



The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

January 16, 2025

Parishes asked to hold special collection to assist wildfire victims

**PARISH SPECIAL COLLECTION
ANNOUNCEMENT**

LOS ANGELES WILDFIRE RELIEF

**All funds will go to Catholic Charities USA's
Los Angeles Wildfire Relief Initiative, with
100% of funds supporting those who have
been displaced or are suffering as a result of
the wildfires.**



As we witness the ongoing devastation caused by the wildfires that are ravaging parts of Los Angeles and surrounding areas, all parishes in the Diocese of Scranton are being asked to hold a special second collection to support our brothers and sisters who are in need of assistance.

Father Gerald W. Shantillo, Vicar General of the Diocese of Scranton, sent a message to all pastors on Jan. 14, asking them to take up the special collection. He noted that in the past, parishioners have been very generous with prayers, outreach, and donations in other disaster situations.

“The funds raised will be donated directly to Catholic Charities USA – the official domestic relief agency of the Catholic Church in the United States. As usual, 100-percent of funds raised will go directly to local agencies in the affected areas who are offering emergency and long-term relief to those who have been displaced, or are suffering as a result of the wildfires,” Father Shantillo wrote.

He continued, “As Catholics, we are called to show mercy and compassion in times of suffering. This is an opportunity for us to unite in prayer and action, offering not only our financial assistance, but also our thoughts and prayers for all those affected.”

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**Fire captain makes way through ruins of
incinerated church to find tabernacle
intact**



Four days after Corpus Christi Church was incinerated in the Palisades Fire, Capt. Bryan Nassour of the Los Angeles Fire Department picked his way over a 6-foot layer of rubble in the ashen bones of the sanctuary and recovered the tabernacle Jan. 11.

“I did it because the whole community has been decimated — it looks like a nuclear bomb has gone off and nothing is standing,” Nassour told Angelus, the news outlet of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Nassour is a member of St. Francis de Sales Church in Sherman Oaks, and his brother belongs to Corpus Christi.

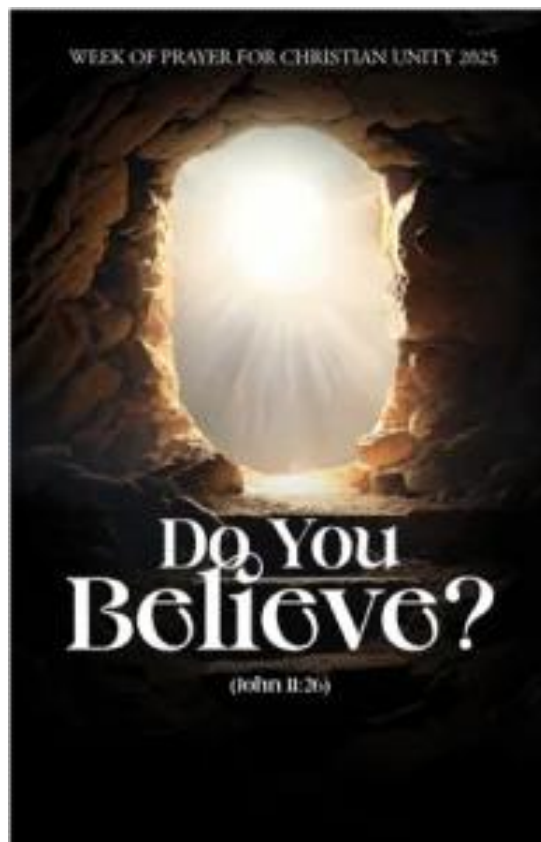
“My brother lost his home. I have close friends who lost everything but the shirts on their backs, and they belong to that church too. So, if I could save just one thing, let it be this, so they have something to believe in,” he said.

That Saturday morning Nassour, whose station in Pacific Palisades is across the street from Corpus Christi, had been up all night battling other fires. As he sipped coffee at his desk and gazed at the ruined church, he

decided to check for valuables. He wanted to protect them from looters and perhaps return something meaningful to the parish.

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Ecumenical Prayer Service to be held Jan. 22 at Cathedral of Saint Peter



Faithful throughout the Diocese of Scranton will join with members of various Christian congregations of northeastern Pennsylvania for an Ecumenical Celebration of God's Word on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025, at 12:10 p.m. in the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

All people of goodwill are invited to participate in the celebration highlighting the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which takes place from Jan. 18-25, 2025.

The observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity carries added significance this year, because 2025 marks the 1,700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in Turkey.

The council, which began meeting in May 325 AD, gave birth to the Nicene Creed, affirmed the full divinity of Christ, and set a formula for determining the date of Easter.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as leader of prayer for the traditional ecumenical prayer service at the Cathedral of Saint Peter. Bishop Bambera is once again serving as Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Homilist for this year's prayer service is Father Scott P. Sterowski, Diocesan Coordinator for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, who took over that role on Sept. 1, 2024. Father Sterowski also serves as Pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Throop, and Holy Cross Parish, Olyphant.

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Catholic School System releases "Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future." Strategic Growth Plan



After nearly two years of consultative work and thoughtful listening, the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System has released its Strategic Growth Plan entitled “Our Faith. Our Students. Our Future.”

On Jan. 8, 2025, all Catholic school families received a copy of the plan, which Diocesan leadership hopes will help to “strengthen and enrich the educational experience” of all Catholic school students.

The Strategic Growth Plan is broken down into seven key areas: Catholic Mission & Identity; Academic Excellence; Governance & Leadership; Enrollment Management; Development; Infrastructure; and Financial Stability. Each section contains high-level goals as well as action steps that can be taken to meet those goals.

“Our Catholic School System has much to celebrate, with enrollment this year reaching its highest level in seven years, which is a testament to the dedication of our educators, administrators, staff, and supportive community,” the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, and Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Superintendent, wrote in a joint letter to families. “With a clear vision and collective commitment, we know that we can build on our

successes and strategically navigate the path forward to ensure our Catholic School System continues to thrive and serve future generations.”

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St. Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception holds final Mass



A crowd of hundreds gathered Jan. 12, 2025, to celebrate the final Mass at the historic Saint Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception on South Washington Street in Wilkes-Barre.

The church, which was founded in 1845, closed its doors for the final time at the conclusion of Mass, marking the final day of the first Catholic Church in Wilkes-Barre.

“It is a sad day, a very sad day,” former parishioner Stacy Moore said.

Moore, who grew up in Wilkes-Barre, moved to Scranton in 1990, but decided to come back to attend the closing Mass.

“I was baptized here, was an altar server here, and was confirmed here,” he explained.

Father Joseph Verespy, Pastor, Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary Parish, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the closing Mass.

The long-time priest noted that “there is a lot of history” within the four walls of the church that needs to be celebrated. He said that over the last few weeks many people have approached him to share that the downtown church is where they received their sacraments, were married, or even their grandparents were married.

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Pope injures arm in a fall, wears sling at audiences



Pope Francis was wearing his arm in a sling during his meetings and audiences Jan. 16 after hurting his right arm in a fall.

“This morning, due to a fall at the Casa Santa Marta, Pope Francis suffered a contusion to his right forearm, without a fracture. The arm was immobilized as a precautionary measure,” the Vatican press office said.

The note was published after Vatican Media had distributed photographs of the 88-year-old pontiff’s morning meetings in which he was wearing a sling that appeared to be made from an elastic bandage tied at his neck. While the photos showed shaking hands with his left hand, other photos showed him using his right hand to sign a document.

He also had fallen in early December, hitting his chin on his bedside table and sporting a significant bruise on the right side of his face when he created 21 new cardinals Dec. 7.

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March for Life speakers to feature DeSantis and Bishop Thomas



Gov. Ron DeSantis, R-Fla., and Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, will be among the speakers at the 52nd annual March for Life, the group said Jan. 9.

DeSantis, a Catholic who ran an unsuccessful bid for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, signed abortion restrictions in Florida during his tenure. Florida was one of just three states that had abortion-related ballot measures in 2024 where voters did not reject restrictions. Unlike the other nine states with such measures, the Sunshine State requires proposed amendments to its constitution to reach a threshold of 60% to pass.

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Mass for the Preservation of Peace & Justice to be held Jan. 22



A Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice will be celebrated on Wednesday, January 22, at 6:30 p.m. in the lower church of St. Ann's Basilica, 1233 St. Ann St., Scranton, to prayerfully mark the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision, Roe vs. Wade.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have called for all dioceses of the United States to observe "a day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion."

All area faithful are invited to attend this Mass, which will conclude with a period of Eucharistic Adoration and the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

A light social will follow.

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Pope looks back on his life, urges people to look
to future with hope

POPE FRANCIS
HOPE
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY



While calling himself an “old man” and saying he never expected to be pope this long, Pope Francis said he still has dreams for the future.

“We must not stumble upon tomorrow, we must build it, and we all have the responsibility to do so in a way that responds to the project of God, which is none other than the happiness of mankind, the centrality of mankind, without excluding anyone,” the 88-year-old pope wrote in his autobiography.

“Hope: The Autobiography” was written with the Italian editor Carlo Musso beginning in 2019. The book was released Jan. 14 in its original Italian and in 17 other languages in about 100 countries. Random House published the book in the United States, and Penguin Random House Canada released it in Canada.

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Best gift a child can receive is faith, pope says at baptisms



When children are baptized, their parents and the church are giving them the greatest gift ever: the gift of faith, Pope Francis said before baptizing 21 infants in the Sistine Chapel.

“Let us ask the Lord that they grow in the faith, a true humanity (and) in the joy of family,” he said in his brief homily at Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord Jan. 12. Afterward, he led the recitation of the Angelus prayer with visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

Like last year, Pope Francis led the baptismal prayers and poured the water over the heads of the infants and was assisted in anointing the babies by Cardinals Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, and Fernando Végez Alzaga, president of the commission governing Vatican City State.

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Catholic Ministries Appeal approaching 85% of goal - will you help us reach the finish line?

Support the Catholic Ministries Appeal



Many men first consider the priesthood because someone encouraged them to do so. Your gifts fund Vocation Ministry efforts, as well as providing seminarian education and formation.



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