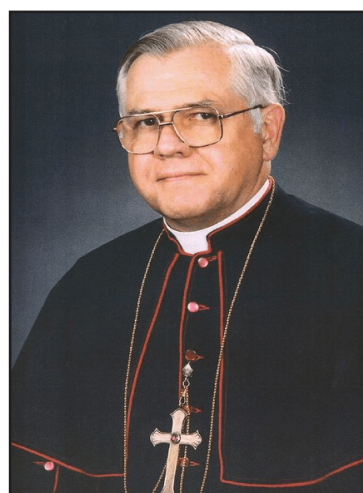
The funeral Mass will be offered Saturday at 10 a.m. in Saint Stanislaus Polish National Catholic Cathedral, 531 E. Locust Street, Scranton. Vespers service will be held Friday at 7 p.m.

Family and friends will be received at the church Friday, 4 to 7 p.m., and Saturday morning, 9 a.m. until time of Mass.

In response to learning of the death of Prime Bishop Emeritus

Swantek, the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, issued the following statement:

“It is with great sadness that I learned of the death of the Most Rev. John Swantek, fifth Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, on Jan. 7. Prime Bishop Emeritus Swantek was a well-respected, knowledgeable, compassionate and faithful leader within his Church. We give thanks to Almighty God for his many years of service as a Priest, Bishop and Prime Bishop. As both a personal friend and colleague in ministry, I will certainly remember him with deep gratitude for his tireless efforts in the dialogue between our Churches and in his passion for the work of Christian unity.



Prime Bishop Emeritus John F. Swantek

Please keep his wife, Arlene, and his entire family in your prayers at this time.”

Bishop Bambera to celebrate Mass for World Day of the Sick Feb. 11

SCRANTON – Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will celebrate Mass for the 30th World Day of the Sick on Friday, Feb. 11, 2022, at 12:10 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The annual Mass is an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who provide them with assistance and care both in health care institutions and within families and communities.

This year, the faithful will once again pray in a particular way for those who have suffered – and continue to suffer – the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mass is a special time to pray for healing and recovery of those sickened by the virus and for the medical community that has been on the frontlines of battling the coronavirus.

While in-person participation is encouraged, those who are unable to attend will be able to view the World Day of the

Sick Mass live on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. A livestream will also be made available on the Diocese of Scranton website and across all Diocesan social media platforms.

In his message for the 2022 World Day of the Sick, Pope Francis said although scientists have made great strides in the field of medicine, genuine care and listening to those who suffer must always be at the forefront of any therapy.

“Patients are always more important than their diseases, and for this reason, no therapeutic approach can disregard listening to the patient, his or her history, anxieties and fears,” the pope said.

Care that respects each patient’s “dignity and frailties” is especially needed when “healing is not possible,” he added.

“It is always possible to console; it is always possible to make people sense a closeness that is more interested in the person than in his or her pathology,” the pope wrote.



World Day of the Sick Mass

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2022
12:10 P.M.**

CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PETER

Principal Celebrant
Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton

CTV: Catholic Television will broadcast the Mass live

For more Diocesan news, visit dioceseofscranton.org

Diocesan schools plan 'Catholic Schools Week 2022' celebrations

SCRANTON — As has been a tradition for nearly 50 years, the Diocese of Scranton looks forward to joining with Catholic schools across the country to celebrate Catholic Schools Week this month.

Customarily observed during the last week of January, the 2022 edition of Catholic Schools Week will be celebrated Jan. 30-Feb. 5. Each of the 19 schools in the Scranton Diocesan education system is planning numerous activities for students, families, parishioners and community members to mark this year's celebration.

Schools typically celebrate the weeklong observance with liturgies, open houses and other programs and events focusing on the value of Catholic education, which benefits not only young people but churches, communities and the nation itself.

"While we invite and welcome families at any time throughout the year, Catholic Schools Week is a time when our current and prospective families join together to experience what sets our schools apart," Jason Morrison, Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Chief Executive Officer, said. "Our unwavering commitment to serving students, particularly throughout the pandemic, ensures



CELEBRATE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2022

January 30 - February 5

#CSW22

that we excel at providing the optimal environment to grow and achieve one's God-given potential. We welcome you to be a part of the Catholic school difference."

The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) continues to emphasize the central theme that has highlighted recent Catholic Schools Week celebrations: "Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service."

The week's theme calls attention to the purpose of Catholic schools — to form disciples, to grow the whole person and encourage students to be witnesses to Catholic social teaching.

"As we approach Catholic Schools Week we are reminded of the incredible dedication of our teachers, staff and administration who provide

the most excellent education in the most compassionate, safe and welcoming atmosphere," Superintendent of Schools Kristen Donohue said. "Our steady delivery of instruction stretches beyond academic excellence; it

very naturally includes a focus on the spiritual, emotional and social well-being of our students, faculty, staff and administrators. We are proud of the commitment of our Catholic schools to this vitally important mission."

In addition to holding fun events for students, numerous Diocesan schools celebrate Catholic Schools Week by engaging students in selfless service to others — a central aspect of Catholic education.

Catholic schools offer academic excellence and a faith-filled education for their students. National test scores, high school graduation rates, college attendance and other data show that Catholic schools frequently outperform schools in both the public and private sectors.

Based on the average public school per pupil cost of nearly \$13,000, Catholic schools also provide \$22 billion in savings

Carolers spread Christmas cheer in Nanticoke



Members of Nanticoke's Saint Faustina Kowalska Parish and its Youth Ministry partnered with the Greater Nanticoke Area Marching Band to treat residents of local nursing homes to Christmas carol programs during the holiday season. Pictured at left, the Christmas musical entertainers perform at the Birchwood Nursing Home & Rehabilitation Center in Nanticoke. Shown right, the carolers sing their Christmas songs outside the Guardian Elder Care Center in the city.

Christmas pageants staged by parish children in Moscow & Milford



Students in the Children's Faith Formation Program at Saint Patrick Parish in Milford participated in a colorful pageant retelling the Nativity Story, from Jesus' birth to the Visitation of the Magi. Directed by Laurie Barcia, who is also a fifth grade catechist in the Children's Faith Formation Program, the pageant was staged on Christmas Eve at the Pike County parish and featured Rachel Swinton and Angelica Barcia as narrators. Shown in the above photo are, from left: Joseph Barcia, Paul Barcia, Cassidy Lentoni, Joellen Nielsen and Dominic Lake.

CCD students from Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow are pictured portraying the characters for a live presentation of "The Christmas Story," which aired on the parish website during the Christmas season.

Diocese of Scranton
CATHOLIC
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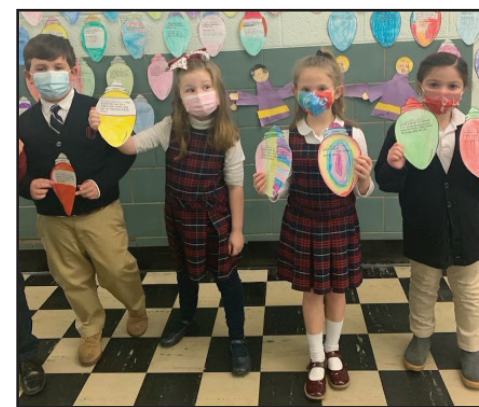
The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others. Each day, our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing today's youth and young adults to become tomorrow's faith-filled leaders.



Sixth grade students at **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** craft a vehicle to protect their egg during a STREAM engineering experiment.



Students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** presented the sounds of the season – the waiting and then the celebrating of our Lord's birth. Pictured are second graders, dressed in their Christmas finest, performing a selection for their family and friends.



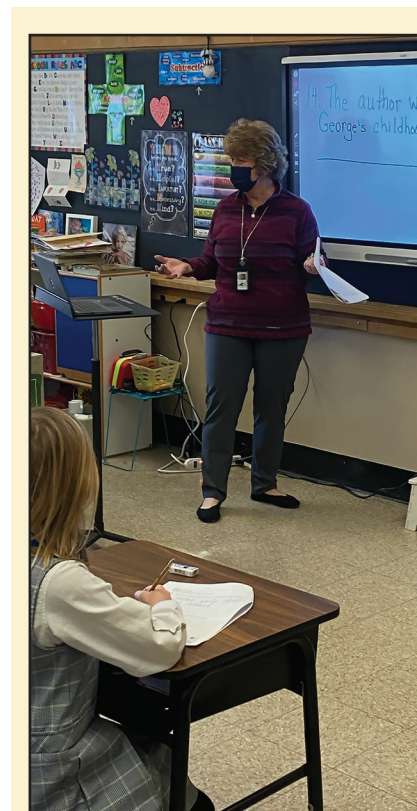
Burke Davis, Cecilia LoRusso, Maeve Morrison and Scarlett DeNaples, first grade students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**, completed 117 acts of kindness as their gifts to the Christ Child.



While preparing for their annual Christmas pageant and concert, students from **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** take a moment to pose for an official photo in commemoration of the 2021 presentation.



The choir from **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** practice for the Saint Paul Parish Virtual Concert.



There's a lot of excitement at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston**! The school recently had 20 new SmartBoard Interactive Learning Panels installed, thanks to state grant monies. Pictured is Mrs. Janet Lyons using the new panels to teach a reading lesson to her second grade class.



The pre-K class at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus with a special cake and classroom party.



Epiphany School in Sayre recorded a Christmas Concert for families. Pictured are Epiphany students participating in the Live Nativity part of the concert.



Students at **All Saints Academy in Scranton**, eagerly awaiting the birth of Christ, were treated to a Christmas carnival by the school's PTO.



PreK-3 and PreK-4 students from **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** present a Christmas pageant for their families at Saint Boniface Church.



Seniors at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore** continue the tradition of visiting community organizations to spread Christmas cheer along with their principal, Mr. Benjamin Tolerico. One stop they made was at the Dunmore Fire Department.



Guilanna Zenga and Addalynn Lilley, sixth grade students at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport**, enjoy Ugly Sweater Dress Down Day before Christmas Break.



Students at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre** presented the Living Nativity, reminding all of the true meaning of Christmas.



Freshman James Malone, juniors Dina and Gina Florentino, and senior Ryan Cabrerra, students at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg**, prepare for the school's annual Advent Liturgy.



The Advent Reflection Nativity was held the week before Christmas at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**.



"Students of Service," a community-focused group at **Holy Family Academy in Hazleton**, recently collected \$500 for Catholic Social Services' Divine Providence Shelter in Hazleton.

Pope to install catechists, lecturers at Word of God celebration

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – At his celebration of Mass for the Sunday of the Word of God Jan. 23, Pope Francis will formally install new catechists and lecturers, ministries open to women.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, which coordinates the annual celebration, said the Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Basilica will include “the conferral of the ministries of lector and catechist.”

Pope Francis’ formally instituted the ministry of catechist in May 2021. It followed his decision in January to open the ministries of lector and acolyte to women. While in most dioceses women already served as readers and altar servers at Mass, they were not formally instituted in those services on a stable basis.

Pope Francis often has spoken of the importance of selecting, training and supporting catechists, who are called to lead people to a deeper relationship with Jesus, prepare them to receive the sacraments and educate them in

the teachings of the church.

The Sunday of the Word of God, instituted by Pope Francis in 2019, is meant to encourage among all Catholics interest in knowing the sacred Scriptures and their central role in the life of the church and the Christian faith. The theme for the 2022 celebration is “Blessed are those who hear the word of God,” a verse which comes from the Gospel of St. Luke.

The pope is also scheduled to celebrate a prayer service Jan. 25 at Rome’s Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls for the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, according to the Vatican, which released a schedule of papal liturgies for January and February.

According to the schedule, published Jan. 10, he will celebrate the Feb. 2 feast of the Presentation of the Lord – which also marks the Vatican celebration of the World Day for Consecrated Life – with a Mass with consecrated men and women in St. Peter’s Basilica in the evening.

Mass for Developmental & Intellectual Disabilities Awareness to take place Feb. 13

SCRANTON – All people, including those with special abilities, have gifts to contribute to the life of the Church. The Diocese of Scranton embraces and welcomes the talents of all individuals in building up the Kingdom of God.

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant for a Mass for Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities Awareness on Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022, at 10 a.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The Mass is open to everyone. It will be broadcast live on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton. A livestream will also be made available on the Diocese of Scranton’s website and YouTube channel and a link provided on all Diocesan social media platforms.

Partners in the annual Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities Awareness Mass include

Saint Joseph’s Center in Scranton, the Diocesan SPRED community (Special Religious Education), The Arc of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Order of the Alhambra and the Catholic Deaf Community of the Diocese of Scranton.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some people who would have traditionally attended the Mass may not be able to participate in person, but are encouraged to take part in the televised broadcasts.

Bishop celebrates Mass for Our Lady of the Cloud, an Ecuadorian tradition



On Jan. 1, 2022, Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant at the Our Lady of the Cloud Mass which was held at the Notre Dame High School Theater in East Stroudsburg.

The annual event draws hundreds of faithful parishioners.

“Through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of the Cloud, may we be blessed with the wisdom and courage to embrace not merely the story of Jesus’ birth but the example of his life, death and resurrection – at the heart of which we discover the surest means of achieving life and lasting peace,” Bishop Bambera said in his homily.

Take the Diocese of Scranton’s Survey for the Synod on Synodality

More than 600 people have already taken the Diocese of Scranton’s online survey for the Synod on Synodality, but we still need to hear from many of you!

The Diocese of Scranton is answering the call of Pope Francis to participate in the local listening phase of the 2023 Synod on Synodality. It is our hope that you will prayerfully consider taking the survey as well, offering feedback about your experience as a member of the Church of Scranton.

The survey is available on the Diocese of Scranton’s website (dioceseofscranton.org). Simply click on the “Synod on Synodality” tile on the main page of the website and choose the survey in English or Spanish.

Diocese welcomes new Seminarists



On Monday, Jan. 10, 2022, Jacob Mutchler and Harrison Rapp were accepted as seminarists for the Diocese of Scranton by Bishop Joseph C. Bambera and members of the Seminary Admissions Committee.

Jacob is a member of Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg and Harrison is a member of Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish in Dunmore.

Let us pray for them, their families, our nine other seminarists and all those who are discerning a call to serve our local Church as a Diocesan Priest.

Pictured, from left: Monsignor David Bohr, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation; Jacob Mutchler; Harrison Rapp; and Father Alex Roche, Diocesan Director of Vocations and Seminarists.

Bishop-elect Walsh to celebrate 'Holy Spouses' Mass at Oblates

PITTSTON — The annual celebration of the Feast of the Holy Spouses, hosted by the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph, will be held on Sunday, Jan. 23, at 3 p.m. in the Chapel of St. Joseph, 1880 Route 315, Laffin.

Serving as principal celebrant and homilist will be Bishop-elect Jeffrey J. Walsh, recently appointed by Pope Francis as Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan.

A Scranton native, Bishop-elect Walsh is currently serving as pastor of the Carbondale parish communities of Saint Rose of Lima Parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. He will be episcopally ordained a bishop and installed as the Gaylord prelate on March 4, 2022.

The Oblates of St. Joseph were granted permission by the Holy See in 1989 to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Spouses on their proper liturgical calendar. The celebration is a pastoral occasion



to highlight the marriage vocation and spousal role of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph.

The public is invited to attend the Sunday afternoon Eucharistic liturgy, which suffices for the weekend Mass obligation. A reception that traditionally coincides with the event will not be held due to COVID-19 concerns.

For more information about the Holy Spouses celebration, contact the seminary office at (570) 654-7542.

National Marriage Week

Feb. 7 - 14, 2022

This year's theme is "Marriage: Called to the Joy of Love!"

Look for more information at dioceseofscranton.org

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Who makes house calls?

As of October 2015, I will now meet clients either at their home, or at a location they choose and no longer require clients to meet at my office. I have decided that I would change the way I meet with people so it will be as easy and as convenient as possible for the client.

Based on my practice, which consists of estate planning and administration along with elder law, I find that clients are more comfortable discussing such matters in familiar surroundings. While I know this may seem unconventional to some, I believe I will be able to serve clients much better in this fashion.

If anyone is uncomfortable with home visits, I have a few locations where I can meet in an office setting. I look forward to meeting with my existing clients and especially meeting new clients that are looking for any assistance in estate or elder law matters.

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“Children, go where I send thee.” I love this phrase from the African-American spiritual which has become a beloved catechetical song often sung at Christmas.

The words themselves begin each of the 12 verses of the song which introduces various scriptural themes and personalities of the Bible. The song is essentially based on the quotations in the Scriptures where Jesus sends His disciples ahead of His arrival in pairs.

When I started writing this article a few years ago, I chose to entitle it “Go Forth,” alluding to a similar call from Jesus that we are to go out in the world and prepare the way of the Lord. Many times, the places we are called to go are not obvious to us. We need to be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within to be sure that

“God sends us where He needs us, not where we necessarily want to go, nor to places we know or circumstances and situations which we design or plan for.”

where we are going is where the Lord needs and wants us to go.

Recently, our Diocese has been blessed — though perhaps grudgingly — to hear of the news that one of our own priests, Father Jeffrey Walsh, was named bishop of Gaylord, Michigan. I say grudgingly because it will be a great sacrifice for us to let Bishop-elect Walsh go. No doubt, we would prefer to keep him with us. But, he must go where he is sent.

Bishop-elect Walsh said himself at the press conference announcing his appointment that he audibly gasped when Archbishop Pierre, the apostolic nuncio, delivered the news to him.

So shocked was he in general that Bishop-elect Walsh was also not sure where Gaylord was.

My friends, I think that’s the point exactly. God sends us where He needs us, not where we necessarily want to go, nor to places we know or circumstances and situations which we design or plan for. Bishop-elect Walsh is a fine example for all of us of humbly accepting what God has in store for us.

Trusting in His Providence — the motto Bishop-elect Walsh has chosen — he is going forth to another place within God’s kingdom to serve with love and sincerity. I pray that each of us can have the same freedom and presence of mind and heart to trust that God will send us to places and into situations where He will ask us to do His work. Isn’t that what missionary disciples do? They go where they are sent.

Children, go where I send thee? He will send us, indeed. And He sends us with these words: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” A future of hope for us all, so long as we go where we are sent.

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For True Human Fraternity —
We pray for all those suffering from religious discrimination and persecution; may their own rights and dignity be recognized, which originate from being brothers and sisters in the human family.

Matz named pro-life liaison in Hazleton



Maryann Lawhon, president of Pennsylvanians for Human Life (PHL) in Hazleton, announces Carol Matz has assumed the role of coordinator of pro-life activities for parishes in the Greater Hazleton area. In the newly created position, Matz will serve as PHL liaison with area churches for outreach and collaboration in pro-life education, events and fundraisers. Pictured above, Lawhon (right) and Matz have set a 2022 goal of developing a pro-life curriculum available to schools and CCD programs, as well as adult education platforms, emphasizing the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. Matz brings to her new duties more than 12 years of experience in Catholic teen ministry. “We hope to bring some more youth on board to not only help with projects but to come to the table to learn more about and discuss respect life issues,” Lawhon said.

Knights to host Respect Life Mass Jan. 23 at Saint Ignatius in Kingston

Knights of Columbus Councils of Wyoming Valley are once again sponsoring their annual Respect Life Mass to mark the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion in America.

The Respect Life liturgical celebration will coincide with the 10:30 a.m. Mass offered on Sunday, Jan. 23, at Saint Ignatius Church, 339 North Maple Ave., Kingston.

During the Eucharistic liturgy, area Knights and pro-life representatives will offer prayer intentions for a greater respect for all human life and an end to abortion.

Monsignor David Tressler, host pastor, welcomes all faithful to attend and join in prayerful support of all life, from conception to natural death — most especially the unborn, those with disabilities, and the ill, aged and infirm.

IHM Sisters to continue series of virtual prayer evenings

SCRANTON — The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters will continue their monthly “Evenings of Prayer with the Sisters of IHM” on Wednesday, Feb. 9

The ongoing series of prayer devotions celebrates a specific theme each month relating to IHM history and the religious community’s charism.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Evenings of

Prayer are offered on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. via videostreaming.

Participants may access the devotions at: <https://video.ibm.com/channel/ihm-tv>.

The theme for the February 2022 prayer service is: “Haiti Prayer.”

For more information, contact the IHM Sisters in Scranton at (570) 346-5404 or communications@sistersofihm.org.



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Notice Regarding Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor

It is the policy of the Diocese of Scranton to report any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement. If you are a victim of sexual abuse committed by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton, you are encouraged to immediately report the matter to law enforcement. If any priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Scranton has cause or reason to suspect that a minor has been subjected to any form of abuse, including child sexual abuse, the matter will be reported to law enforcement.

It is also the policy of the Diocese to adhere to all civil and state regulations. To this end, the Diocese is equally committed to adhering to the norms of the *Code of Canon Law* and to upholding the tenets of the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which includes supporting victims of sexual abuse in their pursuit of emotional and spiritual well-being. As such, information regarding an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor should also be reported to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mary Beth Pacuska at (570) 862-7551.

Aviso al Respeto de Reportar el Abuso Sexual de Un Menor de Edad

Es la norma de la Diócesis de Scranton reportar cualquier alegación de abuso sexual de un menor de edad a las autoridades. Si usted es una víctima de abuso sexual cometido por un sacerdote, diácono, religioso o empleado laico, o voluntario de la Diócesis de Scranton, usted está obligado a reportar el asunto inmediatamente a las autoridades de la ley.

Si algún sacerdote, diácono, religioso, empleado laico o voluntario de la Diócesis de Scranton tiene sospecha de que un menor de edad ha sido sujeto a cualquier forma de abuso, incluyendo abuso sexual de menor de edad, el asunto será reportado a las autoridades de la ley.

Es la norma de la Diócesis defender todas las regulaciones civiles y del estado. Al fin de que la Diócesis esté comprometida igualmente a defender las normas del Código de Derecho Canónico y defender los principios de la Carta Para la Protección de Niños y Jóvenes (Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos), lo cual incluye apoyar a las víctimas de abuso sexual en pos del bienestar emocional y espiritual.

Por eso, información respecto a una alegación del asunto sexual de un menor de edad, debe ser reportada a la Coordinadora Diocesana de Asistencia para Las Víctimas, Mary Beth Pacuska, a (570) 862-7551.



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IHM Sister Mary William Philbin Dies

SCRANTON — A memorial Mass was celebrated for Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Mary William Philbin on Dec. 30 at Saint Paul Church in the Green Ridge section of Scranton. She died Dec. 22 at Regional Hospital in Scranton.

Born Mary Therese Philbin on Oct. 3, 1946, in Scranton, daughter of the late William and Mary Bohan Philbin, Sister Mary William was educated in local parochial schools, graduating from South Catholic High School in Scranton, class of 1964, and regularly attended the class reunions.

Sister entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Sept. 8, 1964, and professed her final vows on Aug. 26, 1972. She received both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degrees in elementary education from Marywood College.

During her religious life, Sister Mary William ministered in

Catholic education, serving as an elementary school teacher in the Diocese of Scranton at Our Lady of Peace School, Clarks Green; Saint Rose School, Carbondale; and Saint Clare/Saint Paul School, Scranton.

She also served on the faculties at IHM schools in Baltimore, Md.; Providence, R.I.; and Nyack and East Rockaway, N.Y.

Since 2016, Sister Mary William had been a member of the support staff and as a Telespond volunteer at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

Surviving are three sisters, Judy Digwood and husband, David, Taylor; Nancy Laffey and husband, Joseph, Moosic; and Eileen Hayes and husband, Martin, Scranton; numerous nieces and nephews, grand nieces and nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by a sister, Jeannie King, and several cousins.

Interment was held at Saint Catherine's Cemetery in Moscow.

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Prayer Requests for Priests

The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule is as follows:

January 13, Father Jaime Perez Restrepo; January 14, Father Carmen Perry; January 15, Jesuit Father Thomas Pesci; January 16, Father Thomas Petro; January 17, Father William Petruska; January 18, Father Michael Piccola; January 19, Father William Pickard; January 20, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Jackson Pinhero; January 21, Father Joseph Pisaneschi; January 22, Father John Polednak, V.E.; January 23, Father Richard Polmounter; January 24, Father John Poplawski; January 25, Monsignor Patrick Pratico; January 26, Monsignor Joseph Quinn; January 27, Father Michael Quinnan; January 28, Father Cyril Rable; January 29, Father Michael Rafferty; January 30, Father Philip Rayappan; January 31, Jesuit Father James Redington; February 1, Pope Francis; February 2, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; February 3, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; February 4, Father Gregory Reichlen; February 5, Father August Ricciardi; February 6, Father Frederick Riegler; February 7, Jesuit Father Angelo Rizzo; February 8, Father Alex Roche; February 9, Jesuit Father Patrick Rogers; February 10, Monsignor Walter Rossi; February 11, Monsignor Dale Rupert; February 12, Father John Ruth; February 13, Holy Cross Father Brogan Ryan; February 14, Father Dominic Sabi; February 15, Father Christopher Sahd; February 16, Father Thomas Sarnecki; February 17, Father Arbogaste Satoun; February 18, Father Kenneth Seegar; February 19, Monsignor John Sempa; February 20, Father Gerald Shantillo, V.G.; February 21, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Joseph Sibilano; February 22, Monsignor Constantine Siconolfi.



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The reason for the season



Continuing an annual tradition that began in 2003, Knights of Columbus Council 7622 in Jermyn once again served as the sponsor for a billboard in Lackawanna County celebrating the true meaning of Christmas. The large signage depicting the Nativity of Our Lord was made possible this year through the generous contributions from the following: Christ the King Parish in Archbald; Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Parish in Jermyn; Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Peckville; Community Bank, N.A.; Ryczak/Harrison Funeral Home; Battenberg Furniture; Bernardi-Wilson Insurance, Inc.; T & R Service Station; Highway Auto Parts; Louis J. Rapoch Funeral Home; Johnson's Fixit Shoppe; Joseph W. Arcadipane, DMD; Calabro Floor Coverings, Inc.; Vladika Insurance Agency; Convenient Food Mart; Mark Bednash Enterprises; KR Transportation Solutions; Kevin and Margaret Ryczak; and Mrs. Lynn Ryczak. Pictured in front of the "Keep Christ in Christmas" billboard prominently displayed along Business Route 6 in Eynon are, from left: K of C Council 7622 Deputy Grand Knight Mario Fitzgerald, Grand Knight Tony Spataro, and Knight Charles Battenberg, billboard chairman.

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Jermyn Knights provide Christmas warmth



Knights of Columbus Council 7622 of Jermyn sponsored a "Coats for Kids" drive during the Christmas season. Due to the generosity of Council members, parishioners of Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary in Jermyn and the local community, the Knights were able to purchase 54 winter coats that were distributed to those in need at Lakeland High School, Lakeland Elementary Mayfield Campus, Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary Parish, and Catholic Social Services in Carbondale. Knight Brock Noldy, chairman of this year's campaign, announced the drive was dedicated to the memory of Knight Del Riffe, who recently passed away after spearheading the Council's involvement in the Coats for Kids program last Christmas. Participants pictured are, from left: Deputy Grand Knight Mario Fitzgerald; Grand Knight Tony Spataro; Karen Riffe, Del's wife; Eileen Roman, Carbondale Catholic Social Services; and Knight Brock Noldy.

Catholic Happenings



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JANUARY SCHEDULE

CTV LOCAL ORIGATION IS BOXED IN BOLD BORDER, OTHER PROGRAMMING IS FROM EWTN

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
12:00 AM	DAILY MASS	SUNDAY MASS (Encore)	DAILY MASS (Encore)				
1:00 AM	FR SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	(1:10AM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	THE JOURNEY HOME (Encore)	MOTHER ANGELICA LIVE CLASSICS	EWTN LIVE (Encore)	THE WORLD OVER (Encore)	EWTN NEWS IN DEPTH
1:30 AM		EWTN GALLERY	EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Encore)				
2:00 AM	ICONS SPOTLIGHT		EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN GALLERY
2:30 AM	THEY MIGHT BE SAINTS						
3:00 AM	EWTN GALLERY	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE	SPECIALS	ANGELUS FROM NAZARETH	LIFE ON THE ROCK	BATTLE READY	FINDING ALL THINGS IN GOD
3:30 AM		DEFENDING LIFE		PAPAL AUDIENCE(3:15)	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY (Call in thurs)		AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY
4:00 AM	EWTN LIVE (Encore)	LIVING THE DIVINE MERCY	FIRST COMES LOVE	REFLECTIONS(4:15)	BOB AND PENNY LORD	WEB OF FAITH 2.0	SAVORING OUR FAITH
4:30 AM		SUNDAY BEST WITH FR GROESCHEL	GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR A HAPPY LIFE	REAL LIFE CATHOLIC	THE PROMISE	LIFE IS WORTH LIVING	POLISH CATHOLIC
5:00 AM	THE REFORMATION	EWTN BOOKMARK	THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL	DOMINICAN SISTERS	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY	EWTN SPECIALS	CATHOLIC BEGINNINGS
5:30 AM	WHERE GOD WEEPS	CATHOLIC VIEW FOR WOMEN	METANOIA	THE CRUSADES			CATHOLICS COME HOME
6:00 AM	ANGELUS WITH POPE FRANCIS	EWTN ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS					
6:30 AM	JOURNEY THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES	G.K. CHESTERTON	CHURCH AND THE POOR	MATTHEWS TESTIMONY TO JESUS	SAINTS VS SCOUNDRELS	THE CHOICES WE FACE	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE
7:00 AM	THE CHAPLET OF ST. MICHAEL					STATIONS OF THE CROSS	CHAPLET OF ST. MICHAEL
7:30 AM	HOLY LAND ROSARY						
7:50 AM	THE HOLY ROSARY	LITANY OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY	LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME	LITANY OF ST. JOSEPH	LITANY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD	LITANY OF SACRED HEART	THE HOLY ROSARY
8:00 AM	SUNDAY MASS (Live)	DAILY MASS (Live)					
9:00 AM	(9:20AM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	HOLY ROSARY WITH THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD					
9:30 AM	EWTN ROSARY FRANCISCANS	SUNDAY BEST WITH FR. GROESCHEL	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (ENCORE)	EWTN LIVE (ENCORE)	THE WORLD OVER (Encore)	MY CATH. FAMILY
10:00 AM	SUNDAY MASS ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL	RELIGIOUS CATALOG	MOTHER ANGELICA LIVE	LIVE WITH PASSION	FOCUS	MOTHER ANGELICA LIVE CLASSICS	LUCY AND FRIENDS
10:30 AM		CHOICES WE FACE					HERMIE AND FRIENDS
11:00 AM		OFOD/SPECIALS/LIVE WITH PASSION	MAN AND WOMAN	ST ANN'S WEEKLY NOVENA	MUSIC AND THE SPOKEN WORD	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY	AT HOME WITH JIM AND JOY
11:30 AM	EWTN NEWS IN-DEPTH	THE PROMISE		MARRIAGE, FOR BETTER, FOREVER	MARRIAGE WORKS IN CHRIST	NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING	BOB & PENNY LORD PRESENT
12:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS (Encore)	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, LIVE AT 12:10 p.m.					EWTN DAILY MASS (Encore)
12:30 PM		"DIOCESAN DATEBOOK" airs before and after Mass.					
1:00 PM	(1:20PM) LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART	WOMEN OF GRACE					EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE
1:30 PM	IN CONCERT	AT HOME WITH JIM & JOY	PRO LIFE WEEKLY	AT HOME WITH JIM & JOY	CHOICES WE FACE/OFOD	WOMEN OF GRACE HOUR LONG	DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MERCY
2:00 PM		CALLED TO COMMUNION	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION	FR. SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	THE JOURNEY HOME	LIFE ON THE ROCK	EWTN ON LOCATION
2:30 PM					STATIONS OF CROSS		
3:00 PM	THE CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY IN SONG						
3:20 PM	LIVE ADORATION FROM EWTN CHAPEL						
3:30 PM	THE ROSARY FROM LOURDES	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, (Encore)					ROSARY FROM LOURDES
4:00 PM	VATICANO	THE HOLY ROSARY DIOCESAN DATEBOOK					SUNDAY VIGIL MASS ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL
4:30 PM	SAVORING OUR FAITH	MASTERPIECE DONUT	THE FRIAR	TRUTH IN THE HEART	CAT CHAT	BUG TIME ADVENTURES	
5:00 PM	CHURCH UNIVERSAL	EWTN BOOKMARK	THE CHOICES WE FACE	EWTN RELIGIOUS CATALOGUE	POLISH CATHOLIC	THEY MIGHT BE SAINTS	GRAB YOUR CATECHISM
5:30 PM	SUNDAY PASSIONIST MASS	SPECIALS					FIRST COMES LOVE
6:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS FROM ST. PETERS CATHEDRAL	EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Live)					METANOIA
6:30 PM		CATHOLICS COME HOME	REAL LIFE CATHOLICS	CHURCH UNIVERSAL	VATICANO	WHAT IS GOD'S WILL?	WALSINGHAM STORIES
7:00 PM	SUNDAY MASS	THE DAILY MASS FROM ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL, (Encore)					DAILY MASS
7:30 PM		THE HOLY ROSARY DIOCESAN DATEBOOK					
8:00 PM	(8:20) LITANY OF SACRED HEART	THE JOURNEY HOME (Live)	OFOD OR SPECIALS (CAN BE 90 MINUTES) MUSIC AND SPOKEN WORD	EWTN LIVE	THE WORLD OVER (Live)	EWTN NEWS IN DEPTH	EWTN CINEMA
8:30 PM	CATHOLICS COME HOME						
9:00 PM	LIFE ON THE ROCK	EWTN NEWS NIGHTLY (Encore)					
9:30 PM	HOLY ROSARY W MOTHER ANGELICA	WEEKLY NOVENA TO ST. ANN	THE CHOICES WE FACE	FOCUS	LIVE WITH PASSION	WEEKLY NOVENA TO ST. ANN	
10:00 PM	EWTN SPECIALS	THE WORLD OVER LIVE (ENCORE)	SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (ENCORE)	FR. SPITZER'S UNIVERSE	PRO-LIFE WEEKLY	LIFE ON THE ROCK	LIVING RIGHT WITH DR. RAY
10:30 PM					DEFENDING LIFE	ICONS SPOTLIGHT	
11:00 PM	CATHOLIC BEGINNINGS	BATTLE READY	LONG RIDE HOME	CROSSING THE GOAL	REAL LIFE CATHOLIC	WOMEN OF GRACE HOUR LONG	WEB OF FAITH 2.0
11:30 PM	CATHOLIC VIEW FOR WOMEN	WOMEN OF GRACE					EWTN BOOKMARK

bird games begin at 6:20 p.m.; regular games follow. Admission package includes weekly jackpot and 17 regular games. Center is handicapped accessible at the Scott Road entrance; variety of foods and beverages available for purchase. Shuttle service provided from Carbondale and Scranton. For more information, call the parish office (570) 489-2091.

Bereavement Support Group Sessions — JAN. 19 & 26, series of weekly gatherings addressing topics dealing with the grief process to enable participants find healing; Bereavement Support Group hosts seasonal meetings on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 330 Wyoming Ave., Scranton (across from St. Peter's Cathedral). Anyone interested in attending is asked to contact the Cathedral Parish office at (570) 344-7231.

Mac & Cheese/Chili Cook-Off — JAN. 30, sponsored by St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Williamsport; event will be held in the parish's Fleming Center, 720 West Fourth St., following the celebration of the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass. Beverages and hot dogs will also be available for purchase. Admission cost: adults, \$5; children (ages ten and younger), free of charge.

35th Annual Mardi Gras — FEB. 26, hosted by St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Williamsport; held from 7:30 p.m. to midnight in the parish's Fleming Center, 720 West Fourth St. Doors open at 7 p.m.; dance music provided from 8 p.m. to midnight. Cost: \$20 (in advance) or \$25 (at door); reservations for table of eight available for \$150 (in advance). For tickets, contact the parish office (570) 323-9456.

Weekly Eucharistic Adoration — JAN. 13, hosted at St. Anthony/St. George Maronite Catholic Church, 311 Park Ave. (corner of Dana Street), Wilkes-Barre; all-day exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament held every Thursday. Devotion concludes with sacramental confessions at 6 p.m., followed by Rosary recitation and closing benediction, with individual blessing with the monstrance of the Eucharistic Lord. Celebration of Mass concludes the day of adoration on the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. All faithful are welcome.

Weekly/Monthly Pro-Life Rosary Gatherings — JAN. 13/ FEB. 4, offered for the special intentions of ending abortion and closure of the Planned Parenthood location in Wilkes-Barre; Rosary is prayed every Thursday and First Friday of the month at 10 a.m. in front of the offices of Planned Parenthood, 101 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre (across from King's College). All faithful are welcome to participate.

Weekend Pierogi & Soup Sales — JAN. 15 & 16, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Parish, 1309 West Locust St., West Scranton; pierogi and variety of soups are sold prior to and following the weekend Masses on Saturday at 4 p.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m. Soups include clam chowder, chicken noodle, piggy, and Italian Wedding. Cost per order: pierogi, \$8/dozen; soups, \$8/quart.

Weekly Bingo — JAN. 17, hosted by Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Dickson City; bingo games held every Monday evening in St. Mary's Visitation parish center, 625 Dundaff St., Dickson City, with doors opening at 5 p.m. Early

Apostleship of Prayer

Papal Intention for February 2022

For Religious Sisters & Consecrated Women — We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage.

May they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

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Alhamar No. 4, the local caravan of the International Order of Alhambra, recently held a memorial Mass for all deceased members, celebrated by Father Thomas Petro, Alhamar's assistant chaplain and pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Dupont. Founded in 1904, the Order of Alhambra is a Catholic fraternal and charitable order especially committed to assisting intellectually disabled individuals. Throughout the year, Alhamar joins the order's other regional caravans in providing activities and support for special-needs children and adults. Pictured above during the liturgy of remembrance are, first row from left: Donna Magni, Alhamar vice grand commander; George Yatison, historiographer; Thomas Keeney, former grand commander; Cathy Kennedy, grand scribe; Marilyn Krall, master of the oasis; and Ada Magni, scribe of the exchequer. Second row: Paul Makuch, past grand commander; Grand Commander Francis Kennedy; Father Petro; and Ruth Yaple, master of the wardrobe. For more information on membership and donation opportunities with the Alhamar Caravan, contact Ada Magni at (570) 693-1338 or amagni@earthlink.net.

*Alhambra offering scholarships
for those pursuing careers
in special education*

In recognition of the increasing importance of education for those with special needs, the International Order of Alhambra announces its annual scholarship program providing financial aid to students pursuing careers in education for persons with disabilities.

The Alhambra Scholarship awards assist college students studying to teach intellectually and developmentally disabled persons.

Open to all eligible U.S. residents, the scholarships are granted on the basis that applicants are dedicated to the

field of special education.

The number of scholarships and amounts vary each year, based on program fund levels.

Eligibility guidelines include college undergraduate junior and seniors enrolled in qualifying programs, and master's degree and community college students in special education studies who have accrued half of the required graduation credits.

For information on requirements and to obtain an application, contact Ada Magni at amagni@earthlink.net. Application deadline is Feb. 23.

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Marian Devotion Rosary prayer services scheduled

Marian Devotion Ministries in the Diocese of Scranton is dedicated to promoting prayerful devotion to Jesus and Mary through recitation of the Holy Rosary.

Prayer rallies and Rosary evenings are hosted throughout the Diocese and include the Rosary with chanted Scriptural mysteries, Fatima prayers and hymns.

Upcoming Marian Devotion events are scheduled as follows:

Third Monday of the Month Rosary — Jan. 17, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Oblates of Saint Joseph Chapel, Route 315, Laffin. Service includes litany and Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Pro-Life Rosary Rally — Jan. 22, at noon at Saint Thomas More Parish, Theodore St. & Main Ave., North Scranton. Following the National March for Life in Washington on Jan. 21, prayers will

be offered for an end to abortion and for the protection of the unborn.

Third Monday of the Month Rosary — Feb. 21, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Oblates of Saint Joseph Chapel, Route 315, Laffin. Service includes litany and Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

To host an event or for more information, contact Ernie Pappa at (570) 241-8171 or email: singtomary@aol.com.



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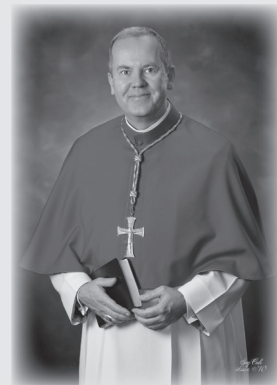


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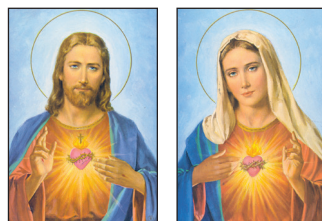


Blue Army Reparation Vigil

The next monthly First Friday Reparation Vigil, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary and sponsored by the Blue Army, will be held **Feb. 4** at Saint Joseph's Oblate Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin (Pittston).

Devotions begin Friday evening at 8 p.m. with recitation of the Rosary, during which time confessions are heard. Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated at 8:55 p.m., followed by benediction and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and consecration to the Sacred Heart.

The vigil continues with the crowning of the Blue Army



Pilgrim Virgin Statue, the Blue Army Pledge, Fatima prayers and Marian hymns, followed by litany and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The vigil concludes with scapular enrollment at 10:15 p.m.

Music for the First Friday devotion is provided by Marian Devotion Ministries, led by Ernie Pappa.

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Doggone it: When a papal point misses the mark



Pope Francis greets dog owners during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in this Sept. 19, 2018. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Context is everything. But sometimes Pope Francis assumes people know him and the context of his words.

When they don't, hackles are raised.

One case in point has garnered huge publicity, again: Pope Francis' view on couples having pampered pets instead of children.

The nervous laughter in the Vatican audience hall Jan. 5 should have tipped him off that he was heading for a mishap.

Speaking at his general audience about the importance of parenthood, both literal and spiritual, Pope Francis again brought up his concern about a "demographic winter," especially in Europe, where birthrates are consistently below death rates.

The pope spoke about the suffering of couples who cannot have children and about the bravery of those who choose to adopt.

But what stuck in many people's craw was when he said that "many couples do not have children because they do not want to, or they have just one - but they have two dogs, two cats. Yes, dogs and cats take the place of children."

When people laughed, he responded, "Yes, it's funny, I understand, but it is the reality. But this denial of fatherhood or motherhood diminishes us, it takes away our humanity."

In his audience talk and when discussing the "demographic winter" Dec. 26, the feast of the Holy Family, Pope Francis mentioned the practical problems declining birthrates have for a nation, especially when it does not have enough young workers paying taxes to support the pensions and

health care of the elderly.

The issue has long been a concern for Pope Francis, who has made it clear he does not believe Catholic couples need to have as many children as possible, but he does believe countries and companies should enact policies that make it possible for couples to have the children they long for.

But the idea of some couples being selfish has been part of his discourse, too. In fact, in "Fratelli Tutti" in 2020, he wrote, "a decline in the birthrate, which leads to an aging of the population, together with the relegation of the elderly to a sad and lonely existence, is a subtle way of stating that it is all about us, that our individual concerns are the only thing that matters."

And, seeming to pick on those who would rather dote on their dogs or cats is not new for him either.

The fur also flew in June 2014 after Pope Francis preached at an early morning Mass in the chapel of his residence with couples celebrating big wedding anniversaries.

Again, he spoke of the pain of couples unable to have children and of the suffering of parents whose child is ill. But that didn't cause alarm.

According to the Vatican newspaper, the pope told the couples that "Jesus does not like marriages in which couples do not want children, in which they want to remain fruitless," who think "not having children is better, this way you can travel and see the world, you can have a house in the country and relax!"

Such a culture, the newspaper quoted the pope as saying, suggests "it is more comfortable to have a little dog and two cats" to love, but at end of such a marriage, "old age arrives in solitude, with the bitterness of awful

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loneliness: it is fruitless." Speaking to reporters returning to Rome with him from Panama in 2019, he said he saw something there that he didn't see in Europe. "They hold up their children and

say, 'This is my victory, this is my future, this is my pride!' In the demographic winter we are experiencing in Europe - below zero in Italy - this should make us think: What is my pride? Tourism, a villa,

a small dog or raising a child?" Still, he has praised some attention to pets, like at the chrisem Mass in 2020 when he lauded priests who are so close to their people that they even know their dogs' names.