

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

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During Lent, find hope in the cross

(OSV News) - The start of Lent is now less than two weeks away. Are you ready?

Lent gets its name from a word meaning “springtime,” the time of year when the hours of daylight are lengthening and the sun is bringing back its warmth and light.

The Lenten season, indeed all of springtime, is a time of hope: We deepen our relationship with Christ through our Lenten disciplines and look to his crucifixion, death and resurrection to overcome the darkness that can cause us to struggle and despair.

Some days we may not feel the love of God that is always present, but we can rely on hope to move us forward in faith, especially in the 2025 Jubilee Year, which Pope Francis gave the theme “Pilgrims of Hope.” Exercise hope this Lent and find renewal for the coming Easter season, where we celebrate Christ’s joyful resurrection.

Hope is a theological virtue, a gift from God that helps us act as his children.

Received at baptism, hope gives us confidence and inspiration as we look forward to heaven and salvation. Hope allows us to move forward in faith even in the most doubtful or difficult times. Hope can help us feel secure even in the midst of our own failings or the injustices we see in the world around us.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, “Hope denotes a movement or a stretching forth of the appetite toward an arduous good.”

In other words, we are reaching for the goodness of God when we exercise hope - even when it isn’t easy.

Hope is also a form of trust in, and surrendering to, our loving God. We have faith in his goodness, and we trust his guidance for our lives and future. And, while

hope is a gift, it is also an active choice we make to stretch toward God’s goodness.

This stretching exercise can take many forms as we live the days of Lent through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

• **Pray with hope.** The season of Lent calls us to deepen our prayer lives.

St. Padre Pio’s famous phrase, “Pray, hope and don’t worry,” is a reminder that prayer can give us comfort when we place our hope in God.

Prayer shows our reliance on God as well as our confidence in God. Along with praying traditional Catholic prayers, it is helpful to pray with God’s word. This Lent, renew your prayer life by reflecting on these hope-filled Scripture passages:

“Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer” (Rom 12:12).

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).

“Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy” (Heb 10:23).

Another way to deepen our faith this Lent is to learn and recite the Act of Hope.

Consider God’s mercy as you reflect on Christ’s death and resurrection and find hope in the promise of salvation:

“O my God, relying on your infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.”

• **Fast with hope.** During Lent, Catholics are called to days of fasting from food and abstinence from meat as we refocus our discipleship.



The goal of fasting is to improve our relationship with Christ as we experience sacrifice in honor of his sacrifice for us. Fasting can help us feel connected with Christ and solidarity with the poor. Many Catholics also traditionally “give up” something for Lent.

Here are some ideas to make your Lenten sacrifice a hope-building exercise.

Refrain from negative or hopeless comments; try saying things only in positive ways. Avoid watching television or movies with negative messages or dialogue. Give away items that are burdening you with clutter; find new homes for them with a charity donation. Trade the time you usually spend on screens or sports viewing to take walks with family or friends. Skip buying desserts or treats and use the money you save to purchase flowers for someone who needs a day-brightener.

As you fast, consider Pope Francis’ April 2017 TED Talk in which he addressed misconceptions around hope.

“Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naive and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing,” he said. “Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn’t lock itself into darkness, that doesn’t dwell on the past, (that) does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow. ... And it can

do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness.”

• **Give alms with hope.** “It is in giving that we receive,” according to the Prayer of St. Francis. Almsgiving can seem the easiest of Lenten disciplines.

Most parishes have opportunities to donate funds to missions or the poor, and these are important works of charity.

Giving funds to help support others has been a part of Lent since the earliest days of Christianity and brings hope to others. However, as St. Teresa of Kolkata said, “It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into the giving” that’s important. Exercising hope means we are relying on God’s love for us, which calls us to truly love others. This might mean that we exercise our hope this Lent by giving our love in time as well as in treasure.

This Lent, consider volunteering time at your parish during one of their Lenten activities, or help clean or decorate the church in preparation for Holy Week. Write cards to family and friends expressing ways they help you feel more hopeful and thanking them for their support.

This Lent, let us work to become more understanding, compassionate and faithful through developing a habit of hope!



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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10 Tips for a Christ-centered Lent

1. Pray with Christ in the desert to gain His faith

Be explicit about it: Imagine yourself next to Jesus in the desert; or imagine him joining you wherever you pray. Spiritual masters like St. Ignatius of Loyola say we are free to use our imaginations not because it's helpful to pretend Jesus is with us, but to help our minds acknowledge what is true.

Lord Jesus, give us the faith that will allow us to see your presence, essence and power everywhere in all the things that you made.

2. Fast with Jesus Christ in the desert to learn hope

It is the Holy Spirit, the consoler, that leads Jesus into the desert in the Gospel for the first Sunday of Lent. This reveals what real consolation looks like. The Holy Spirit doesn't console us by telling us that our life here on earth is just fine. He consoles us by telling us that we have a deeper relationship that keeps us rooted and steady as storms rage.

Lord Jesus, as we sit with you in the desert, give us a share in the spiritual hope that only grows as our false, material hopes wane.

3. Give alms to grow in love for the suffering Jesus

To become like Jesus, you have to see Christ in others. Mother Teresa, the saint of charity, shared what she called "The Gospel on five fingers": You. Did. It. To. Me. This was the criteria Jesus the Judge will use at the end of time: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

Lord Jesus, as we give alms this Lent, help us console you in the people you identify so closely with that in serving them we serve you.

4. Pray the Stations of the Cross to see with Jesus' wisdom

When Jesus Christ sees Pilate on the way of the cross, he sees his dignity and appeals to that. When he sees his mother, he is encouraged by her fidelity. When Simeon is seen by Christ, it changes the trajectory of his life. When Veronica is seen by him, he leaves his image with her.

Lord Jesus, help us enter into the Stations of the Cross deeply so that we see with you and are seen by you.

5. Do spiritual reading to think with Christ's understanding

The gift of understanding is the holy insight that lights up your brain. If a passage of the Bible has ever jumped out at you and convicted you, if a homily's words have ever cut you to the heart, if you ever felt like you finally "got" what life is all about for one fleeting moment - you have experienced the Holy Spirit's gift of understanding.

Lord Jesus, fill our minds with your understanding through our relationship with you and those who came before us in the Faith.

6. Attend Mass to imbibe Christ's knowledge

The purpose of life is to know, love and serve God. To know him means to know things about him, but it also means to "have knowledge" of him in the Biblical sense: to unite with the body of Christ. That means that the Catholic Mass's Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist are a summing up of one of our whole life's tasks.

Lord Jesus, give us the gift of receiving you deeply at each Mass, through our ears and on our tongues.

7. Give something up so that your heart grows in Christ's fortitude

Giving something up is a Lenten tradition for a reason. Think of all the things lovers give up to make their beloved first in their lives: their own preferences, their personal time, and the money they would have spent on themselves. Think of all the things parents give up because their children become first in their lives: their days and nights, their travel plans and their future plans. They give them up gladly for the person their heart loves most.

Jesus, love gives us the fortitude to give things up for those we love. Give us the fortitude to give up that thing that most keeps us from you.

8. Live Ash Wednesday, Fridays and Good Friday to walk in Christ's counsel

Think of counsel as the Holy Spirit's GPS system. It allows you to judge where to go and how to act almost by intuition. This doesn't happen magically; it happens by building the habit of following God's will, which is expressed in his church. The precepts of the church are here to help give us that habit: Fast with Jesus as the church asks on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstain from meat on Fridays in union with his sacrifice, and more.

Lord Jesus, you gave us your church as a way to train us to walk in your path. Give us the grace to walk in fidelity to your church and to you.

9. Pray the Rosary to join Christ in His fear of God and piety

The person who best exemplifies life in Christ is Our Lady, who carried Christ in her womb. In the joyful mysteries of the rosary, she makes Christ the center of her life and brings him to others. In the final glorious mysteries, she is given the awe-inspiring gifts of being welcomed at Christ's side in heaven as a queen.

Lord Jesus, let me kneel with your mother in awe at your majesty and fold my hands with her in appreciation at your closeness.

10. Recommit to your baptism on Easter, ready to become one with Jesus

Spoiler alert: At the end of Lent, you will be renewing your baptismal promises at Easter Mass. It turns out that renewing your baptismal graces is what Lent was about all along.

Lord Jesus, every year I renew my baptismal promises at Easter. This year I want to be more prepared for that moment than ever before. Kindly give me the graces in Lent that will unite us at Easter.

Bishop Bambera to celebrate Ash Wednesday Mass on March 5 at Cathedral

SCRANTON – On Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will be principal celebrant and homilist for the 12:10 p.m. Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent, a 40-day season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving that ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter.

During Lent, fasting and abstinence regulations are observed. Fasting and abstinence are church-imposed penitential practices that deny us food and drink during certain seasons and on certain days. These acts of self-denial dispose us to free



Bishop Bambera distributes ashes at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on Feb. 14, 2024. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

ourselves from worldly distractions, to express our longing for Jesus, to somehow imitate His suffering.

Abstinence and fasting are required on both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On those days, one full meal is allowed along with two other smaller meals. Catholics bound by the law of abstinence include everyone age 14 and over; the law of fasting includes individuals age 18 through the beginning of their 60th year.

In addition to the 12:10 p.m. Mass with Bishop Bambera, ashes will also be distributed at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton during Masses held at 6:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Mass with the distribution of ashes will also take place at Immaculate Conception Parish, which is linked with the Cathedral, at 8:00 a.m. and a Liturgy of the Word Service with the distribution of ashes will be held at 4:30 p.m.

A full listing of Ash Wednesday Masses for all 106 parishes in the Diocese of Scranton is available on the Diocese of Scranton website at dioceseofscranton.org.

Throughout the Season of Lent, Bishop Bambera will also visit every geographic area of the Diocese of Scranton holding a Lenten Holy Hour. A Holy Hour is a period of time spent in prayer before the Lord, present to all sacramentally in the Eucharist. A Holy Hour involves personal prayer, meditation readings from Scripture, hymns and more.

The dates and locations for Bishop Bambera's Lenten Holy Hours during the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope across the Diocese of Scranton are listed below.

LENTEN HOLY HOURS WITH BISHOP BAMBERA BEGINNING AT 7 P.M. EACH NIGHT

Thursday, March 6: St. John the Evangelist Parish, Pittston

Tuesday, March 18: Annunciation Parish, Hazleton

Thursday, March 20: St. John the Evangelist Parish, Honesdale

Monday, March 24: Christ the King Parish (St. Thomas Aquinas Church), Archbald

Tuesday, March 25: St. Boniface Parish, Williamsport

Wednesday, March 26: Our Lady of the Snows Parish, Clarks Summit

Thursday, March 27: Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Dickson City

Monday, March 31: Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (St. Basil Church), Dushore

Tuesday, April 1: St. Faustina Kowalska Parish, Nanticoke

Wednesday, April 2: St. Ann Basilica Parish, Scranton

Thursday, April 3: Saint Matthew Parish, East Stroudsburg

Monday, April 7: Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary Parish, Wilkes-Barre

*Pilgrims
OF
Hope*

 DIOCESE OF
SCRANTON



Deaneries plan 'Road to Resurrection' series

SCRANTON - During Lent, many Catholics focus on the three hallmarks of the liturgical season: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

We set aside more time to pray. We abstain from meat on Fridays, give up something we enjoy and try to respond to the needs of others more generously.

Several deaneries around the Diocese of Scranton are once again partnering to help parishioners focus on what loving God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind looks like (Mt 22:37).

Churches within the Scranton, Pittston and Williamsport deaneries have all scheduled 'Road to Resurrection' events this Lent. The information on each is located to the right.

Prayer is not optional when it comes to living the Christian life, and there is no substitute for spending time with God.

Knowing this doesn't make finding the time less of a struggle. We're busy. But as St. Francis de Sales wrote, "Half an hour's meditation each day is essential, except when you are busy. Then a full hour is needed."

If we want to embrace God's will in our lives, we must learn how to see things (in addition to ourselves and other people) from his perspective.

Please mark your calendars now and plan to visit a local church near you this Lent as part of a 'Road to Resurrection' event, or - even better - make a commitment to attend every session in a particular area.

This Lent, challenge yourself to stop trying to "add God" to your life and start learning how to draw your life from God.

The Scranton Area's
the ROAD
2025
to RESURRECTION

Make your Lenten journey a special one this year by following the Road to Resurrection

Thursday March 13- 7:00 PM
St. Paul Parish
1510 Penn Ave. Scranton, PA 18509

Thursday March 20- 7:00 PM
Immaculate Conception
801 Taylor Ave., Scranton, PA 18510

Thursday March 27- 7:00 PM
St. Teresa of Calcutta (Bilingual)
1217 Prospect Ave., Scranton, PA 18505

Wednesday April 2- 7:00 PM
Lenten Holy Hour with Bishop Bambera
St. Ann's Basilica
1250 St. Anns St., Scranton, PA 18504

Thursday April 3- 7:00 PM
Mary Mother of God
316 William St. Scranton, PA 18508

Thursday April 10- 7:00 PM
Divine Mercy
312 Davis St. Scranton, PA 18505

WEEKLY OPPORTUNITY FOR EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION, BENEDICTION, AND VESPERS

WED, MARCH 12TH, 7PM | SAINT JOSEPH THE WORKER
702 W FOURTH ST, WILLIAMSPORT

WED, MARCH 19TH, 7PM | OUR LADY OF LOURDES
100 WALNUT ST, MONTTOURVILLE

TUES, MARCH 25TH, 7PM | SAINT BONIFACE
SPECIAL HOLY HOUR WITH BISHOP BAMBERA
326 WASHINGTON BLVD, WILLIAMSPORT

WED, APRIL 2ND, 7PM | SAINT ANN
1305 NORTHWAY RD, WILLIAMSPORT

WED, APRIL 9TH, 7PM | IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
5973 JACKS HOLLOW RD, BASTRESS

WED, APRIL 16TH, 7PM | SAINT BONIFACE
AREA PENANCE SERVICE
326 WASHINGTON BLVD, WILLIAMSPORT



**ROAD TO
RESURRECTION**
LYCOMING COUNTY CATHOLIC CHURCHES

ANNIVERSARY 1924 PILGRIMS OF HOPE

PITTSTON DEANERY ROAD TO RESURRECTION

Thursday, March 6 - 7 p.m. (Lenten Holy Hour with Bishop Bambera)
St. John the Evangelist Church, Pittston

Wednesday, March 12 - Mass at 7 p.m.
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Dupont

Wednesday, March 19 - Mass at 7 p.m.
Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary, Laflin

Wednesday, March 26 - Mass at 7 p.m.
St. Maria Goretti Parish, Laflin

Wednesday, April 2 - Mass at 7 p.m.
Corpus Christi Parish at St. Anthony of Padua Church, Exeter

Wednesday, April 9 - Mass at 7 p.m.
Nativity of Our Lord Parish, Duryea



Regulations for Lent 2025

Lent is a 40 day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter.

The following fasting and abstinence regulations are observed:

- **FASTING** is to be observed on Ash Wednesday (March 5, 2025) and Good Friday (April 18, 2025) by all Catholics over 18 years of age to the beginning of their 60th year. On days of fasting, one full meal is allowed. Two smaller meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to one's needs, but together should not equal another full meal, unless dispensed or excused.

- **ABSTINENCE** from meat is to be observed by all Catholics who are 14 years of age or older. Ash Wednesday, all of the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday are days of abstinence.

During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting. We are called not only to abstain from luxuries during Lent, but to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully. We recall the waters of baptism in which we were also baptized into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ.

Lent is a penitential season. It is a time to seek forgiveness, to look inward, and to admit our shortcomings and failures. All faithful of the Diocese of Scranton are reminded of Diocesan Statute No. 41, which addresses the penitential aspect of Lent:

"The season of Lent is penitential in nature and during Lent penance should be not only internal and individual, but also external and social (Sacrosanctum Concilium, No. 5, 109). Pastors are obliged to avoid scheduling activities in the parishes which in any way could possibly detract from the external and social penance required by Lent."

How can you spend your time during Lent?

- By **"giving up" things** you hunger after, such as sweets or alcohol; or activities you desire, such as vacations, concerts or movies.
- By **"doing" things to help others**, such as offering an extra donation to the poor or helping those in need by providing food or clothing.
- By **"adding" to our normal routine**, such as going to daily Mass, praying the Stations of the Cross and going to confession.



The Light is ON for You!

The Church encourages us to make confession a regular part of our spiritual life, especially during the holy season of Lent, as we reflect on our baptism and repentance.

Parishes in the Diocese of Scranton will once again participate in **"The Light is ON for You"** initiative in 2025.

Every Monday evening during the Lenten season, beginning March 10, and continuing through the Monday of the last full week of Lent, April 7, confessions will be heard in every parish from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. (unless the parish already has a different established weeknight tradition).

This special opportunity allows Catholics the ability to come (or return to) this incredible source of God's grace, mercy and healing.



Faithful encouraged to participate in 'Rice Bowl' initiatives during Lent

An annual Lenten collection taken up by Catholics across the U.S. continues to provide life-changing hope to others.

This year, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl program is celebrating its 50th year of funding hunger and poverty alleviation efforts around the world.

The program, which is supported by more than 12,000 Catholic parishes and schools across the United States, has raised more than \$350 million since its inception.

"For half a century, CRS Rice Bowl has been a pillar of our work," said Sean Callahan, CRS president and CEO. "It has given hope to millions of our sisters and brothers experiencing hunger. We are humbled by the generous support that Catholics across the United States have shown for CRS Rice Bowl and for their global family."

In 1975, CRS Rice Bowl began in Allentown, Pennsylvania, as a response to the devastating drought and famine affecting families in the Sahel region of Africa. "Operation Rice Bowl," as it was known then, was adopted in 1976 under the guidance of CRS in preparation for 41st International Eucharistic Congress. The bishops in the United States voted for it to be the official program of CRS in 1977.

Sadly, the issue of hunger is just as relevant now as it was in 1975. Since 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, hunger



Catholic Relief Services 'rice bowls' are displayed together as the life-changing program marks its 50th anniversary. (Photo/Lauren Carroll/Catholic Relief Services)

levels have remained high. In some parts of the world, the levels are increasing. Despite efforts to combat this rise, the world is still far off track to achieve the United Nations' Zero Hunger goal.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 580 million people could be chronically undernourished in 2030 – just five years away – if the trajectory is left unchecked.

Direct donations to CRS are accepted online at crsricebowl.org/give; by phone at (877) 435-7277 between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.; or mail. Please write "CRS Rice Bowl!" on the memo line of a check and mail it to: Catholic Relief Services, Attn: Rice Bowl, PO Box 5200, Harlan, IA 51593-0700.



BISHOP BAMBERA DESIGNATES EIGHT JUBILEE YEAR PILGRIMAGE SITES



1
Cathedral of Saint Peter
 315 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton



2
Saint Ann Basilica
 1250 St. Ann Street, Scranton



3
Saint Augustine Church
 295 Church Road, Brackney



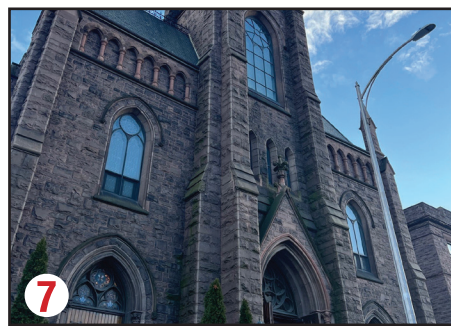
4
Saint Boniface Church
 325 Washington Blvd, Williamsport



5
Saint Gabriel Church
 122 S. Wyoming Street, Hazleton



6
Saint John the Evangelist Church
 150 Terrace Street, Honesdale



7
Saint Nicholas Church
 226 S. Washington St, Wilkes-Barre



8
Saint Matthew Church
 78 Ridgeway St, East Stroudsburg

SCRANTON – The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, has named eight churches in the diocese as pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee Holy Year 2025.

The pilgrimage sites include: Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton; Saint Ann Basilica, Scranton; Saint Augustine Church, Brackney; Saint Boniface Church, Williamsport; Saint Gabriel Church, Hazleton; Saint John the Evangelist Church, Honesdale; Saint Nicholas Church, Wilkes-Barre; and Saint Matthew Church, East Stroudsburg.

The designation, aimed at deepening the spiritual experience of Catholics, is part of the broader, global observance of the Jubilee Year, which takes place every 25 years.

The pilgrimage sites will be places where the faithful are urged to visit, pray, and participate in liturgies and events throughout the Jubilee Year. Jubilee Year indulgences are also available for pilgrims who undertake a pious pilgrimage to any designated jubilee site.

In addition to designated jubilee pilgrimage sites in Rome and the Holy Land, Pope Francis announced that cathedrals in ecclesiastical areas would serve as local pilgrimage sites, along with any other sacred places chosen by the local bishop.

The Jubilee Year will conclude in the Diocese of Scranton and other local dioceses on the Feast of the Holy Family Dec. 28, and in Rome on Jan. 6, 2026.



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

JUBILEE YEAR INDULGENCE INFORMATION



During Jubilee Year 2025, the Holy Father calls on all Christians to become “pilgrims of hope.” For this to occur, each person must be sourced above all in the grace of God and in the fullness of His mercy.

For centuries, a feature of Holy Year celebrations has been the granting of an Indulgence, which the church describes as a remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for their sins.

“Every sin ‘leaves its mark’” even after a person has received forgiveness and absolution through the sacrament of reconciliation,” Pope Francis wrote in the document proclaiming the Holy Year. “Sin has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, inasmuch as ‘every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death, in the state called Purgatory,’” he wrote, quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Those who cannot make a Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome are nevertheless invited to take part in the spiritual movement that accompanies receiving an Indulgence during the Jubilee Year 2025. To receive an Indulgence, the faithful in the Diocese of Scranton may do the following:

1. MAKE A VISIT TO A DESIGNATED PILGRIMAGE CHURCH SITE

In the Diocese of Scranton, the following churches are specifically designated pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee Year 2025:

- Cathedral of Saint Peter, 315 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA
- Saint Ann Basilica, 1250 St. Ann Street, Scranton, PA
- Saint Augustine Church, 295 Church Road, Brackney, PA
- Saint Boniface Church, 325 Washington Boulevard, Williamsport, PA
- Saint Gabriel Church, 122 South Wyoming Street, Hazleton, PA
- Saint John the Evangelist Church, 150 Terrace Street, Honesdale, PA
- Saint Nicholas Church, 226 South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA
- Saint Matthew Church, 78 Ridgeway Street, East Stroudsburg, PA

The faithful can obtain the Indulgence if, individually or in a group, they devoutly visit the Jubilee site and recite the Our Father, and the Profession of Faith (Apostles/Nicene Creed).

2. SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION

Celebrate sacramental reconciliation within 20 days before or after the seeking of the indulgence (which includes the intention of sincere detachment from all sin).

3. RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

Receive Holy Communion during full, conscious, active participation at Mass.

4. PRAY FOR THE INTENTION OF THE POPE

The condition of praying for the intention of the Holy Father is fully satisfied by reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary; nonetheless, one has the option of reciting any other prayer according to individual piety and devotion, if recited for his intention.

Pope calls artists to be ‘custodians of the beatitudes’ during Jubilee

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Artists and cultural figures must be “custodians of the beatitudes,” embracing their vocation to create beauty, reveal truth and inspire hope in a troubled world, Pope Francis wrote to people participating in the Jubilee for Artists and the World of Culture.

“Art is not a luxury, but a necessity of the spirit. It is not an escape, but a responsibility, an invitation to action, a call, a cry,” said the homily Pope Francis prepared for the Jubilee Mass Feb. 16 in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, celebrated the Mass with artists from more than 100 countries and read the pope’s homily during the liturgy.

“To instruct in beauty is to instruct in hope, and hope is never separated from the drama of existence - it crosses the daily struggle, the fatigue of living, the challenges of our time,” the homily said.

Pope Francis was unable to attend the Mass because he was hospitalized for treatment of a respiratory tract infection.

Pope: Vocation of military and police is to defend life, peace, justice

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Thanking members of the military and the police for their service, Pope Francis asked them to be on guard against seeing other people as enemies and instead dedicate their lives to defending life, peace and justice.

“Be vigilant lest you be poisoned by propaganda that instills hatred (and) divides the world into friends to be defended and foes to fight,” the pope wrote in his homily for the Mass Feb. 9 for the Jubilee of the Armed Services, Police and Security Personnel.

The Vatican said some 30,000 active and retired members of the military and police from 100 countries - including U.S. military and members of the New York Police Department - registered as pilgrims for the jubilee celebration.

Upcoming Jubilee Celebrations

Feb. 21-23: Jubilee of Deacons

March 8-9: Jubilee of the World of Volunteering



Pope to U.S.: Migration policies built on force, not truth, 'will end badly'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Pope Francis has urged U.S. Catholics and people of goodwill to not give in to "narratives" that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to migrants and refugees.

"I recognize your valuable efforts, dear brother bishops of the United States, as you work closely with migrants and refugees, proclaiming Jesus Christ and promoting fundamental human rights," he said in a letter to the U.S. bishops published by the Vatican Feb. 11.

Pope Francis said he was writing because of "the major crisis that is taking place in the United States" with the start of President Donald J. Trump's "program of mass deportations."

In his presidential executive order, "Protecting the American people against invasion," released Jan. 20, Trump said, "Many of these aliens unlawfully within the United States present significant threats to national security and public safety, committing vile and heinous acts against innocent Americans."

Pope Francis said, "The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality."

He also applauded the efforts of the U.S. bishops to assist migrants and refugees and to counter the arguments of the Trump administration, saying that "God will richly reward all that you do for the protection and defense of those who are considered less valuable, less important or less human!"



Pope Francis prays for migrants and refugees in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 19, 2023. Behind the pope is "Angels Unawares," a sculpture by Canadian Timothy Schmalz, depicting a boat with 140 figures of migrants from various historical periods and various nations. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

"I exhort all the faithful of the Catholic Church, and all men and women of goodwill, not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters," he wrote.

"With charity and clarity we are all called to live in solidarity and fraternity, to build bridges that bring us ever closer together, to avoid walls of ignominy and to

learn to give our lives as Jesus Christ gave his for the salvation of all," the pope wrote.

In his letter to the bishops, the pope said every nation has the right to defend itself and keep its communities safe "from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival."

However, he continued, "the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness."

"This is not a minor issue," he wrote. "An authentic rule of law is verified precisely in the dignified treatment that all people deserve, especially the poorest and most marginalized."

Pope Francis also used the letter to respond to an assertion U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who is Catholic, made in a late January television interview about the Catholic concept of "ordo amoris" (the order of love or charity).

The concept, Vance said, teaches that "you love your family, and then you love your neighbor, and then you love your community, and then you love your fellow citizens in your own country. And then after that, you can focus and prioritize the rest of the world."

However, the pope said, "Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to

other persons and groups. In other words: the human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings!"

"The true ordo amoris that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the 'Good Samaritan,' that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception," the pope wrote.

The pope wrote that "worrying about personal, community or national identity, apart from these considerations (of human fraternity), easily introduces an ideological criterion that distorts social life and imposes the will of the strongest as the criterion of truth."

"The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all - as I have affirmed on numerous occasions - welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable," he wrote.

That does not prevent or hamper the development of policies that regulate "orderly and legal migration," he wrote. "However, this development cannot come about through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others."

"What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly," the pope warned.

"Let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect individuals and families who live in fear or pain due to migration and/or deportation," he wrote.

Faith groups gather for Prayer Vigil, urging compassion for immigrants and refugees

SCRANTON - With temperatures barely breaking 20-degrees and gusty winds making it feel much colder, more than 150 people braved the frigid conditions to show support - and pray - for Scranton's immigrant and refugee communities Monday, Feb. 17, 2025.

Faith leaders from the Catholic Church, Temple Hesed, and the Islamic Center of Scranton were among those offering prayers on Courthouse Square for the continued dignity and respect for all people.

"In recent weeks, our community has been overshadowed by anxiety and

fear, yet tonight we come together to reaffirm our commitment to compassion," Alexandra Marroquin said in welcoming the crowd to the event. "Let us stand united, drawing strength from one another and the values we hold dear."

The crowd sang the hymn, "All Are Welcome," after an opening prayer and listening to excerpts of a statement from Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Migration.

The vigil was sponsored by several community organizations, including the



Community members hold signs during an interfaith prayer vigil in downtown Scranton Feb. 17, 2025. (Photo/Eric Deabil)

Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium; Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart

of Mary; Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton; Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish; Saint Ann's Passionist Monastery; Temple Hesed; Islamic Center of Scranton; Marywood University; and The University of Scranton.

Rev. Jonathan Kuhar, pastor, Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish, read Bishop Bambera's recent statement on immigration, "Upholding the Dignity of All," and offered a prayer that everyone may hear the cry of refugees, immigrants, the homeless and the lost.

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“Upholding the Dignity of All”

A Message on Immigration from the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35)

Faith is not just about belief. It is also about action.

As noted in the verse above from Matthew’s Gospel, how we treat others – particularly the most vulnerable in society – is directly linked to our relationship with Christ.

Put simply, when we serve those in need, we are serving Jesus Himself.

This basic principle is put into action every day across northeastern and north central Pennsylvania without a second thought: from young students collecting food for the less fortunate, to community organizations working together to provide nightly shelter to those experiencing homelessness, and parishioners in our parishes visiting the sick and lonely.

As Christians, this verse should also shape how we approach complex societal issues, reminding us to always act with mercy, dignity, and love.

The issue of immigration in the

United States is one that often divides us. For some, the conversation revolves around safety, security, and order in our great nation, while for others, it is about compassion and human rights.

As followers of Christ, we must never forget one of the central and basic tenets of our faith: the dignity of every human person. Every person is made in the image and likeness of God – and that inherent dignity cannot be taken away by status or nationality.

From the very beginning of Scripture, God’s command to welcome the stranger is clear. The parents of Jesus had to flee their own land and take refuge in Egypt to save the life of their child.

Likewise, we must see Christ in those who seek refuge among us – whether because of war and widespread violence, religious and ethnic persecution, or human rights abuses. For many of these individuals, the decision to leave their homeland is often born out of desperation – and in the face of these concerns – we all have a responsibility to respond with compassion and understanding.

While the Catholic Church teaches us that individuals and families have the right to migrate, likewise, no country should be unduly burdened by those seeking refuge. To be clear, the United States has the responsibility to secure its borders and keep its citizens safe. Yet, as Pope Francis recently noted in a letter to the Bishops of the United States, “the true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all ... welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable.”

Like many of my brother bishops, I am calling on our political leaders to set aside partisan politics and to fix our broken immigration system. But I pray that they do so in a way that respects Gospel values. Threats of mass deportations and allowing immigration officials to enter churches, schools, and healthcare facilities to conduct arrests, have only led to fear and anxiety for many of our brothers and sisters who live in our neighborhoods, attend our schools,

provide useful services throughout our communities and worship with us on a regular basis.

Since its inception, our nation has been built upon the presence of immigrants who have contributed to the well-being and greatness of our land. As such, it is essential that we continue to support proper, legal pathways for immigration, ensuring that those who seek to contribute to society can do so in a manner that honors both their dignity and the lawful order of our communities.

As we pray for a system that honors the dignity of all people, one that is always guided by God’s love and justice, let us all remain hopeful that with faith, dialogue, and a commitment to justice, a solution to the complex challenges of immigration may be addressed in a way that honors the dignity of all.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas, intercede for us and for our nation, guiding us toward solutions that uphold the dignity of all people and reflect the mercy of Christ.



“Defendiendo la Dignidad de Todos”

Un Mensaje sobre la Inmigración del Muy Reverendo Joseph C. Bambera, Obispo de Scranton

“Porque tuve hambre, y me diste de comer; tuve sed, y me diste de beber; era forastero, y me acogiste” (Mateo 25:35)

La fe no es solo cuestión de creencias.

También se trata de acción.

Como se señala en el versículo anterior del Evangelio de Mateo, cómo tratamos a los demás – particularmente a los más vulnerables en la sociedad – está directamente vinculado a nuestra relación con Cristo.

En pocas palabras, cuando servimos a los necesitados, estamos sirviendo al propio Jesús.

Este principio básico se pone en acción todos los días en el noreste y centro-norte de Pensilvania, sin pensarlo dos veces: desde los

estudiantes más jóvenes recolectando alimentos para los menos afortunados, hasta las organizaciones comunitarias que trabajan juntas para proporcionar refugio nocturno a quienes experimentan la falta de vivienda, y los feligreses de nuestras parroquias visitando a los enfermos y solitarios.

Como cristianos, este versículo también debe moldear nuestra forma de abordar los complejos problemas sociales, recordándonos actuar siempre con misericordia, dignidad y amor.

El tema de la inmigración en los Estados Unidos es uno que a menudo nos divide. Para algunos, la conversación gira en torno a la seguridad, el orden y la protección en nuestra gran nación, mientras que para otros, se trata de compasión y derechos humanos.

Como seguidores de Cristo, nunca

debemos olvidar uno de los principios centrales y básicos de nuestra fe: la dignidad de toda persona humana. Cada persona está hecha a imagen y semejanza de Dios, y esa dignidad inherente no puede ser arrebatada por el estatus o la nacionalidad.

Desde el principio de las Escrituras, el mandato de Dios de acoger al extranjero es claro. Los padres de Jesús tuvieron que huir de su tierra y refugiarse en Egipto para salvar la vida de su hijo.

De igual manera, debemos ver a Cristo en aquellos que buscan refugio entre nosotros – ya sea por la guerra y la violencia generalizada, la persecución religiosa y étnica, o las violaciones a los derechos humanos. Para muchos de estos individuos, la decisión de abandonar su tierra natal nace a menudo de la desesperación, y ante

estas preocupaciones, todos tenemos la responsabilidad de responder con compasión y comprensión.

Mientras que la Iglesia Católica nos enseña que los individuos y las familias tienen el derecho a migrar, igualmente, ningún país debe ser excesivamente cargado por aquellos que buscan refugio. Para ser claros, los Estados Unidos tienen la responsabilidad de asegurar sus fronteras y mantener a salvo a sus ciudadanos. Sin embargo, como el Papa Francisco señaló recientemente en una carta a los obispos de los Estados Unidos, “el verdadero bien común se promueve cuando la sociedad y el gobierno, con creatividad y un estricto respeto por los derechos de todos... acogen, protegen, promueven e integran a los más frágiles, desprotegidos y vulnerables.”

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Cathedral of Saint Peter to host Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass March 8

SCRANTON – The annual Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on Saturday, March 8, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

All are welcome to attend.

The liturgy is traditionally held in conjunction with the city of Scranton's annual Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Following the Mass, the Saint Patrick's Parade is expected to take to the streets of the Electric City beginning at 11:45 a.m.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant for the Mass. Various priests from the Diocese of Scranton are expected to concelebrate.

The Mass will be broadcast live on CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese

of Scranton due to the generosity of the Society of Irish Women.

The Mass will be rebroadcast several times the following week, including Tuesday, March 11, at 8:00 p.m., and Wednesday, March 12, at 10:30 a.m.

It will also be available for viewing on the Diocese of Scranton's YouTube Channel.

Among the other local organizations that participate in the annual Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass are the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, Irish American Men's Association, Irish Cultural Society, Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Saint Patrick's Parade Association of Lackawanna County.



Above: Flag bearers participate in the 2024 Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass.



Right: Participants in the 2024 Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass fill the sidewalk outside the Cathedral of Saint Peter after the conclusion of Mass. (Photos/Mike Melisky)

Mass for Persons with disabilities emphasizes God's love for all

SCRANTON – Despite a snowstorm into the early morning hours, the Diocese of Scranton still celebrated its annual Mass for Persons with Disabilities on Feb. 9 at the Cathedral of Saint Peter.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass, which is held in advance of National Disability Awareness Month in March.

"My brothers and sisters with disabilities, more than you realize, your unwavering trust in God and your example of acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude and selfless love provide us all with priceless lessons for how best to live as disciples of Jesus," Bishop Bambera said during his homily. "Simply put, you teach us that like Isaiah, Paul and Peter, we are all a part of God's plan. Each of us is treasured by God, for being just the way we are. And each of us is more than well equipped to give witness to God's merciful presence among us and to bring hope and peace to our corner of God's world."

In a beautiful display of



Clients of Saint Joseph's Center serve as gift bearers during the Mass for Persons with Disabilities on Feb. 9, 2025. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

inclusivity, many individuals with special needs participated in the Mass, serving as greeters, lectors, altar servers and gift bearers.

The Mass for Persons with Disabilities has become a beloved tradition in the Diocese of Scranton, emphasizing that all people – including those with physical, sensory, and intellectual disabilities – are deeply loved by God and called to contribute to building His Kingdom.

During this Jubilee Year, the Bishop also shared the words of Pope Francis, which he said could be especially directed to people affected by illness or disability.

pessimistic about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness ... But God's word helps us find reasons for that hope," Bishop Bambera quoted.

Partners in the annual Mass for Persons with Disabilities include Saint Joseph's Center in Scranton and the Order of the Alhambra.

As 2025 celebration came to an end, those in attendance were reminded we must celebrate the dignity of those with disabilities but also call on the wider community to recognize the immense value of every person, as we all work together to build up God's Kingdom on earth.

"Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring... Even so, often we find people who are discouraged and

World Day of the Sick Mass messages focus on God's presence in times of illness

SCRANTON – On Feb. 11, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated a special Mass in honor of the World Day of the Sick, an annual observance in the Catholic Church dedicated to offering prayers and support for those suffering from illness.

Held at the Cathedral of Saint Peter, the Mass brought together parishioners and individuals seeking comfort in their time of need, all united in faith and hope.

The World Day of the Sick, established by Pope John Paul II in 1992, invites Catholics worldwide to pray for the sick and reflect on the role of suffering in the life of faith. The day also calls attention to the importance of healthcare workers who extend care and compassion to those who are ill.

In his message to the world's sick, Pope Francis said "hope amid suffering" leads to God.

While the Holy Year 2025 refrain, "Hope does not disappoint," can be difficult for those suffering from illness to



Bishop Bambera anoints a woman with holy oil during the Liturgy of the Anointing on Feb. 11, 2025. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

embrace, the Holy Father said Christians are called to recognize God's closeness even in moments of weakness or despair.

Sickness "becomes an occasion for a transformative encounter" when one is open to God, he wrote in his message for the 33rd World Day of the Sick.

"Suffering always brings with it a mysterious promise of salvation, for it makes us experience the closeness and reality of God's consoling presence," the pope wrote in his message.

As pope remains in hospital, Vatican announces schedule changes

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - In another sign that Pope Francis' stay in Rome's Gemelli hospital will continue for some time, the Vatican announced a substitute presider for the Mass and ordinations as part of the Jubilee of Deacons.

In a brief note to journalists Feb. 18, the Vatican said, "Due to the Holy Father's health condition," his appointments had been canceled through Feb. 22.

In addition, the note said, "Pope Francis has delegated Archbishop Rino Fisichella," pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization and chief organizer of the Holy Year 2025, to celebrate the Mass and ordinations of permanent deacons Feb. 23.

The 88-year-old pope was hospitalized Feb. 14 after more than a week of suffering from bronchitis and difficulty breathing.

A source, who was not authorized to speak on the record, said Feb. 18 that the pope was breathing on his own without the need for supplemental oxygen.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, said Feb. 18 that the pope again had rested well overnight, was eating regularly, reading newspapers and doing some work.



A get-well card for Pope Francis is set among flowers and votive candles at the base of a statue of St. John Paul II outside Rome's Gemelli hospital Feb. 18, 2025. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

The Vatican had said Feb. 17 that test results showed that the pope is suffering from a "polymicrobial infection of the respiratory tract, which required a further modification of his therapy." Polymicrobial means multiple pathogens are involved.

The pope, who underwent surgery in 1957 to remove part of one of his lungs after suffering a severe respiratory infection, has been susceptible to colds and bouts of bronchitis.

"Defendiendo la Dignidad de Todos"

Continuado desde la página 9

Como muchos de mis hermanos obispos, hago un llamado a nuestros líderes políticos para que dejen de lado la política partidista y arreglen nuestro sistema de inmigración roto. Pero rezo para que lo hagan de una manera que respete los valores del Evangelio. Las amenazas de deportaciones masivas y permitir que los funcionarios de inmigración entren en iglesias, escuelas y centros de salud para realizar arrestos, solo han generado miedo y ansiedad en muchos de nuestros hermanos y hermanas que viven en nuestros vecindarios, asisten a nuestras escuelas, brindan servicios útiles a lo largo de nuestras comunidades y adoran con nosotros de manera regular.

Desde su inicio, nuestra nación ha sido construida sobre la presencia de inmigrantes que han contribuido al bienestar y la grandeza de nuestra tierra.

Por lo tanto, es esencial que sigamos apoyando caminos legales y adecuados para la inmigración, asegurando que aquellos que buscan contribuir a la sociedad puedan hacerlo de una manera que honre tanto su dignidad como el orden legal de nuestras comunidades.

Mientras oramos por un sistema que honre la dignidad de todas las personas, uno que siempre esté guiado por el amor y la justicia de Dios, sigamos teniendo esperanza de que, con fe, diálogo y un compromiso con la justicia, se pueda abordar la solución a los complejos desafíos de la inmigración de una manera que honre la dignidad de todos.

Que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, patrona de las Américas, interceda por nosotros y por nuestra nación, guiándonos hacia soluciones que defiendan la dignidad de todas las personas y reflejen la misericordia de Cristo.

APPOINTMENTS

His Excellency, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, announces the following appointments:

Reverend David W. Bechtel, to Chaplain, Saint John Neumann High School Williamsport. Father will remain Pastor, Saint Joseph the Worker Parish, Williamsport, effective February 17, 2025.

Reverend William D. Corcoran, from Retirement, to Administrator, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Williamsport, and Saint Luke's Parish, Jersey Shore, effective February 17, 2025.

Reverend Bert S. Kozen, V.F., from Pastor, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Williamsport, and Saint Luke's Parish, Jersey Shore, to Leave of Absence for Reasons of Health, effective February 17, 2025.



BISHOP BAMBERA'S SCHEDULE

- February 26** - School Mass for Holy Rosary School
Nativity of Our Lord Church, Duryea, 9:00 a.m.
- February 27** - School Mass for Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School
Saint Mary of Mount Carmel Church, Dunmore, 9:00 a.m.
- March 2** - Feast Day Mass
Saint Katharine Drexel Parish, Forest City, 11:00 a.m.
- March 5** - Ash Wednesday Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- March 6** - School Mass for Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School
Saint Nicholas Church, Wilkes-Barre, 9:00 a.m.
- March 6** - Lenten Holy Hour for the Pittston Deanery
Saint John the Evangelist Church, Pittston, 7:00 p.m.
- March 8** - Saint Patrick's Parade Day Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 10:00 a.m.
- March 9** - Rite of Election
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 2:30 p.m.
- March 10-12** - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Meeting
Administrative Committee Meeting - Washington, D.C.
- March 17** - Saint Patrick Feast Day Mass
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 12:10 p.m.
- March 18** - Lenten Day of Recollection for Priests
Diocesan Pastoral Center, Scranton, Noon
- March 18** - Lenten Holy Hour for the Hazleton Deanery
Annunciation Parish, Hazleton, 7:00 p.m.
- March 19** - Feast of Saint Joseph Mass
Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary, Laflin, Noon
- March 20** - Lenten Holy Hour for the Honesdale Deanery
Saint John the Evangelist Church, Honesdale, 7:00 p.m.

Ecumenical Prayer Service at Cathedral marks Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

SCRANTON – The Cathedral of Saint Peter hosted an Ecumenical Celebration of God’s Word on Jan. 22, 2025, as part of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

This year’s service was particularly significant, as it centered around the powerful theme: “Do You Believe?”, a question that invites all Christians to reflect on the shared foundations of faith and the call to unity in Christ.

“As we come together, we give thanks for what we share in common – a common Creed – a common profession of faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior,” the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, said.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated worldwide from Jan. 18-25, serves as a time for Christians from various denominations to come together in prayer and dialogue, acknowledging the bonds that unite them in Christ and the work still needed to heal divisions.

“May what we do during this noon-time hour, be a sign to our world in some small way, of our desire to fulfill the great prayer of the Lord Jesus, that we would all be one,” Bishop Bambera added.

Bishop Bambera served as leader of prayer for the Ecumenical Prayer Service. As chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs, Bishop Bambera has long

been a leader in promoting dialogue and cooperation among Christian denominations.

The service, which included prayers, hymns, and scripture readings, was attended by more than 100 Christians from several denominations, all coming together to pray for greater understanding and collaboration.

Rev. Scott Sterowski, Diocesan Coordinator for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, delivered the sermon at the prayer service.

He began by acknowledging this year, 2025, holds additional significance as it marks the 1700th anniversary of the historic Council of Nicaea, a pivotal event in the early Church that helped shape the foundation of Christian doctrine and unity.

Convened in 325 AD by Emperor Constantine, the Council sought to address theological disputes, particularly the nature of Christ’s divinity, and resulted in the Nicene Creed, a central declaration of Christian faith still recited in many Christian liturgies today.

The anniversary of the Council of Nicaea underscores the important work of ecumenism and the shared commitment of preserving the core truths of the Christian faith in a divided world.

“We celebrate this day of unity, of togetherness, as members of the Body of Christ, asking the question, ‘what is faith?’ Faith, of course, is a gift of the Spirit, poured forth into our hearts,

a theological virtue. Before we can come to believe, we must receive this gift from God,” Father Sterowski stated.

Noting that “full unity” has not yet been achieved, Father Sterowski said it will happen “in God’s time.”

“That is the deepest desire of the heart of Christ, for His Body, the Church, that we dwell together as His people, as one,” he added.



Rev. Scott Sterowski, Diocesan Coordinator for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations; Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky, Prime Bishop, Polish National Catholic Church, Scranton; Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton; Pastor Rodney Harraway, First Congregational Church of West Pittston; Rev. Craig A. Miller, Bishop, Upper Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

Bishop hosts ecumenical dinners in Cathedral rectory



Attending a dinner hosted by Bishop Bambera for members of the local Orthodox Eastern Catholic and Latin Rite clergy on Jan. 20, 2025, were, front row, from left: Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak; Bishop Bambera; Very Rev. John Kowalczyk. Second row: Proto Deacon Sergei Kapral; Very Rev. Michael Lepa; Very Rev. Innocent Neal. Third Row: Rev. Scott Sterowski. Fourth Row: Rev. Paul Witek; Very Rev. John Cigan, Rev. Thomas Looney. Fifth Row: Rev. Andrii Dumnych; Rev. Edward Shestak; Rev. Nestor Iwasiw. Sixth Row: Rev. Antoun Youssef; Rev. Roman Vasylunka; Rev. Michael Shepherd; Rev. Myron Myronyuk. Seventh Row: Rev. Eugene Hradil. Eighth Row: Rev. Gerald Shantillo; Msgr. Dale Rupert. Ninth Row: Rev. John Polednak; Rev. Volodymyr Radko. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

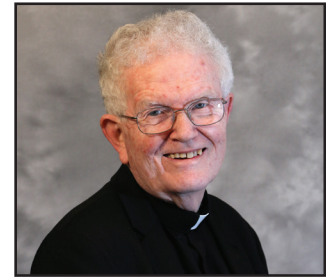


Bishop Bambera and priests of the Diocese of Scranton hosted a dinner meeting for Polish National Catholic Church clergy on Jan. 21, 2025. Front row, from left: Bishop Bambera; Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky. Second row: Very Rev. Lucian Urbaniak. Third row: Rev. Thomas Looney. Fourth row: Msgr. Patrick Patrico; Rev. Scott Sterowski. Fifth row: Rev. Boguslaw Janiec; Rev. John Polednak. Sixth row: Rev. Gerald Shantillo; Msgr. Dale Rupert. (Photo/Mike Melisky)



REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

- *A Priesthood Perspective by Father Connell A. McHugh -
Sacramental Minister, Holy Rosary Parish, Hazleton & Pastor Emeritus, Good Shepherd, Drums*



I have had a great appreciation for the Holy Eucharist since my early years in grade school at Saint Gabriel's in Hazleton.

From my early years in elementary school through high school, I attended Mass almost every day. This played a major part in my decision to become a priest.

I have always appreciated the opportunity to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist - whether as a student, seminarian and eventually as a priest.

The Eucharist was the highlight of the day, be it at Saint Charles College in Catonsville, Md.; our own Saint Pius X Seminary in Dalton; or the very creative Seminary of Our Lady of Angels located just outside of Albany, N.Y.

Our Lady of Angels often had contemporary folk music at their Masses. Among the homilists were biblical scholars Father Sean Kealy, C.S.Sp., who at the time was a visiting scholar, and once headed the African Biblical Institute and later served as the chair of Duquesne University's Theology Department; and Father John O'Grady, who eventually had approximately 20 books published (mainly by Paulist Press), most of which I have read and own.

I am much more interested in Scripture than any other branch of theology, although I like all theological disciplines. Father Robert Barone from Hazleton was responsible, in my opinion, for introducing modern Scripture studies in the Scranton Diocese, and had a great influence in sparking my interest in Scripture, along with Father O'Grady.

I always enjoyed working with First Communion classes as an associate pastor and pastor at the now-closed beautiful Church of Saint Francis, West Hazleton; as pastor of Saint Patrick's White Haven; and as pastor of Good Shepherd, Drums.

I was blessed with excellent coordinators and Communion Class teachers at all three parishes.

First Communion was always a joyful time for me. I remember purchasing gifts for the First Communicants - oftentimes white chocolate in the form of First Communion figures.

The parishes of Saint Francis, Saint Patrick and Good Shepherd often had "Class Masses," in which the children proclaimed the readings, presented the offertory gifts and sang. The Children's Masses always increased attendance and fostered a sense of community, which

should occur at the celebration of the Eucharist.

I always enjoyed the Holy Thursday Masses with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament and subsequent Adoration. While I was at Saint Francis, West Hazleton, a large number of the Knights of Columbus used to have a Holy Hour after the Holy Thursday Mass, at which I often delivered a homily.

Even though Holy Thursday has always been celebrated under the shadow of Good Friday, I always appreciated the Holy Thursday devotions.

No matter which parish I served, I have always looked forward to offering Mass. I was fortunate to have a nice attendance for daily Mass at all the parishes of which I was pastor. The organists, choir directors and cantors I had at the parishes were very dedicated people who almost never missed a weekend Liturgy.

After retirement in 2019, I greatly missed celebrating daily Mass with a community.

I substituted quite often for my home Parish of Annunciation (Saint Gabriel Church); Good Shepherd Parish, of which I am pastor emeritus; and Saint John Bosco Parish, Conyngham.

I was elated to be named the Sacramental Minister of Holy Rosary Parish in January 2024. This was a great opportunity to celebrate Mass on a regular basis.

Over the years, I am very grateful for all the people with whom I shared the Celebration of the Eucharist.

I should also recall celebrating Mass at the White Haven Center for nearly ten years with clients and staff. I found this a very rewarding experience. I offered Mass at most of the Nursing and Personal Care Homes in the Greater Hazleton Area for many years.

At the time of my retirement, I was offering Mass regularly at Fritzingertown, Providence Place and The Laurels. I found the people in these facilities appreciated having access to the Mass.

I found it very fulfilling bringing Holy Communion to the ill and shut-ins at home or in hospitals throughout my priesthood. I always had a list of parishioners to whom I brought Communion during First Friday week.

I always viewed this as a most important and enjoyable part of my ministry.

Next National Eucharistic Congress to be held in 2029, will 'build on grace' of Indianapolis

WASHINGTON (OSV News) - The 11th National Eucharistic Congress will be held in 2029, building "on the grace" received in Indianapolis at the 10th congress, said Jason Shanks, CEO of the National Eucharistic Congress Inc.

The 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis July 17-21 drew more than 60,000 attendees and included a Eucharistic procession of tens of thousands of Catholics through the city's downtown streets. The congress was a high point of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

"The National Eucharistic Congress

Inc. is thrilled to share that we have begun the initial steps in preparing" for a 2029 congress, Shanks told OSV News.

"We look forward to reuniting as an American church to celebrate our shared Eucharistic faith," he said. "We are eager to build on the grace we received during our gathering in Indianapolis this past summer."

"We recognize that the success of the previous congress can be attributed to the countless individuals who prayed and interceded for the event," Shanks continued. "So, we invite the church to join us in praying not only for the planning of this future Congress, but that we might continue



Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens blesses pilgrims July 17, 2024, during adoration at the 10th National Eucharistic Congress. (OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

to Walk with One through this year of missionary sending. We will provide more

details about the 11th National Eucharistic Congress in the future."

Shanks told The Pillar Feb. 7 that a decision to hold the next national gathering in 2029 was made "in consultation with the bishops" and that a formal presentation on plans for the congress will be presented to the body of the bishops during their fall plenary assembly in November.

The revival is now focusing on its Year of Mission, in which Catholics are encouraged to become "Eucharistic missionaries" who share the reality and impact of Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist with others.

Bold and Beloved Retreat brings Catholic women together for weekend of prayer and connection

DALTON – A sense of warmth and sisterhood filled the air of the Transfiguration Retreat Center during the last weekend in January as roughly 90 Catholic women gathered for the second annual ‘Bold and Beloved Retreat.’

The event, which ran from Jan. 24-26, was organized by the Diocesan Office for Parish Life and supported by donations to the Catholic Ministries Appeal.

Women from parishes across the Diocese of Scranton came together to grow in faith and meet like-minded sisters in Christ.

“It’s really refreshing to take a step back from the craziness of life and just rest in God’s love and be supported by other women who are here for the same reasons,” Megan Kinney, a parishioner of Saint Boniface Parish in Williamsport, said.

Kinney said she enjoyed being able to spend quiet time in Eucharistic Adoration and reconnect with friends she made at other retreats.



The second annual ‘Bold and Beloved Retreat’ brought together roughly 90 women from parishes across the Diocese of Scranton on the weekend of Jan. 24-26, 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

“I love being able to learn from other women who have gone through different journeys in the Catholic faith, who may be in a different season of life, who can really be good examples for me,” she added.

Over the course of the weekend, six local women, each with her own profound

conversion experience, shared their personal journeys of finding God’s love and mercy.

Gianna Moulton, a parishioner of Saint Therese Parish in Shavertown, was one of the presenters, who shared her conversion story from being a “lukewarm Catholic” after learning more about church teachings.

“I truly feel I can’t pour into my marriage, my children, my job, any of my friendships, without putting God as the priority,” Moulton explained.

The speakers had a variety of backgrounds – including healthcare, law enforcement, and working on a college campus – just to name a few.

Mary Hallman, Diocesan Secretary for Parish Life, said each woman was inspiring because they were “really

vulnerable, being honest, and sharing where their struggles have been.”

This year’s retreat, inspired by the life and legacy of Saint Catherine of Siena, a Doctor of the Church and tireless advocate for the faith, provided the women motivation to “set the world on fire.”

“Saint Catherine is such a good example. She was a ‘do-er,’” Laurie Coffee, a parishioner of Holy Child Parish in Mansfield, said. “I think of her kind of like a combination of Martha and Mary because she did it all. You need to be able to do the contemplative in order to be able to do things.”

As the retreat ended, Coffee returned to her home in Tioga County feeling empowered to live her faith even more boldly than before.

“There are things that we all experience, but we experience them in different ways,” Coffee said. “The bottom line, the most important thing is how we find Jesus, how we come to Him, and how we make Him the center of our life.”

Pilgrimage to Philly shrines planned

SCRANTON - While planning for the 2025 Catholic Women’s Conference is underway, organizers of the event are also inviting the faithful to participate in a Jubilee Year pilgrimage to three national shrine sites in Philadelphia.

On Saturday, April 15, buses will leave two parts of the Diocese to visit the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal, Shrine of Saint John Neumann, and the Shrine of Saint Rita Cascia.

The first bus will depart the bus terminal in Wellsboro at 7:00 a.m. and make a stop at the Burger King in Williamsport at 7:30 a.m.

The second bus will depart the Shoppes at Montage in Moosic at 7:00 a.m.

The cost of the trip is \$150 per person and includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, tours,

and tips. Registration is open to anyone.

Registration is open now at dioceseofscranton.org.

Visit 3 National Shrines in Philadelphia
designated as pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee Year.
Private shrine tours, gift shops and special blessings.
Saturday, April 5, 2025

 <p>Shrine of the Miraculous Medal Tour of Basilica, Our Lady of Knock Rosary walk, investiture in the miraculous medal.</p>	 <p>Shrine of Saint John Neuman Lunch, Tour, short film of his life and miracles, museum, and gift shop.</p>
 <p>Shrine of Saint Rita Cascia Tour, Mass, blessing with first class relic, and gift shop.</p>	 <p>Shrine of Saint Rita Cascia Tour, Mass, blessing with first class relic, and gift shop.</p>

www.cwcnepa.com
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Vocations retreat planned for March

SCRANTON - Registration is now open for the upcoming *Ezra 10:4 Retreat* for men discerning priesthood.

This spring’s retreat will take place March 21-22 at Holy Family Spiritual Renewal Center in Nanticoke.

This preached retreat, named after the Book of Ezra verse that says, “Rise, then, for this is your duty! We are with you, so have courage and act!” is led by Fr. Alex Roche, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation, Vocation Director, and Director of Seminarians.

Men over the age of 18, who are interested in discerning a vocation to priesthood, are invited to attend.


For those who have come to the *Ezra 10:4 Retreat* before, brand new talks and discussion will be offered, so you are encouraged to come again!

The retreat will include Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Confession,

and the opportunity for Spiritual Direction.

To register for the free retreat, visit dioceseofscranton.org.

Diocese of Scranton
VOCATIONS




EZRA 10:4

A RETREAT FOR MEN DISCERNING THE PRIESTHOOD

Rev. Alex Roche

SCAN TO REGISTER
Open to Men 18 +



Holy Family Spiritual Renewal Center, Nanticoke
Hosted by the Diocese of Scranton Vocations Office
MARCH 21-22, 2025
REGISTER AT DIOCESEOFSCRANTON.ORG/VOCATIONS

Feast of Our Lady of Altagracia draws hundreds together in joyous celebration

HAZLETON – Despite a storm on Jan. 19 that dropped several inches of snow in the Hazleton area, roughly 900 people gathered to celebrate a special Mass in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Altagracia.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant of the Mass, which was held in the gymnasium of Holy Family Academy to accommodate the large crowd.

“We’re a joyful people and it shows,” parishioner Rafael Perez of Annunciation Parish, explained. “This is what brings us together ... It is our faith that makes us one. That is what we celebrate.”

Three parishes that regularly hold Spanish Masses – Annunciation Parish in Hazleton; Queen of Heaven Parish in Hazleton; and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in West Hazleton – work together to plan



Approximately 900 people gathered inside the gym at Holy Family Academy Jan. 19, 2025, to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Altagracia. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

all aspects of the liturgy.

“This is a great day,” parishioner Eugenio Sosa of Queen of Heaven Parish,

said. “It is a great tradition. It is a great celebration around the world, and as you can see in Hazleton, it’s a big celebration.”

Our Lady of Altagracia is the patroness of the Dominican Republic. Under that title, the Blessed Virgin Mary continues to be revered by people of Dominican heritage in the United States.

The feast of Our Lady of Altagracia (which is Jan. 21 each year) derives from a popular image of Mary painted in the 16th century which shows a woman’s image in front of her child, and behind her is Joseph, as it is written in Revelation 12:5.

Father Neftali Feliz-Sena, Assistant

Pastor at Annunciation Parish, said he is always touched by the families who attend with their children and elders. He also said it is important to note that it wasn’t just natives of the Dominican Republic who attended the Mass, many other cultures and nationalities participated.

“We celebrate together as one faith because the Catholic faith is one,” Father Neftali stated. “It doesn’t matter the language or the culture, everywhere we go we celebrate the same faith in Jesus Christ, Our Lord.”

For many, the importance of the Feast of Our Lady of Altagracia is passed down from generation to generation.

“It is a beautiful gift to be able to embrace every culture and to become one church. That is what Christ asked us to be,” Deacon Luis Rivera, who helped celebrate the Mass, added.

Statement of the Diocese of Scranton on Jean-Pierre Garry Pilon being dismissed from the Clerical State

SCRANTON – Jean-Pierre Garry Pilon, formerly a priest of the Diocese of Scranton, has been dismissed from the clerical state at the conclusion of a disciplinary process authorized by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Holy See.

Mr. Pilon’s involuntary dismissal from the clerical state was imposed after having been found guilty under canon law of solicitation of sexual behavior of an adult during the celebration of the Sacrament of Confession. As a result of his dismissal, Mr. Pilon will never again exercise priestly ministry in any capacity. He may no longer celebrate Mass, hear confessions, or administer any of the Church’s sacraments.

In August 2021, the Diocese of Scranton became aware of an accusation made against Mr. Pilon from officials in the Diocese of Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, that then-Father Pilon had been accused of soliciting sexual behavior with another adult within the celebration of the sacrament of

Confession, which is among the gravest crimes in the canon law of the Catholic Church. Following the reception of the accusation, the Diocese of Scranton revoked Mr. Pilon’s faculties and prohibited him from the exercise of priestly ministry.

Officials from the Diocese of Scranton then investigated the accusation in cooperation with the Diocese of Peterborough and, finding the accusation credible, transmitted its findings to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican, as required by canon law. In response to the investigation, the same Dicastery authorized the Diocese of Scranton to adjudicate the accusation against Mr. Pilon using trial processes found in canon law.

Throughout the proceedings, Mr. Pilon was represented by a canon lawyer of his choosing and his right to defense was upheld. At the conclusion of the adjudication, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith authorized the Diocese of Scranton to impose the penalty of

Dismissal from the Clerical State on Mr. Pilon, the most severe penalty that can be imposed on a cleric.

Jean-Pierre Garry Pilon is a Canadian citizen and has neither exercised priestly ministry, nor lived in the Diocese of Scranton. He was ordained a priest on June 29, 2002, and was incardinated into the Diocese of Scranton by the late Most Reverend James C. Timlin for membership in The Priestly Society of Saint John, a religious institute that was suppressed in 2004. Since his ordination, Mr. Pilon has only exercised ministry in various apostolates in different dioceses. Most recently, Mr. Pilon exercised priestly ministry in the Diocese of Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. During his time of priestly ministry, he has used several alias’, including Brother Anthony Lawrence.

Mr. Pilon now lives privately in Ontario, Canada, and is prohibited from exercising priestly ministry or representing the Diocese of Scranton or the Diocese of Peterborough in any capacity.

COME TO OUR RECTORY, SET, COOK! 2025 LAUNCH PARTY AND BE AMONG THE FIRST TO TASTE SAINTS BE PRAISED! A CHARITABLY MINDED IRISH RED ALE BREWED IN HONOR OF ST. PATRICK & ST. JOSEPH!

Ticket purchases, beverage purchases, and raffle purchases all help fight hunger and homelessness!

WHAT: RECTORY, SET, COOK! 2025 LAUNCH PARTY AND BEER RELEASE!
INTRODUCING SAINTS BE PRAISED! - OUR SECOND COLLABORATION BREW BY FATHER BRIAN VAN FOSSEN, HIS BISHOP HOBAN CLASSMATE MARK LEHMAN, AND BREAKER BREWING BUSINESS PARTNER CHRIS MILLER.
ENJOY: GREAT BEER - CUSTOM CRAFT COCKTAILS - TASTY EATS - A KITCHEN TECHNOLOGY RAFFLE & DIVINE WINE RAFFLE + OUR FAMOUS PUB-TUNE-SINGING PRIESTS
WHEN: 5 P.M. - ??? - FAT TUESDAY, MARCH 4
WHERE: BREAKER BREWING COMPANY, 787 E. NORTHAMPTON ST., W-B TWP.
TICKETS: \$20. ONE TICKET INCLUDES ONE SAINTS BE PRAISED! DRAFT PLUS RED AND GREEN PIZZA, CHARCUTERIE, CHEESE, VEG, LIGHT APPS + DESSERTS.

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'Cereal-ously' Generous: Notre Dame students let boxes fall in name of service

EAST STROUDSBURG – Notre Dame Elementary School marked a memorable Catholic Schools Week 2025 with a powerful display of generosity.

Throughout the week, students, families, and teachers collected hundreds of cereal boxes, which were meticulously organized into an impressive domino display inside the school gymnasium.

“We feel that it is an exciting, fun thing for the kids to do, as well as teaching them about giving to other people, and taking care of the needy,” principal Sister Dorothy Kibler, I.H.M., explained.

On Jan. 30, the entire school gathered to watch – and loudly cheer – as the boxes toppled over onto one another in a grand spectacle.



Hundreds of cereal boxes donated by students from Notre Dame Elementary School are lined up in a domino display inside the school gym on Jan. 30, 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

“I love it. It’s probably the best week so far,” sixth grader Anastazja Nowak said.

All the cereal boxes used in the domino chain were donated to

the food pantry at Saint Matthew Parish, where they will help feed people in need. The event was part of Notre Dame Elementary’s ongoing efforts to foster a sense

of community service in their students.

“I try to give back as much as I can to my community, be as nice as I can, the best person I really can be,” sixth grader Arthur Gonzales explained.

When she heard students preparing for the big event on their weekly podcast – using the word ‘domino’ very intentionally – she began thinking about how important Catholic education can be in creating a ‘domino’ effect of serving others in the spirit of Christ.

“Our Catholic education will hopefully have a domino effect in our world, a domino effect on how we treat our friends, how we are with our families, and how we go out into our world,” the long-time educator and principal explained.

Founded on strong Catholic values, Notre Dame Elementary has long been known for its dedication to student success and academic excellence. The school prides itself on its nurturing environment, where each child’s intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met.

“It really prepares them for everything,” parent Jessica Corcoran stated.

“They use a very student-centered teaching style, and they provide individualized instruction,” parent Peng Zhang added. “They use all sorts of activities to train the students and educate them and make sure that they develop good behaviors ... most importantly, they teach love.”

Students shine in ‘furry friends’ parade at All Saints Academy

SCRANTON – Dressed in colorful costumes and proudly pulling carefully created floats, the youngest students at All Saints Academy took center stage during a special event to mark Catholic Schools Week 2025.

On Jan. 29, pre-K and kindergarten students at the Scranton-based elementary school paraded around their gym, participating in a ‘furry friends’ parade.

“Pre-school and kindergarten students had the opportunity to build a float for one of their stuffed animals, their furry friends,” principal Brittany Haynos-Krupski explained. “You saw Ghostbuster floats, birthday floats, you saw Irish step dancing floats, Mario, every possibility.”

In addition to the floats, many of the students dressed up to match the theme of their float – filling the gym with little firefighters, princesses, and many other characters.

“I heard so many parents and



Kindergarten and pre-K students from All Saints Academy in Scranton participate in the ‘furry friends’ parade as part of Catholic Schools Week 2025. (Photo/Dan Gallagher)

teachers say it was such a great morning, just to see the excitement in the students’ eyes was priceless,” Haynos-Krupski said.

The event captured the essence of Catholic schools as more than just places of learning, but as close-knit families where every student, no matter their age, is celebrated.

The rest of the student body

filled the gymnasium bleachers and loudly cheered as each student and float took their turn in the spotlight.

“When you walk into our building, you feel that sense of family. I have heard from parents, I’ve heard it from people touring our school, I’ve heard faculty and staff. It is that idea of community,” Haynos-Krupski added.

All Saints Academy administrators decided to bring back the ‘furry friends’ parade during Catholic Schools Week this year for the first time since 2020.

Teachers say the event – and all the activities held during Catholic Schools Week 2025 – celebrate the heart of what Catholic schools are all about.

“In a Catholic school, you have the opportunity to teach a child’s spirit as well as their academics,” Amanda Valletta said. “We teach the students to grow in their faith, to become leaders, and that helps them in the real world when they graduate.”

As the parade wrapped up, many of the pre-K and kindergarten students were beaming with pride as their parents and grandparents snapped pictures on their cell phones. For many, it will be a day they remember, and a reminder of the deep sense of love and support that makes All Saints Academy a true family.

“LIVING THE STREAM” CONTEST IS UNDERWAY

STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-8 SHARE THEIR “BIG IDEAS” TO MEET COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL NEEDS!

WATCH THE VIDEOS AND VOTE AT
DIOCESEOFSCRANTON.ORG

Community spirit soars at Saint Jude School's pep rally

MOUNTAIN TOP – During Catholic Schools Week 2025, eighth grade students at Saint Jude School created memories that will last a lifetime.

Among the week's most anticipated events was the spirited and fun-filled pep rally where eighth grade students face off in a basketball game against their coaches – a tradition that has become a favorite for the whole school.

"It is so much fun. I love Catholic Schools Week because as an eighth grader we get to do all the fun stuff," student Leah Smith said.

Catholic Schools Week is a time for students, faculty, and families to come together to celebrate the values and educational opportunities that Catholic schools provide.

At Saint Jude School, administrators stress it is not just about academics, but also about

building strong relationships and a sense of community. The pep rally and basketball game, which are held in the school gym, perfectly highlighted that philosophy.

"We had all our students here in the stands cheering and we had our cheerleaders come out to do their routines. It made for a fun day," parent Frank Carone said.

Carone is the father of two students at Saint Jude School. He says the competitive basketball match is all about school spirit, camaraderie, and the bond between students, staff, and parents.

"The atmosphere in this gym was just incredible. Kids cheering and yelling, cheering for the eighth graders against the dads, it makes for such a great time, a great atmosphere," he added.

Sister Ellen Fischer, principal, says the pep rally is something the kids look forward



Eighth grade students from Saint Jude School in Mountain Top face off in a basketball game against their coaches as part of a pep rally for Catholic Schools Week 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

to every year. She agrees it is much more than just a game – it's a celebration of the Saint Jude School family – emphasizing the significant role that parents play in their children's education.

"It gives us a chance to focus on the great things that are happening here at Saint

Jude School and it's time for our children to enjoy the week," Sister Ellen stated.

Saint Jude School's commitment to creating a family-like atmosphere is evident in everything they do, especially during events like the pep rally. Throughout the entirety

of Catholic Schools Week, the Luzerne County-based school held many other activities to celebrate the school's values of faith, knowledge, and community, all of which were focused on togetherness.

Students, teachers, staff, and families all shared in the fun, creating lasting bonds and reinforcing the importance of supporting one another, both in and out of the classroom.

"We are a family, from before school starts to after school is over, and every minute in between," teacher and parent Carrie Grandzol said.

Being able to celebrate each other's accomplishments is what sets Saint Jude School apart.

"You see this in how our teachers and our administration react to our students and you see how our students react to one another as well," Grandzol added.

Student ambassadors lead tours, provide warm welcome at open house

CLARKS GREEN – Our Lady of Peace School launched Catholic Schools Week 2025 with excitement and energy, hosting an open house on the first day of the annual celebration.

The open house gave prospective students and their families a chance to explore the school, meet its dedicated teachers, and learn more about the diverse programs that set the school apart – everything from faith-based education to hands-on STREAM experiences.

The open house is special because of the unique role that the school's 7th and 8th grade students get to play. The student ambassadors got to lead prospective families on tours, offering a firsthand look at what makes Our Lady of Peace School so special.

"It is so much fun," eighth grader Eloise Giroux said. "They get to meet the teachers, look at



Eloise Giroux, student council president for Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green, helps to lead prospective families on tours during an open house held as part of Catholic Schools Week. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

the curriculum ... Our Lady of Peace is really a great school. It is such a family."

Giroux has attended the Lackawanna County elementary school for the last eight years and is currently serving as student council president.

"We have so many

fun programs, basketball, cheerleading, OLP Players, the theater program," she explained. "It's really a great school academically, spiritually, and socially. You learn so many things."

Leah Steinberg, another eighth-grade student, also served

as a student ambassador. She transferred to Our Lady of Peace School in seventh grade, and said the school quickly helped her grow more confident in her faith.

"It is the foundation to our education. I always believe in putting God first and trying to glorify him in anything I can do," Steinberg said. "It is amazing that I had the opportunity to come here to learn so much about my faith and more about academics."

Ann D'Arienzo, who has served as principal at Our Lady of Peace School for the last seven years, says students not only practice their faith by praying together, celebrating Mass regularly and having religion classes – but points to service projects that help to build student character and a desire to give back.

"We start as early as pre-school to explain to our students, and to model for our children,

how important it is to give back to our community," the long-time educator said. "Whether it is through coat drives, pajama drives, we put together toiletry kits for those that have been displaced due to weather disasters, they are able to recognize how fortunate they are."

Members of the 'Falcon Family Alliance,' the parent organization that helps to plan activities at the school, were also on hand for the open house.

The group's co-chair, Mary Ann Morgan, said the open house isn't just a chance to "show off" to the community, but is important for members of the school community to feel pride in everything they have accomplished.

"I hope parents can feel the school is alive. It's growing and we're a community that works together to support each other," Morgan said.

Diocese of Scranton
CATHOLIC
 SCHOOL SYSTEM
 FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

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.



Students at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** enjoyed "Game Day" during Catholic Schools Week, matching wits and showing off their skills with their classmates.



On "Favorite Jersey Day," students at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** proudly stand in front of the Saint Francis of Assisi classroom door so everyone knows it won the "Favorite Saint Door Contest" during the school's Catholic Schools Week celebration.



Congratulations to Izabella Merrick, a sixth grade student at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre**, for winning the school's annual Spelling Bee. She survived 25 rounds and won on the word "steeped."



As part of their Catholic Schools Week activities, the students and faculty from **La Salle Academy in Jessup** participated in a special liturgy by Diocese of Scranton Secretary of Clergy Formation, Father Alex Roche, and Father Timothy Kennedy, Parochial Vicar of the Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup.



The Individualized Instruction students at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** recently celebrated an Autism Awareness Liturgy with Father Brian Van Fossen, pastor of Saint Faustina/Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parishes. The students led the Mass' readings, petitions, and offertory procession.



Finn Naughton and Jediah Bioh, ninth graders at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg**, are all smiles on "Twin Accessory Day" during Catholic Schools Week.



The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated Mass with the students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**. After hearing the Loaves & Fishes Gospel, the Bishop reminded the students of one of the most important elements to the story: Jesus wanted His apostles to help Him with the miracle of feeding the 5,000 people, even though He could have done it Himself. At the conclusion of Mass, the students presented the Bishop with a painting they all helped create for Mother Teresa's Haven in Wilkes-Barre, a men's shelter that just recently moved into its permanent location.



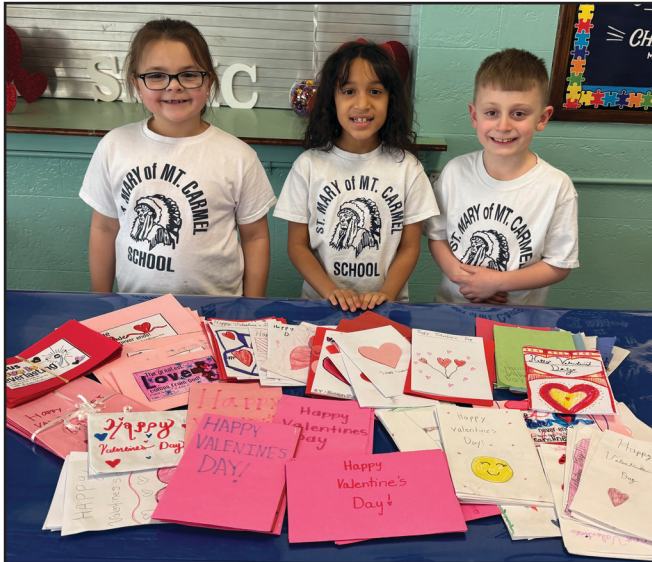
Father Jose Kuriappilly, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Towanda, celebrated the Feast of Saint Blaise by blessing the throats of students and faculty at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda**.



Students in Grades K, 1 & 2 from **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** meet weekly for "Cougar Cubs," which teaches them basketball skills in preparation for joining the CYO in Grade 3 and beyond.



Although a snow day cancelled the original plans for The Brain Show during Catholic Schools Week at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore**, students were ready to answer trivia questions and dance their way to become champions on the rescheduled date.



Students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** made Valentine's Day cards for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters as part of their Catholic Schools Week celebrations.



Father Michael Bryant, pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish, Duryea, treated the students at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** to ice cream sundaes during Catholic Schools Week.



Third grade students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** proudly showcase their homemade inventions using simple machines at the school's annual "Invention Convention."



Students at **All Saints Academy in Scranton** were ready to go for the school's annual Family Dodgeball tournament during Catholic Schools Week.



Members of the Key Club at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport** delivered cans of soup to St. Joseph the Worker's Soup Kitchen as part of the school's "Souper Bowl" collection drive.

Host-for-a-Day campaign supports mission to serve people in need

SCRANTON - With more people than ever requiring its services, Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen in Scranton has begun the 47th annual Host-for-a-Day campaign to support its mission of feeding and clothing individuals and families in need.

For a donation of \$100 or more, an individual, family, business, community organization or faith-based group can help to fund a day's meal. Major sponsorship levels are also available starting at \$500.

In effect, each contributor becomes a "host" for a day.

Contributors may then select a date on which they or someone they designate or memorialize will be recognized as helping to provide that meal.

Financial contributions to the Kitchen also help to fund other programs such as a Client-Choice Food Pantry and Free Clothing Store and weekly meals at parish locations and high-rise housing buildings in Carbondale and Olyphant and also weekly meals at parish sites in Roaring Brook Township and Archbald.

The Kitchen's Free Clothing Mobile Trailer visits various locations to bring clothing items to those in need who might not be able to come to the Scranton property.

Also, the Kitchen maintains a "Code Blue" collaboration with the City of Scranton and Keystone Mission. When the temperature gets below 20 degrees, the Kitchen provides hot



Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen has launched its 2025 Host-for-a-Day campaign. Pictured in foreground, from left: Rob Williams, Kitchen Executive Director; Michael Colarusso, Advisory Board Member and Campaign Chair; and Maria McCool, Advisory Board President.

soup to homeless folks welcomed to shelter at Weston Field.

Rob Williams, Kitchen Executive Director, noted that the Kitchen recently had the highest

single month serving counts in its history. In just one month, the Kitchen served nearly 10,000 meals, provided more than 1,000 family servings through the Client Choice Food Pantry and had nearly 1,000 visits to the Free Clothing

operations. In 2024, a total of 96,000 meals were provided.

"Now more than ever, our brothers and sisters in need are relying on us for help," he said. "Fortunately, through donations and the dedication of our staff and volunteers, we are able to provide for those we serve in a dignified and compassionate manner."

Michael Colarusso, a member of the Kitchen's Advisory Board, is chairing the 2025 Host-for-a-Day campaign and leading the effort with his fellow board members.

"Considering all the services that the Kitchen provides,

you truly realize that it's only possible thanks to the generosity of individuals and organizations within our community," he said. "The need is so great and you understand how important the Host-for-a-Day campaign is."

Recent contributors to the campaign are receiving an appeal directly from the Kitchen through the mail or will be contacted by members of the Kitchen's Advisory Board.

Host for a Day gifts can also be made by calling the Kitchen at (570) 342-5556, or sending a check to Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen, 500 Penn Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509. Donations can also be made online at: www.stfranciskitchen.org or [facebook.com/stfranciskitchen](https://www.facebook.com/stfranciskitchen) or text SFAK to 26989.

This year the celebration that concludes the campaign will be held at Fiorelli's in Peckville on Wednesday, April 30, beginning at 6 p.m. Each contributor and a guest is invited to attend. RSVP's are required by April 15 to confirm attendance and an accurate meal count.

Those who would like to sponsor the reception are asked to call the Kitchen at (570) 342-5556.

YOU Can Feed and Clothe People In Need!

More than 250 men, women and children rely on Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen each day for hot, nutritious meals, food for their households and clothing for all seasons.

You can support this mission through the annual Host-for-a-Day campaign. For a donation of \$100 or more, an individual, a family, a business, a community organization or faith-based group can help sponsor a day's meal at the Kitchen and be recognized as a "host" of that meal. Major sponsorship levels are also available beginning at \$500.



Recent contributors to the Host-for-a-Day campaign are receiving an appeal directly from the Kitchen through the mail or will be contacted by a member of the Advisory Board. Donations can also be made by:

Calling the Kitchen at 570-342-5556, online at stfranciskitchen.org, [facebook.com/stfranciskitchen](https://www.facebook.com/stfranciskitchen), text SFAK to 26989, or sending a check to Saint Francis of Assisi Kitchen, 500 Penn Avenue, Scranton PA 18509

Thank You For Your Support!

The culmination of the campaign will be celebrated at Fiorelli's in Peckville on Wednesday, April 30, at 6 p.m. RSVPs are required by April 15. Those who would like to sponsor the reception are asked to call the Kitchen at 570-342-5556.



Scholarships available for local scouts on national & local level

SCRANTON – The National Catholic Committee on Scouting (NCCS) is reminding young people that scholarship opportunities are available to service-oriented high school students who are Catholic Scouts in a Boy Scouts of America (Scouting America) program and plan to continue their education in college.

These prestigious scholarships recognize the dedication and leadership demonstrated by young men and women in their faith and scouting journey.

The NCCS awards thirteen

scholarships nationally totaling \$36,000. Applicants complete one application to be considered for any of the scholarship awards.

To be eligible, a high school student must be a practicing Catholic, a full-time high school senior, registered and actively involved with a Scout Troop, Venturing Crew, or Sea Scout Ship. Eligible recipients must also have earned the Eagle Scout, Summit Award, Quartermaster Award, Ad Altare Dei, Pope Pius XII, or Light is Life (Eastern Rite) Religious Emblem.

Continued on Page 26

Hibernians gather for Saint Brigid of Ireland Feast Day



The Lackawanna County Men's and Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH & LAOH) gathered on Feb. 1 for the celebration of the Feast of Saint Brigid of Ireland. The Hibernians participated in a feast day Mass at Saint Patrick Church in West Scranton, celebrated by Father Richard Fox, pastor of Saint Patrick Parish. Pictured front row, from left: John Michelle, Danielle Ketch, Doreen Gilbride, Kate Angerson, Lynn Walsh, Maureen Wallace, Father Fox, Dorothea Crowley, Karen Savage, Michele McDade, Amanda Gavin, Mary Kay Sears and Judy Krell. Back row, same order: Nancy Yavoroski, Conal McHugh, Patty Jones, Sister Kathleen Smith, Mary Claire Kingsley, Mary Kate Werner, Nancy Earyes, Mary Ellen Richard, Mary Fran Smith, Kathy Connor, Ann Brunori and Jeff Sears.

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MISSION MESSAGE

**Four Societies —
One Shared Purpose**

By Shannon Kowalski
Diocesan Director,
Pontifical Mission Societies



If you've been following this column for a while, you're probably familiar with The Pontifical Mission Societies (TPMS) and their vital role in spreading the Gospel and strengthening the Church, especially in places where people are just hearing about Christ for the first time.

Here in the United States, four societies work together to keep the missionary spirit alive. Each one has a distinct mission, but they all share the same purpose: bringing Christ's love to those who need it most.

Since the National Office recently revealed a new series of logos for each of the four societies, I thought now may be a good time for a refresher on how each society serves those in need.

Society for the Propagation of the Faith

This society, founded in 1822 by Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot, is all about making sure missionary priests, religious, and lay workers have what they need to spread the Gospel. Whether it's helping build churches, training catechists, or supporting medical and educational ministries, this society is at the heart of mission efforts. Every parish in the Diocese plays a part in supporting the Society for the Propagation of the Faith by welcoming a missionary for a weekend appeal each summer. Fun fact: one of the very first collections taken up by this society helped missions in Louisiana and Florida — right here in the U.S.!

Missionary Childhood Association (MCA)

Have you ever heard the phrase "children helping children?" That's exactly what the MCA is about! Founded in 1843 by Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson, this society invites kids to pray for, learn about, and support other children in mission territory. Through small sacrifices and fundraising efforts, young Catholics get to live out their faith by helping their brothers and sisters around the world.

Society of Saint Peter the Apostle

Without priests and religious sisters, who would guide and nurture the faith in mission territories? The Society of St. Peter the Apostle focuses on the education and formation of future priests, nuns, and brothers, especially in areas where the Church is still growing.

By providing scholarships and funding seminaries, this society ensures that local Church leaders are well-equipped to serve their communities for generations to come.

Pontifical Missionary Union

Unlike the other three societies, this one isn't about raising funds; it's about raising awareness. Founded by Father Paolo Manna in 1916, the Pontifical Missionary Union helps priests, religious, and lay leaders grow in their missionary spirit. It's a powerful reminder that every Catholic — no matter where they live — is called to be a missionary in their daily life.

The TPMS USA Logo



The new logo for the Pontifical Mission Societies, revealed in November, combines elements of each society into one logo emphasizing unity: unity with Christ on the Cross and in the Eucharist, unity within the universal Church and her missionary efforts, unity with the Holy Father, and unity across the four societies comprising TPMS. This new design introduces several key elements that distinguish it from the previous logo: a circular design symbolizing unity and inclusiveness; central symbols such as the crossed keys of the papacy and the cross of Christ's sacrificial love; red stars highlight TPMS's American identity and its commitment to the global mission from a U.S. perspective.

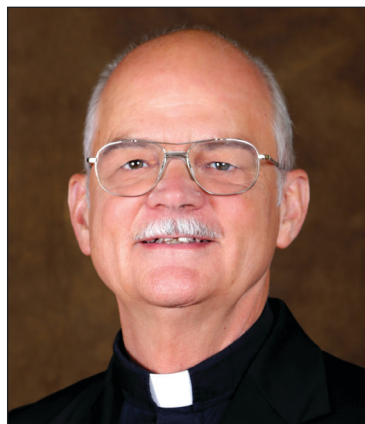
If you receive mailings or communications from the Pontifical Mission Societies, keep an eye out for this new logo — it's a symbol of our shared mission to bring hope, faith, and love to the ends of the earth!

Annual OSJ Saint Joseph Novena to welcome renowned theologian on patron saint

LAFLIN — The Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph will host their Annual Novena to Saint Joseph during March 10-19 at their seminary chapel on Route 315, Laffin, while welcoming as novena homilist one of their own priests, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Larry Toschi, who serves with the OSJ community in California.

The Novena of Masses will be celebrated each day at noon & 7 p.m., with devotions following, including a blessing with the first-class relic of Saint Joseph Marelo, founder of the Oblates of Saint Joseph.

Confessions and praying of the Holy Rosary will precede every Mass.



Father Larry Toschi, OSJ

A native of California, Father Toschi has spent many years on the national and international levels promoting deeper intellectual study on Saint Joseph, the husband

of Mary and earthly father of Jesus.

The Oblate priest has been very instrumental in bringing to light over the past decades, through his talks and writings, the important role of Saint Joseph in the plan of redemption and promoting a special devotion to the Holy Spouses based on Scriptural and theological truths.

The Novena concludes on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Wednesday, March 19, with a solemn Mass celebrated at noon by the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton.

A feast day evening Mass will also be celebrated at 7 p.m. by Father Toschi, in conjunction

with the Pittston Deanery's Lenten "Road to Resurrection" series.

Oblate Father Paul McDonnell, rector of the religious community in the Pittston area, invites all faithful of the diocese

to participate in this annual celebration honoring the patron saint of the Universal Church.

For more information, contact the OSJ office at (570) 654-7542 or osjseminary@comcast.net.

Slovak Lenten program March 30 at Saint Ignatius in Kingston

KINGSTON — The Slovak Heritage Society of NEPA will host the celebration of a Lenten Slovak Hymn Sing & Traditional Slovak Stations of the Cross on Sunday, March 30, at Saint Ignatius Loyola Church, 339 North Maple Ave., Kingston.

All faithful are welcome to join in the congregational singing of Slovak Lenten hymns that will open the program at 2 p.m.

Prayerful meditation of the sorrowful Stations of the Cross in the Slovak language will follow.

The words and translations of the rich hymnology, along with program booklets for the Station prayers, will be provided to those in attendance.

Benediction will conclude the service, to be followed by refreshments. A free-will offering will be accepted.

Saint Ignatius Church is wheelchair accessible via elevator.

For more information, contact Anna Hudock at (570) 510-1655.

Catholic Choral Lenten concert at Pittston parish

PITTSTON — Continuing a 75-year tradition of inspiring prayer and meditation through music, the Catholic Choral Society will present its annual Lenten Concert this year at Saint Joseph Marelo Parish, 237 William St., Pittston. Serving as host pastor is Father Joseph Elston.

The concert will be held on Sunday, March 9, at 4 p.m. in the parish worship site of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

In addition to the Choral Society, the concert will feature the combine parish choirs of

Saint Joseph Marelo, under the direction of Brandon Jopling, and Saint John the Evangelist, directed by Michael Sowa. Ann Manganello serves as music director of the Catholic Choral Society, with Linda Houck as accompanist.

The concert is open to the public free of charge; a goodwill offering will be accepted.

The musical ensemble is composed of 50 members from Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wayne, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties.



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Alhambra hosts Holy Hour for those with special needs



The Order of Alhambra, local caravan Alhambra No. 4, recently hosted a Holy Hour at King's College, Wilkes-Barre, for special needs individuals, their families and continual blessings on the mission of the confraternity. Father James McGahagan, Alhambra chaplain, presided during the Eucharistic adoration devotion, assisted by visiting priest Father Derek Thome, chaplain of the Saint Pius X Catholic Student Center at Pittsburg State University in Kansas. Founded in 1904, the Order of Alhambra is a Catholic fraternal organization dedicated to assisting those with intellectual disabilities. Principals shown during the recent Holy Hour are, first row from left: Past Grand Commander Cathy Kennedy, Supreme Regional Director Ada Magni, Father Thome, Father McGahagan and Grand Commander Donna Magni. Second row: Maureen Roughsedge, Grand Chamberlain Sharon Yale, John Brzycki and George Yatison. Third row: Grand Advocate Raymond Kownacki and Past Grand Commander/Supreme Director Francis Kennedy.

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Alhambra dinner for Special Olympians, families slated March 20 at King's College

WILKES-BARRE — Local caravan Alhambra No. 4, Order of Alhambra, will host a Spring Dinner Dance for Special Olympians, their families, and friends of Alhambra on Thursday, March 20, in the Sheehy-Farmer Campus Center at King's College, 133 North Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre.

All are invited to attend the gala from 5 to 8 p.m.

Dinner entrée includes fruit salad, breaded chicken, mashed potatoes & green beans, and apple pie dessert. Coffee, tea and soft drinks will be provided.

DJ Joe Hussey will provide

the evening's entertainment.

Tickets cost \$35 each. Reservations, including guests' names and check payable to Alhambra Caravan 4, are required by March 10. Remit to: Alhambra Caravan 4, 17 English St., West Wyoming, PA 18644.

For more information, contact Ada Magni at (570) 693-1338.

Founded in 1904, the Order of Alhambra is a Catholic fraternal organization dedicated to assisting those with intellectual disabilities.

Alhambra members meet on the second Wednesday of the month on the campus of King's College in Wilkes-Barre.

Prince of Peace Parish gymnasium in Old Forge renovated, blessed



Extensive restoration of the gymnasium at Prince of Peace Parish in Old Forge has been completed. The parish recreational facility was fully refurbished with new electrical capacity, lighting, signage, emergency lighting, and installation of a new court floor.

Pictured in the photo at left are members of the



Prince of Peace Finance Council. From left: Mark Voyack; Alan Coolbaugh; Rich Ciuferrri; Father August Ricciardi, pastor; George Dunbar; Robert Potosky; and Robert Gilette. Absent is Finance Council member Sal Luzio Sr.

Shown above is Father Ricciardi presiding over the blessing and dedication of the newly remodeled gym, which is now open to community youth groups for sports-related & social activities.



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Scholarship opportunities available to scouts

Continued from Page 20

The applicant must also have provided service and leadership in your church, community, school and scouting.

Over the last 20 years, NCCS has awarded a total of \$272,000 in scholarships to 118 service-oriented Scouts across the country.

Applications for the

scholarships are due by March 1 and must be submitted online.

Locally, there is also a \$500 local high school scholarship (renewable annually) presented annually to one qualified eighth grade student from Lackawanna County for educational expenses at a Catholic high school who is active in scouting and has a financial need.

The scholarship, which is managed by the Scranton Area Community Foundation and named in honor of Constance and Joseph Brocavich, is renewable for four years provided the recipient maintains a B average or higher.

Additional information is available at safdn.org and the application for that scholarship is due April 1.

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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 Respecto 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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Matamoras church hosts Boy Scouts anniversary Mass



Knights of Columbus John Paul II Council 13935 and Saint Joseph Parish in Matamoras welcomed Scouts from the Hudson Delaware Council for a special Scout Mass celebrating the 115th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. Hosted at Saint Joseph Church and celebrated by parish pastor Father Joseph Manarchuck, the Mass paid tribute to the values of leadership, service and faith that Scouting fosters in young people. Following the Eucharistic liturgy, the Knights hosted a pancake breakfast for the Scouts and their families as part of a fundraising effort to support the mission of the K of C and local Scouting initiatives.

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Atlantic City Resorts Casino Overnight • April. 27-28-\$199
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"Noah's Ark" Sight & Sound, Lancaster • July 26, Oct. 4 includes an Amish meal • \$219

Wind Creek Casino
May 4 • \$58 (\$25 Free Slotplay)

Resorts World Catskills Casino
March 23 • \$63
\$25 Slot & \$15 food credit

Finger Lakes Luncheon Cruise
June 14 • \$224 Live music from the Motown Disco era plus wine tasting at a local winery.

Branson, MO • June 21-29 \$2,049
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Seneca Allegany Resort Casino & High Stakes Bingo Overnight
July 20-21 • \$95 Slotplay plus \$20 food credit • \$249

Wildwood Crest, NJ • Sept. 7-10
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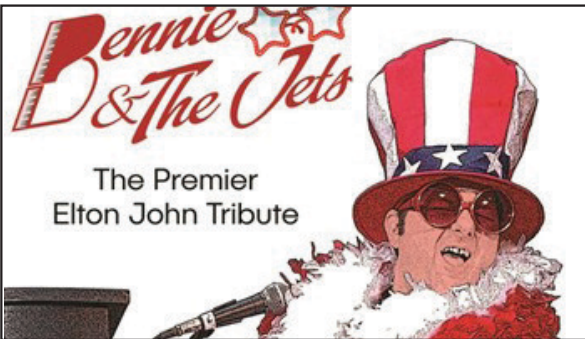
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Scripture series for Lent offered in Hazleton

HAZLETON — Father Connell McHugh, sacramental minister at Holy Rosary Parish, 240 Poplar St., Hazleton, will offer a series of five presentations on Holy Scripture for the season of Lent, beginning on the Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday, March 4.

The series programs held on five consecutive Tuesday mornings in Holy Rosary Parish Hall will begin at 10 a.m. and run approximately 75 to 90 minutes.

Session dates and topics are as follows:

March 4 — The Temptation Narratives; **March 11** — In-depth Look at Judas; **March 18** — Apocryphal Writings; **March 25** — Reading the Passion Narratives & Examining the Passion by Luke; and **April 1** — Words from the Cross: The Seven Last Words of Jesus.

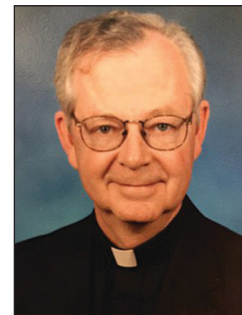
The Lenten Scripture presentations are open to the public free of charge.

Since program notes for each weekly topic will be prepared for those in attendance, registration is required by contacting the Holy Rosary Parish office (570) 454-6693.

IN MEMORIAM

Jesuit Father Eugene Nolan

*Entered Eternal Life:
January 6, 2025*



Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Jean Conaty

*Entered Life:
January 17, 1931*

*Entered Eternal Life:
January 15, 2025*



Religious Sister of Mercy Jayne Pruitt

*Entered Eternal Life:
January 31, 2025*



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Prayer Requests for Priests

February 20, Capuchin Franciscan Father Pio Mandato; February 21, Father Michael Marchetti; February 22, Jesuit Father Joseph Marina; February 23, Jesuit Father Leonard Martin; February 24, Bishop Emeritus Joseph F. Martino; February 25, Father Paschal Mbagwu; February 26, Father Michael McCormick; February 27, Father Glenn McCreary, V.E.; February 28, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Paul McDonnell; March 1, Pope Francis; March 2, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; March 3, Father Patrick McDowell; March 4, Father James McGahagan; March 5, Father Gerard McGlone; March 6, Monsignor Stephen McGough; March 7, Father Connell McHugh; March 8, Jesuit Father Bernard McIlhenny; March 9, Jesuit Father Ronald McKinney; March 10, Father Patrick McLaughlin; March 11, Jesuit Father Joseph McShane; March 12, Father Edward Michelin; March 13, Father Kevin Miller; March 14, Father Joseph Mosley; March 15, Father Joseph Motsay; March 16, Father Thomas Muldowney; March 17, Father Kevin Mulhern; March 18, Father Paul Mullen; March 19, Holy Cross Father Frank Murphy; March 20, Father James Nash; March 21, Father Theodore Obaza; March 22, Holy Cross Father Thomas O'Hara; March 23, Father Peter O'Rourke; March 24, Father James Paisley.

Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

Friday Eucharistic Adoration & Benediction — FEB. 21, hosted by St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish at Our Lady of the Lake Church, 5112 Pocono Crest Road, Pocono Pines; Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament and benediction offered every Friday morning following the 9:15 a.m. Mass. St. Monica's Army hosts prayerful recitation of the Holy Rosary on the First Friday of each month at 6:30 p.m., followed by adoration.

Weekly Eucharistic Adoration — FEB. 21, hosted by St. Thomas More Parish in Lake Ariel; exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is held every Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Chapel of St. Thomas More Church, 105 Gravity Road, Lake Ariel. Weekly adoration of the Eucharistic Lord includes recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet during the 3 p.m. hour, evening prayers at 5:30 p.m., concluding with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 6 p.m.

XLT: Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations — FEB. 23, sponsored by the Scranton Diocesan Office of Vocations; hosted at St. Matthew

Church, 78 Ridgeway Street, East Stroudsburg, beginning at 7 p.m. Gathering includes Eucharistic Adoration, guest speaker, music, Sacrament of Reconciliation and social. Contact Kyra Krzywicki, vocation program coordinator, at kkrzywicki@dioceseofscranton.org.

Mass & Prayer for Healing — FEB. 25, sponsored by the Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal; Mass with healing prayer begins at 7 p.m. at St. Mary Assumption Church, Prince of Peace Parish, 123 W. Grace St., Old Forge. Celebrant: Father August Ricciardi, host pastor.

Tuesday Eucharistic Adoration — FEB. 25, hosted by St. Peter Parish in Wellsboro; weekly exposition & adoration of the Blessed Sacrament offered every Tuesday from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Church of St. Peter, 47 Central Ave., Wellsboro. All faithful are welcome to spend time in prayerful meditation and reflection in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Weekly Rosary — FEB. 26, hosted at SS. Peter & Paul Church,

1309 West Locust St., West Scranton; weekly Rosary devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help offered every Wednesday morning following the 9 a.m. Mass.

XLT: Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations — FEB. 26, sponsored by the Scranton Diocesan Office of Vocations; hosted at Christ the King Parish, Archbald, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Gathering includes Eucharistic Adoration, guest speaker, music, Sacrament of Reconciliation and social. Contact Kyra Krzywicki, vocation program coordinator, at kkrzywicki@dioceseofscranton.org.

58th Annual "German Nite" Dinner-Dance Social — MARCH 1, sponsored by the Holy Name Society of St. Nicholas-St. Mary Parish in Wilkes-Barre; doors open at 6 p.m. in the St. Nicholas-St. Mary School Auditorium, 240 South Washington St., Wilkes-Barre. German-style buffet dinner served at 6:15 p.m., featuring pork & sauerkraut, chicken francaise, bratwurst, mashed potatoes, halushki & green beans; beer and soda included. Dance music provided from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. by the German band Schnitzel. Cost: \$35 per person (adults 21 & older). Advance tickets only; reserved seating for groups of eight or more available. For more information and tickets, call the parish office at (570) 823-7736.

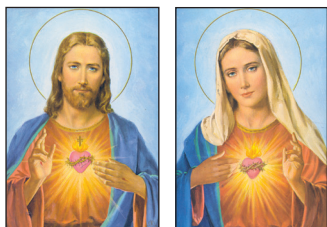
Continued on Page 30

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 **March 7** 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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Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

2025 Mardi Gras Celebration — MARCH 1, sponsored by Prince of Peace Parish in Old Forge; held from 6:30 to 10 p.m. in the Arcaro & Genell Banquet Room, Main St., Old Forge. Cost: \$35 per person (adults only), includes appetizers and full-course, sit-down dinner with choice of beef, chicken or fish. Beer, wine and soft beverages included; entertainment provided by The Dynamic Duo. Event also includes a cash raffle drawing. Advance reservations encouraged; seating is limited. For reservations,

contact the parish rectory at (570) 457-5900. Tickets will also be sold at all weekend Masses; payment due with reservations.

Sign Language Interpreted Masses — MARCH 2 & APRIL 6, hosted by The University of Scranton; both signed Masses will be offered on Sunday at 11 a.m. on the university campus at Madonna Della Strada, 415 Monroe Ave., Scranton. All are welcome. For more information, contact Scranton University at (570) 941-7419 or campusministry@scranton.edu.

Ash Wednesday Pizza Fritta Sale — MARCH 5, sponsored by SS. Anthony & Rocco Parish in Dunmore; take-out orders available 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. & 3:30 to 5 p.m. at St. Rocco Church Hall, 122 Kurtz St., Dunmore. Pizza Fritta sold in bags of three (with or without sugar) for \$5. Pre-order deadline is Tuesday, March 4; call the parish office (570) 344-1209. Walk-ins welcome.

Ash Wednesday Polish Lenten Food Sale — MARCH 5, sponsored by Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Dupont; take-out orders available from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the garage behind the parish rectory, 215 Lackawanna Ave., Dupont. Fresh homemade Lenten foods sold on a first-come basis include: potato pancakes, \$20/dozen; fried cabbage & noodles (halushki), \$10/quart, \$5/pint; homemade meatless soups, \$12/quart); and pierogi.

“40 Days for Life” Pro-Life Rosary Gatherings — MARCH 5-APRIL 11, offered for the special intentions of an end to abortion and closure of the Planned Parenthood location in Wilkes-Barre; Rosary is prayed each weekday, Monday to Friday, at 10 a.m. in front of the Planned Parenthood offices at 101 North Main St., Wilkes-Barre. The pro-

life campaign draws attention to the evil of abortion through prayer & fasting, constant vigil, and community outreach.

Annual Homemade Pierogi Sale — MARCH 5-APRIL 11, sponsored by St. Catherine of Siena Parish, 220 Church St., Moscow; sale held Monday thru Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in the parish hall (lower level of St. Catherine Church) and after all weekend Masses. Cost: potato cheese or cabbage pierogi, \$11 for baker's dozen (13); halushki (cabbage & noodles) also available for \$9/quart. Orders may be placed by calling Mary Ann (570) 266-3198, or Betty Ann (570) 842-6195.

Lenten Fridays Food Sale — MARCH 7-APRIL 18, hosted by St. John the Evangelist Parish, 35 William St., Pittston; held every Friday during Lent (including Good Friday) with order pick-up from 3:30 to 6 p.m. in the Monsignor Bendik Pastoral Center, Church Street. Sale items include potato pancakes (3 for \$5) and take-and-heat red pizza or white pizza with broccoli (\$15/tray). Orders required by Thursday of each week by calling the parish office (570) 654-0053.

Lenten Friday Buffet Dinners — MARCH 7, 21 & APRIL 4, hosted by St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Pocono Pines; dinners served from 4 to 6 p.m. in the social hall at Our Lady of the Lake Church, 5112 Pocono Crest Road, Pocono Pines. All three buffets feature a variety of meatless dishes. Menu offerings include garden salad, choice of two soups, and meatless entrees: fish, stuffed pasta shells, macaroni & cheese, halushki, baked ziti, veggie penne, pierogi casserole, spinach lasagna, Mexican casserole, penne w/vodka sauce, and steamed & roasted vegetables. Buffet also includes rolls, hot & cold beverages, and

Continued on next page

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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Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

Continued from previous page

sauce, and steamed & roasted vegetables. Buffet also includes rolls, hot & cold beverages, and dessert table. Menu subject to change. Cost: \$14 per person; seniors (age 65+), \$12. Both dine-in and take-out service available. No reservations needed. For more information, call the parish office (570) 646-6424.

Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Prayer Breakfast — MARCH 8, sponsored by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Scranton Diocese; hosted from 9 to 11 a.m. in Queen of the Apostles Parish Hall, 715 Hawthorne St., Avoca. Gathering includes songs of praise and a teaching by Father Timothy Kennedy, pastor of Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup. All are welcome.

Monthly Meeting of the Lay Carmelites — MARCH 15, hosted by Our Lady of the Mountains Lay Carmelite Community on the third Saturday of each month; gatherings are held from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Oblates of St. Joseph seminary/chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laflin. For more information, contact Chris at (570) 239-8094.

Gift Card Bingo — MARCH 15, sponsored by the Youth Ministry at Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Hanover Township; hosted at the Warrior Run Fire Hall, 316 Academy St., Warrior

Run. Doors open 10:30 a.m.; games begin at noon. Admission fee: \$25 (in advance) or \$30 (at door), includes 15 regular games; each game wins \$100 in gift cards. Event features five specials, Pot of Gold door prizes, basket raffle, bake & food sales, and cash raffle; final special wins \$1,000 in gift cards. For tickets/more information, visit www.exhc.org or call (570) 328-4004.

Night at the Races — MARCH 15, hosted by SS. Peter & Paul Parish, 13 Hudson Road, Plains; doors open at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall, with post time at 7 p.m. Admission cost: \$10 (adults only/age 21+), includes food & refreshments. Race horses available for \$10 each. For tickets, contact the parish office at (570) 825-6663 or email: parishoffice@sspeterandpaulplains.com.

Annual Saint Joseph Day Breakfast — MARCH 23, hosted by the Women's Society at St. Joseph Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, 130 N. Saint Frances Cabrini Ave., West Scranton; breakfast served from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Menu includes eggs, buttermilk pancakes, home fries, olives, honey-baked ham, breads, juice & coffee/tea. Cost: adults, \$12; children (ages 6 to 10), \$6. Take-out orders cost \$10/\$6 each (no beverages). Traditional St. Joseph Bread available in two-loaf packages for \$5. Breakfast tickets sold at the door; call (570)

468-0529 or contact: melkite.scranton@gmail.com.

Lenten Reflection Service — MARCH 25, hosted by St. Ignatius Loyola Parish in Kingston; held from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at St. Ignatius Church, 339 North Maple Ave., Kingston. Service offers meditative atmosphere for the season of Lent, including contemplative music composed by St. Hildegard von Bingen and performed live under the direction of John Vaida. Musical interludes will be interspersed by brief reflections on the themes of faith, hope and love during the Resurrection journey, offered by the three Notre Dame Echo Apprentices currently serving in the Scranton Diocese.

April Lottery Raffle — APRIL 1-30, sponsored by the Ladies of Mary Society at Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Hanover Township; based on the daily Pennsylvania Lottery evening Pick 3 drawing. Raffle calendars (with two numbers each) cost \$20. Cash prizes range from \$100 to \$500. For calendar orders or more information, call (570) 823-6242, or visit: www.exhc.org.



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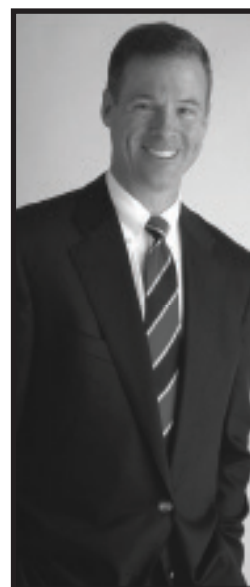
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Papal Intention for February 2025

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Pope adds feast day of St. Teresa of Kolkata to universal calendar

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - Pope Francis has added the feast day of St. Teresa of Kolkata, a "beacon of hope" and an example of loving service to the poorest of the poor, to the General Roman Calendar so that her "Optional Memorial shall be celebrated by all on 5 September every year."

Cardinal Arthur Roche and Archbishop Vittorio Francesco Viola, respectively prefect and secretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, announced the pope's decision in a decree published by the Vatican Feb. 11.

Previously the feast day of St. Teresa of Calcutta, as the Vatican refers to the city in India where she began her work with the abandoned poor, was inscribed only in the proper calendar of the Missionaries of Charity and the



St. Teresa of Kolkata is seen in this 1995 file photo. (CNS file photo/Joanne Keane)

proper calendar of India.

Now her memorial is included in the calendar of the universal church.

Pope Francis, responding to the requests of bishops, religious and laypeople "and considering the influence exercised by the spirituality of Saint Teresa in different parts of the world," decided to add her to the universal calendar, the decree said.

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Prayer vigil urges compassion for immigrants and refugees

Continued from Page 8

"Grant us now the grace of hospitality, bless our eyes that we may see the needs of our brothers and sisters, and fill our hearts with the wisdom we need to recognize the human dignity of all people, and bless our hands so that we may continue to have the honor of doing your work in this world," Father Kuhar prayed.

Representatives of the Jewish community said the biblical directive of welcoming the stranger is mentioned 36 times in the Torah, more than any other commandment.

"We, like many of you here,

believe that revelation is not something that happened 'once upon a time' and is something of the past," Rabbi Daniel J. Swartz of Temple Hesed said. "It is continuing to unfold with all of us today. When we listen to Scripture, we listen to it not as someone listening to someone else's words, but as someone who is being addressed by those words."

After about 30 minutes, the group walked to Saint Luke's Episcopal Church on Wyoming Avenue and continued the prayer service inside hearing the recent words of Pope Francis and three personal reflections from those who have migrated to the United States.



An interfaith prayer vigil was held Feb. 17 in downtown Scranton.

Ushu Mukelo came to the United States after spending 12 years in a refugee camp in Uganda. He said the bible demands us all to take action on this issue.

"We must respect the dignity of every human being," Mukelo said.

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