



# **The Catholic Light**

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

## **Weekly E-Newsletter**

### **February 27, 2025**

## **Pope continues to improve, is doing respiratory therapy**



Pope Francis' clinical condition continued to improve Feb. 27, the Vatican said, and he had respiratory physiotherapy in the morning and the afternoon.

For the second day in a row, the 88-year-old pope's doctors at Rome's Gemelli hospital did not use the word "critical" when describing the pope's

condition in the medical bulletin they drafted for the Vatican press office to distribute.

Still, the bulletin said, “more days of clinical stability are needed” before the doctors will lift their “guarded” prognosis of the pope’s condition.

The medical bulletin also specified that the pope’s breathing had improved enough for him to alternate receiving high-flow oxygen through a nasal cannula and using a “ventimask” with a mix of room air.

Pope Francis has been hospitalized since Feb. 14 and was diagnosed with double pneumonia and a “polymicrobial” infection; he experienced an “asthmatic respiratory crisis” Feb. 22.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Catholic News Service](#)



## Faithful unite in St. Peter's Square praying for pope's health

For the last week, many faithful have headed to St. Peter's Square to pray the rosary for Pope Francis.

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On Monday, 27 cardinals living in Rome and dozens of members of the Roman Curia participated in the rosary at 9 p.m. local time.

## **Bishop Bambera to celebrate Ash Wednesday Mass on March 5 at Cathedral of Saint Peter**



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

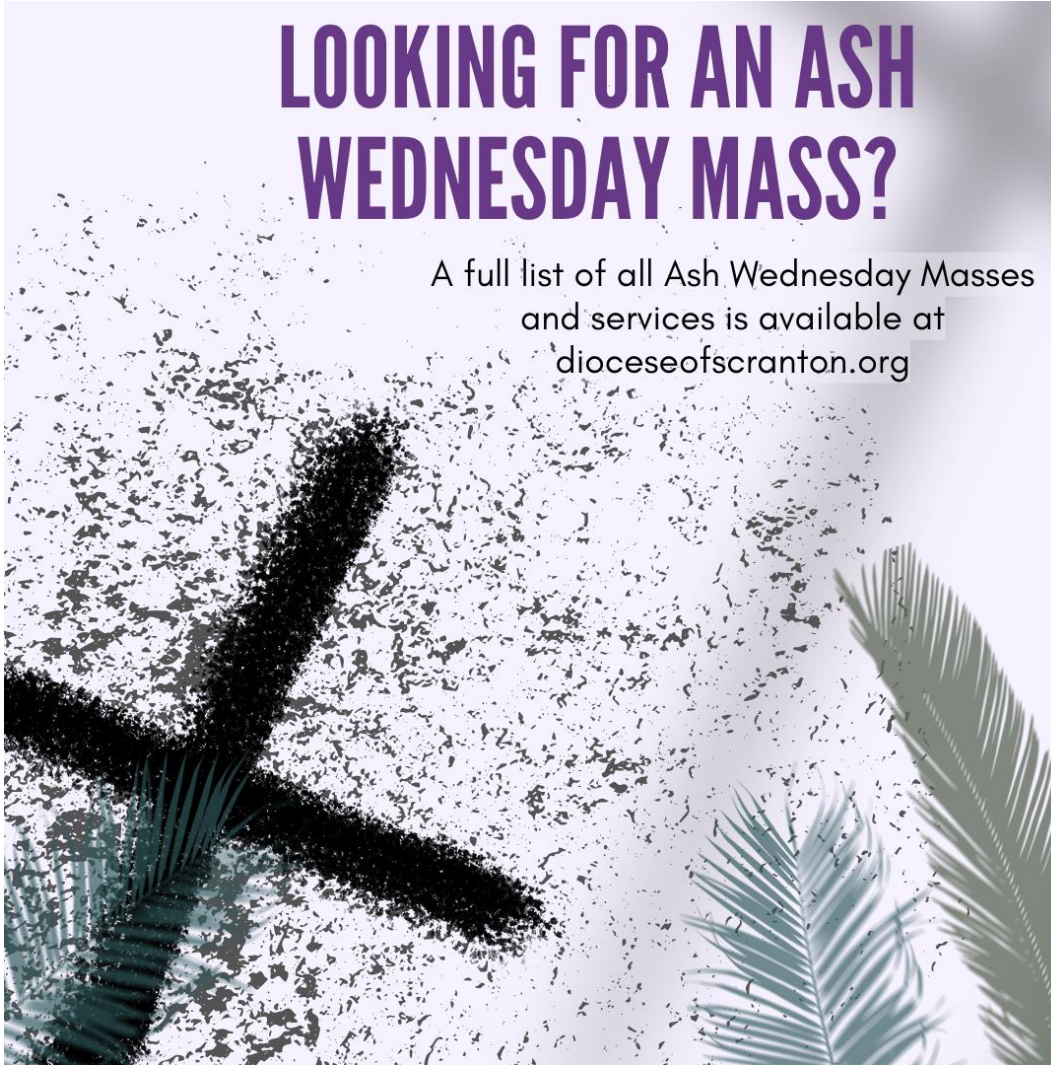
Abstinence and fasting are required on both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On those days, one full meal is allowed along with two other smaller meals. Catholics bound by the law of abstinence include everyone age 14 and over; the law of fasting includes individuals age 18 through the beginning of their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

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from The Catholic Light](#)

**Full Ash Wednesday Mass schedule for  
all parishes in the Diocese of Scranton  
is available online**

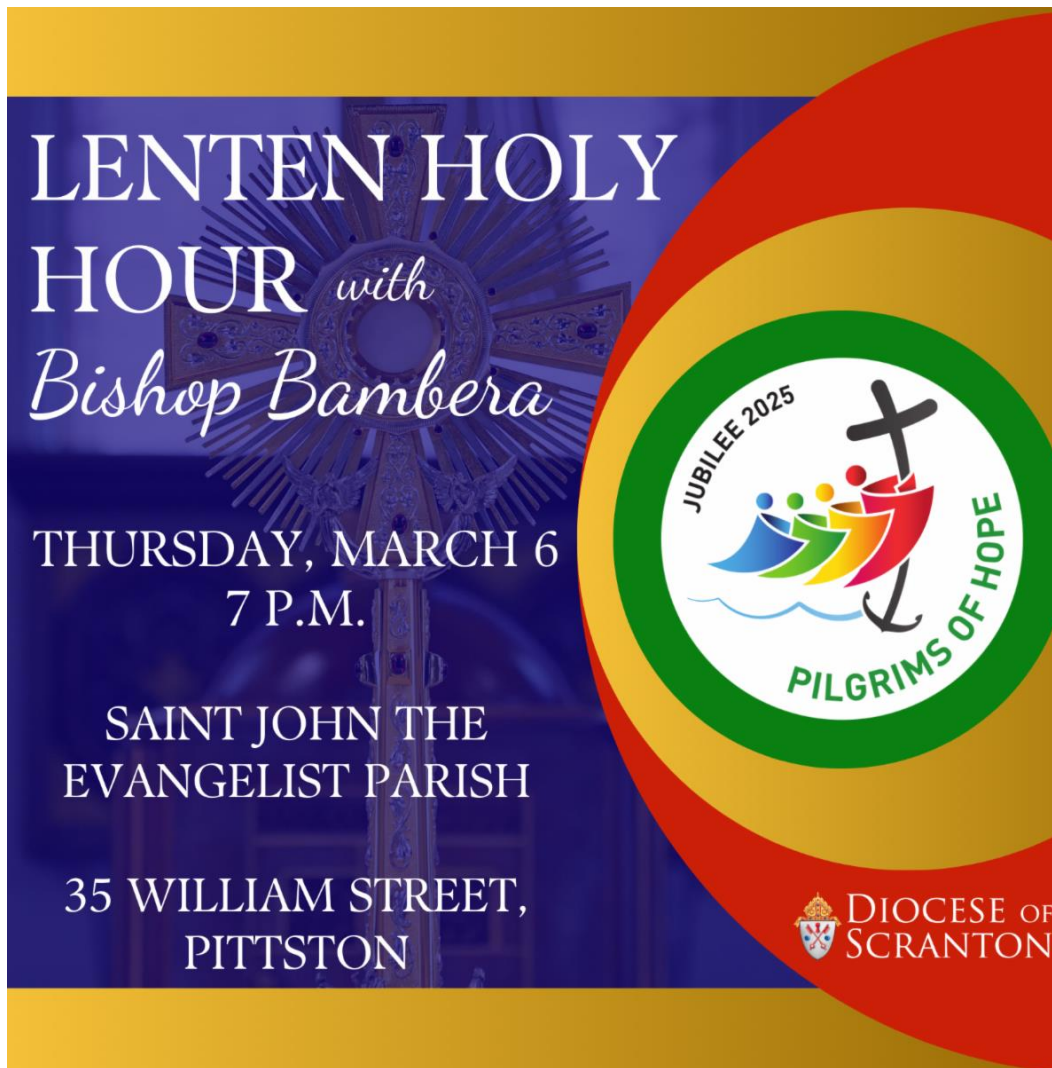
## **LOOKING FOR AN ASH WEDNESDAY MASS?**

A full list of all Ash Wednesday Masses  
and services is available at  
[dioceseofscranton.org](http://dioceseofscranton.org)



[Click Here to See the Full Schedule of Ash Wednesday Mass Times  
and Services at Parishes Across the Diocese of Scranton](#)

**Lenten Holy Hours with Bishop  
Bambera to begin next Thursday in  
Pittston**



**LENTEN HOLY  
HOUR** *with  
Bishop Bambera*

**THURSDAY, MARCH 6  
7 P.M.**

**SAINT JOHN THE  
EVANGELIST PARISH**

**35 WILLIAM STREET,  
PITSTON**

**DIOCESE OF  
SCRANTON**

For the third straight year, Bishop Bambera will visit each deanery in the Diocese of Scranton during Lent to hold a special Holy Hour for the faithful.

During this year's Holy Hour, Bishop Bambera will not only reflect on the third and final year of the National Eucharistic Revival that remains underway, but also the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope that the Church is celebrating.

The Lenten Holy Hour next Thursday will be held at 7 p.m. at Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Pittston.

[Click Here to See all of the Dates and Locations of the 2025 Lenten Holy Hours with Bishop Bambera](#)

## 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.

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**This Lent, compare your life to the hardships faced by migrants, pope says**

# Let us journey together in hope

MESSAGE OF  
POPE FRANCIS  
FOR LENT 2025



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL  
HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT

Pope Francis urged Christians to examine their consciences in Lent by comparing their daily lives to the hardships faced by migrants, calling it a way to grow in empathy and discover God's call to compassion.

“It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or foreigner, to learn how to sympathize with their



experiences and in this way discover what God is asking of us so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father,” the pope wrote in his message for Lent 2025.

The message, signed Feb. 6, before the pope was hospitalized Feb. 14 for treatment of double pneumonia, was released by the Vatican Feb. 25.

Reflecting on the theme “Let us journey together in hope,” the pope said that Lent is a time to confront both personal and collective struggles with faith and compassion.

Comparing the Lenten journey to the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt, he recalled “our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.”

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**Deacons are called to selflessness, men  
ordained at Jubilee Mass are told**



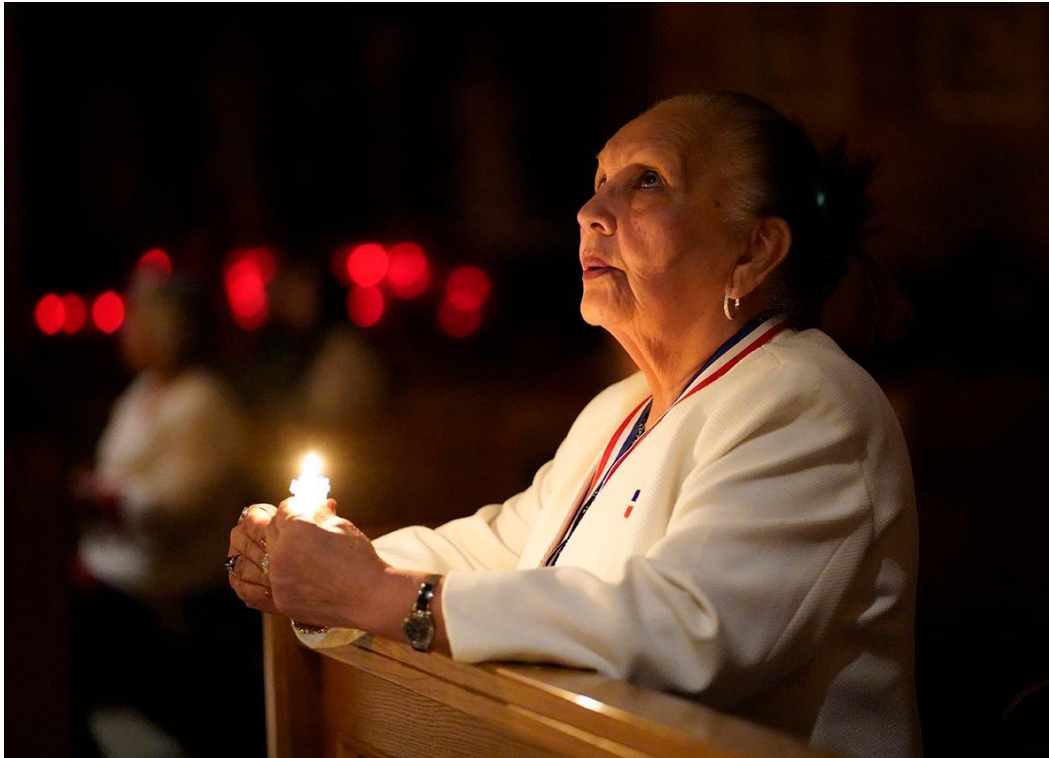
“Being ordained is not an ascent but a descent, whereby we make ourselves small, lower ourselves and divest ourselves,” Pope Francis said in a message to 23 men from eight countries, including three from the United States, who were ordained permanent deacons in St. Peter’s Basilica.

The Feb. 23 ordination Mass at the Vatican was the culmination of a three-day Holy Year celebration that drew thousands of deacons, plus their wives and others, from more than 100 countries to Rome for communal prayer, discussion and celebration of the diaconate.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, celebrated the Mass with 2,500 deacons and delivered the homily prepared by Pope Francis. The pope was originally scheduled to preside over the Mass but remained hospitalized with pneumonia and was in “critical condition,” the Vatican said.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Catholic News Service](#)

## **Pew: U.S. Christianity downturn leveling, but Catholics suffer 'greatest net losses'**



A multiyear decline in Christianity in the U.S. may have leveled off, according to a new survey by Pew Research Center. However, the Catholic Church, the survey found, is seeing the greatest net losses of believers compared to other religions in the U.S.

The data indicates that for every one person received into the Catholic Church, another 8.4 individuals have left the faith, either altogether or for another worship tradition. This increases the trend Pew found in 2014, when 6.5 Catholics left the faith for every person who entered.

Pew's new survey also shows just 29% of the nation's Catholics attend religious services weekly or more often. Altogether four in 10 Catholics attend religious services monthly or more.

In addition, support among U.S. Catholics for legalized abortion, homosexuality and other stances at odds with church teaching has increased over the past decade and a half.

[Click Here to Read the Full Story from Our Sunday Visitor](#)

## **A silent genocide is unfolding in Congo, church sources warn**



A “silent genocide” – mimicking the Rwandan one of 1994 – is occurring in eastern Congo, said some Catholic Church sources, as shock greeted the killing of 70 people in a Protestant church in the North Kivu Province.

The victims were found beheaded with machetes Feb. 15 near the Maiba village in Lubero, a district close to the border between Rwanda and Uganda, according to Fides, a news agency of the Dicastery of Evangelization. Many of those who died in the massacre were women, children and the elderly and had their hands tied behind their back.

The Orthodox Public Affairs Committee, an Orthodox agency that champions for Christian communities facing persecution, said the victims were taken from their homes days earlier.

“This heinous act, perpetrated within a sacred place of worship, is an egregious violation of human rights and a direct assault on religious freedom,” said the organization in a statement on Feb. 23.

Allied Democratic Forces, an Islamist group originally from Uganda and aligned to the Islamic State group is believed to have carried out the killings.

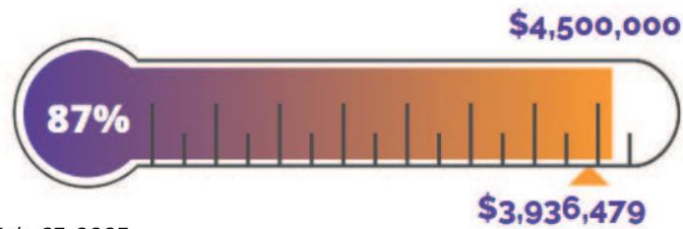
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**Support the Catholic Ministries  
Appeal!**

# HELP THE CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL MEET ITS GOAL!!

## 2024-25 Appeal Progress



As of Feb. 27, 2025



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