

The Catholic Light

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

WWW.DIOCESEOFSCRANTON.ORG VOLUME 126 NUMBER 7 ISSN-0164-9418 THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2026

“I’m still letting it sink in”

Father Jan Carlo Pérez reflects on Priesthood Ordination Mass

SCRANTON – Surrounded by family, friends, fellow clergy, and faithful from across the Diocese of Scranton, Father Jan Carlo Pérez was ordained to the Priesthood on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

The Ordination was conferred through the imposition of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, at a joyful 10:00 a.m. liturgy.

The Ordination Mass marks the beginning of Father Pérez’s ministry as a priest of Jesus Christ in service to the Church.

Several hundred people were in attendance, including many from the East Stroudsburg area, where Father Pérez grew up and has been formed in faith.

A bus carrying more than 30 parishioners from Saint Matthew Parish made the hour-long journey to Scranton,

while many others traveled on their own, arriving early to sit together prominently near the front right side of the Cathedral.

The Mass itself was marked by both solemnity and beauty.

The Diocese of Scranton Festival Choir and instrumentalists led powerful musical selections, including a stirring entrance hymn, “Lift High the Cross,” underscored by strong percussion that filled the Cathedral.

In his homily, Bishop Bambera reflected on the mystery of vocation and the trust required of those called to priestly ministry. Drawing from the Scripture readings picked by Father Pérez for the liturgy, the Bishop reminded him that God, not human strength alone, brings to completion the work He begins in each vocation.

“At the heart of authentic discipleship,” the Bishop said, “there must be a radical trust and belief that it is God



During the Rite of Ordination, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera lays his hands upon the head of Jan Carlo Pérez at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on June 27, 2026. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

who has begun the good work in us and God – not we ourselves – who will bring it to fulfillment.”

Following the homily, Father Pérez made his promises of priestly service, including obedience to the Bishop and

commitment to the celebration of the sacraments, before prostrating himself on the Cathedral floor during the Litany of Supplication as the Church prayed for the outpouring of God’s grace.

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Solemn Novena to Saint Ann begins Friday in Scranton

SCRANTON – For more than a century, Catholics from throughout northeastern Pennsylvania and beyond have made their way to Saint Ann’s Basilica each July, bringing with them prayers of thanksgiving, petitions for healing and hope, and a deep devotion to the grandmother of Jesus Christ.

That tradition continues this week as the annual Solemn Novena to Saint Ann begins Friday, July 17, and continues through Sunday, July 26, the Feast of Saint Ann.

Thousands of pilgrims are expected to visit the Scranton Basilica during the ten-day celebration, participating in Masses,

Novena devotions, opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and special liturgies that have made the annual Novena one of the Diocese of Scranton’s most beloved spiritual traditions.

This year’s Passionist preachers are Father Rick Frechette, C.P., a Passionist priest and physician whose ministry has served the people of Haiti for more than three decades, and Father Jack Conley, C.P., a longtime Passionist mission preacher and superior of Saint Vincent Strambi Retreat in Chicago.

Together, they will reflect on the 2026 Novena theme, “Reading the Signs of the Times,” exploring how faith speaks

to many of today’s greatest challenges, including division, fear, loneliness, Christian witness, and the Real Presence of Jesus.

Along with the daily schedule of Masses and Novena services, several special celebrations are planned throughout the week.

On Tuesday, July 21, Bishop Kurt Burnette of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine Rite at 6:30 p.m., offering pilgrims an opportunity to experience one of the Church’s beautiful Eastern liturgical traditions.

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CHURCH PICNIC AND FESTIVAL LISTING



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The Catholic Light

(ISSN 0164-9418)

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON



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

The Catholic Light is our official diocesan journal. The publication of notices, regulations and extra-synodical decrees in said paper constitute legal promulgation for all the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton, Clergy and Laity.

Published monthly by:

Catholic Light Publishing Company
300 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503-1287

Offices:

300 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503-1287
Phone: (570) 207-2229
Fax: (570) 207-2271

Publisher:

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Bishop of Scranton

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Yearly Subscription Rates:

Resident: \$10
Foreign: \$12

Your donation to the Catholic Ministries Appeal
helps support The Catholic Light



Postal Information:

The Catholic Light (ISSN 0164-9418) is published monthly by the Catholic Light Publishing Company, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503-1287. Periodicals postage paid at Scranton PA and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to *The Catholic Light*, 300 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503-1287

www.dioceseofscranton.org

Where his vocation began, his priesthood begins

HAZLETON – The church where Rev. Jose Luis Batista Castillo, O.S.J., first encountered the spirituality that shaped his vocation became the place where that calling reached its fulfillment on July 1, 2026.

Before a standing-room only crowd at Saint Gabriel Church in Hazleton, the principal worship site of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish, the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, ordained Batista to the priesthood for the Oblates of Saint Joseph.

The Ordination Mass carried special significance for the newly ordained priest, whose family immigrated to Hazleton from the Dominican Republic during his childhood. It was while the former Annunciation Parish was under the pastoral care of the Oblates of Saint Joseph that he first came to know the religious community and began discerning God's call.

"Today I became more conformed to Christ, for the glory of the Lord and also for the service of His people," Father Jose said following the Ordination Mass.

He explained that his vocation grew through prayer and a growing desire to give his life in service to God and the Church.

"I really wanted to give



Father Mariusz Beczek, O.S.J., former pastor of Annunciation Parish in Hazleton, greets Rev. Jose Luis Batista Castillo, O.S.J., with a fraternal hug during his Ordination Mass at Saint Gabriel Church in Hazleton July 1, 2026. (Photos/Dan Piazza)

myself to God and the people. As I was praying and discerning in my life, I received the call to the priesthood. At first, it was a shock to me. But then, little by little, the Lord let me know He wanted me to give myself to Him," he said.

The Ordination Mass included the ancient rites of the Church, including the Litany of the Saints, the Prayer of Ordination, the laying on of hands by Bishop Bambera and the concelebrating priests, and the anointing of the new priest's hands with Sacred Chrism.

Reflecting on the Litany of

the Saints, during which he lay prostrate before the altar, Father Jose described it as a moment of complete surrender.

"For me, that was a beautiful moment of just giving myself to the Lord and letting Him do the rest," he said. "I asked for the intercession of all the saints to help me be open to the grace of God."

One of the most emotional moments came at the conclusion of the Mass, when the newly ordained priest imparted his first priestly blessing on his parents.



Father Jose distributes Holy Communion during the Mass.

"I've been in the seminary for a long time, almost 11 years now, and they were always asking 'When are you going to be ordained,'" Father Jose explained. "For them to have the opportunity to witness my ordination, it was a very touching moment for me and also for them. When we are kids, our parents are the one who bless us and now I'm the one blessing my parents!"

Father Jose said he left the Ordination Mass with profound gratitude.

"I feel welcomed by God, by the Church and by His people," he said. "Tonight I'm very grateful to God, and to the Bishop, and to all the people who made it possible for this to happen."



Bishop Joseph C. Bambera delivers the homily at the Ordination Mass for Rev. Jose Luis Batista Castillo, O.S.J., as Batista sits on a chair listening in the sanctuary area of Saint Gabriel Church.



Faithful attending the Ordination Mass of Rev. Jose Luis Batista Castillo, O.S.J., break into applause at the conclusion of the celebration, which was standing-room only inside the church.

Diocese of Scranton welcomes its newest priest

Continued from Page 1

The essential moment of the Ordination Mass followed: Bishop Bambara laid his hands upon Father Pérez's head, joined by the other priests of the Diocese present, invoking the Holy Spirit in the ancient rite that marks a man forever as a priest of Jesus Christ.

After the Prayer of Ordination, Father Pérez's hands were anointed with Sacred Chrism, and he was vested before receiving a chalice and paten – signs of his participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

A MOMENT STILL SINKING IN

In an interview immediately following the liturgy, Father Pérez described the experience as overwhelming and difficult to fully absorb.

"It's kind of surreal to have actually gone through this after imagining it so many times," he said. "To actually undergo all of these signs and symbols and be welcomed into the Order of Presbyters ... it's really something. I'm still letting it sink in."

He pointed to the anointing of his hands as a moment that especially impacted him.

"That really struck me, that these hands have been set aside for God's will," he said.

Father Pérez also spoke with gratitude about the presence of so many parishioners from East Stroudsburg who traveled to be with him.



Father Jan Carlo Pérez said one of the most meaningful moments of the Ordination Mass was when Bishop Joseph C. Bambara used Sacred Chrism to anoint his hands on June 27, 2026. (Photo/Mike Melisky)



At the end of the Ordination Mass, Father Jan Carlo Pérez gave his first priestly blessing to his parents, Alex and Liana Pérez, and other family members. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

"It's incredible. I looked out and thought, who are all these people who have come for me?" he said. "It really means a lot to me that so many people would come out to pray for me."

At the conclusion of Mass, Bishop Bambara announced that Father Pérez was being assigned as Assistant Pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville. Father Pérez said he looks forward to ministry in the Monroe County region, especially in Hispanic ministry and youth outreach.

"There are people who have been estranged from the Church or estranged

from God for long periods of time and they can be called back," he said. "If I can participate in that, I think that's the greatest thing I could possibly do in my life."

'WE ARE SO PROUD'

Among those attending the Ordination Mass was Angie Rose, a parishioner of Saint Matthew Parish, who described the Mass as deeply moving.

"We are so proud," she said. "This is like being a mama almost. He is part of the church family."

She credited parish life and Eucharistic Adoration for fostering vocations and spiritual growth in the community.

"It makes us so proud to be Catholic," she said. "You want to go to the rooftops and say, I'm a practicing Catholic!"

For many in attendance, the Ordination Mass was also their first experience inside the Cathedral of Saint Peter – an experience they described as powerful and faith-affirming.

"This is so special," Rose added. "We can see God's hand. God is not dead. He is alive and He is working."



Rev. Brian F. Van Fossen, V.F., left, and Rev. Gerald W. Shantillo, V.G., right, help to vest Father Jan Carlo Pérez in a Chasuble immediately after his ordination on June 27, 2026. (Photo/Mike Melisky)



During the Litany of Supplication, Pérez lies prostrate on the Cathedral floor. (Photo/Mike Melisky)



Following the Ordination Mass, Father Jan Carlo Pérez greeted family and friends for more than an hour inside the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton on June 27, 2026. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

Young Catholics discover they are not alone during Quo Vadis & Fiat Days



The 53 high school students from parishes across the Diocese of Scranton who participated in Quo Vadis and Fiat Days at Marywood University from June 29-July 1, 2026, pose for a group photo with Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, priests, religious sisters, and seminarians who made the summer camp experience possible. (Photo/Dan Gallagher)

SCRANTON – For many Catholic teenagers, living their faith can sometimes feel like a lonely experience.

As they navigate school, sports, and peer groups, they may wonder if anyone else their age shares a love for Jesus Christ and the Church.

For 53 high school students from across the Diocese of Scranton, Quo Vadis and Fiat Days offered a reassuring answer this summer: You are not alone.

Held June 29 – July 1, 2026, at Marywood University, the Diocese’s annual vocation camps brought together 34 young men for Quo Vadis Days and 19 young women for Fiat Days to pray, build friendships and reflect on how God may be calling them to serve Him.

Through daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, talks, games, small-group discussions and time with priests, seminarians and religious sisters, participants were invited to listen more closely for God’s voice while discovering a community of young Catholics striving to do the same.

“It feels great because, number one, I’m not alone out there,” Jake Sanchez of

Saint Matthew Parish in East Stroudsburg, said. “I have other people to share my thoughts and ideas with. It’s nice to know that there are other people with a strong faith in God.”

Sanchez attended Quo Vadis Days for the second consecutive year. He said returning for a second summer was an easy decision.

“Everything about it, the experience, making friends, Mass, everything about it is amazing. I think everyone should try it out, even if they think they won’t like it, you never know until you try it,” Sanchez said.

Throughout the three-day experience, students learned about the many vocations within the Church, including marriage, priesthood, diaconate, and religious life, while also reflecting on how God is calling them to holiness today.

For Eddie Scavone of Our Lady of the Snows Parish in Clarks Summit, one of the most meaningful moments was Eucharistic Adoration.

“I really enjoy the Holy Hour,” he said. “It’s really nice to just sit in the Chapel during Adoration and enjoy the presence of God and have



Quo Vadis participants participate in a small group discussion outdoors. (Photo/Dan Gallagher)

confessions at the same time.”

Still discerning what his future holds, Scavone said the camp has helped him approach that process with greater confidence.

“They’re definitely giving me good tips and ideas for how to correctly discern what God is calling me to do,” he added.

For the young women attending Fiat Days, the opportunity to spend time with religious sisters offered a unique perspective on vocational discernment.

Emily Lopez of Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Scranton returned for her third year because she says each experience has drawn her closer to Christ.

“I think I look forward to it because the connection I feel each year toward God gets deeper,” Lopez explained. “I just learn more. I learn how to connect with Jesus and learn more about the Holy Spirit. It’s really nice and you feel peaceful.”

Lopez said one of the greatest blessings of Fiat Days is realizing there are many other teenagers striving to grow in faith.

“When you feel like you’re alone, it’s hard because you think you’re the only teenager who believes in God,” she said. “But when you surround yourself with people who are just like you and are also sinners but at the same time trying to get closer to God, it



Fiat Days participants join religious sisters in providing music for a Mass. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

feels more relieving. You realize, ‘I’m not the only one.’”

First-time participant Emily Barrett from Saint Carlo Acutis Parish in Olyphant echoed that sentiment.

“I think it’s pretty awesome to spend time with other girls my age who share the same faith,” Barrett said. “It’s good to talk to them and get excited about it and just have fun with it.”

She described the opening Mass of Fiat Days as one of the highlights of the camp.

“I just felt like that was the closest I’ve felt to God in a while,” she said. “I go to church often, but I really felt something different that time.”

Rite of Candidacy marks milestone in seminarian's journey to Priesthood



Seminarian Roberto Carlos Acevedo Ruiz stands before Bishop Joseph C. Bambera during the Rite of Candidacy June 30, 2026, at Marywood University. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

SCRANTON – Dozens of high school students who spent time discerning their vocation during the Diocese of Scranton's annual Quo Vadis and Fiat Days summer camp this summer were given a firsthand glimpse of what answering the call to the Priesthood can look like.

During a Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, on June 30, 2026, at Marywood University, Diocesan seminarian Roberto Carlos Acevedo Ruiz took part in the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders, a significant milestone in his journey toward the priesthood.

Acevedo Ruiz, whose home parish is Saint Pius of Pietrelcina in Hazleton and who studies at Pope Saint John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass., was presented to Bishop Bambera by Father Alex J. Roche, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation, Rector of Saint Pius X Seminary, and Director of Seminarians.

After being called forward by name, Acevedo Ruiz stood before the Bishop and publicly affirmed his willingness to continue preparing for priestly ministry, responding, "I do," as Bishop Bambera questioned him during the Rite.

Drawing from the day's Gospel from Saint Matthew, in which Jesus calms the storm at sea, Bishop Bambera explained to those attending that they never face life's challenges alone.

"No matter how harsh the winds and the waves of the storm that envelop you, Jesus walks with you. Jesus is with you in the midst of your struggles," Bishop Bambera said.

Addressing Acevedo Ruiz directly, the Bishop encouraged him to place complete trust in the Lord as he continues discerning his vocation.

"Roberto, trust Him, trust Him, for He will never let you go," Bishop Bambera added.

The Bishop explained that the Rite of Admission to Candidacy marks the Church's formal recognition that a seminarian has demonstrated the qualities necessary to continue preparing for ordained ministry. At the same time, he said, the Rite challenges the candidate to deepen his relationship with Christ and strengthen his commitment to serving God's people.

"Open your heart, Roberto, to the Lord's call to serve the Church," Bishop Bambera said. "Trust today like never before in His grace and mercy."

Following the Mass, Acevedo Ruiz described the celebration as a profound moment in his vocational journey.

"I am very happy because responding to God's call to the priesthood is a profoundly transformative experience," he said. "I have discovered my life's purpose and desire to dedicate myself to God and to serve others."

Calling the Rite of Candidacy a "huge step," he said he believes God continues to shape his heart for priestly ministry.

"God is forming within me what He has done with me, how He has called me and all the beautiful new things He has done in my life," Acevedo Ruiz said.

He also expressed gratitude to those who have accompanied him throughout his discernment.

"I give thanks to God for my family, who support me, for the communities in the different parishes where I serve, for their prayers, for my Bishop, and for the guidance of Father Alex, who has been a great blessing in my life," he said.

Vocations Golf Classic unites Diocese in support of seminarians



Golfers from across the Diocese of Scranton participated in the Vocations Golf Classic - John Yourishen Memorial Tournament - on July 10, 2026. (Photos/Eric Deabill)

DORRANCE TOWNSHIP – Approximately 100 golfers took to the fairways of Blue Ridge Trail Golf Club on July 10, 2026, for the annual Vocations Golf Classic – John Yourishen Memorial Tournament – enjoying a day of friendly competition while investing in the future priests of the Diocese of Scranton.

The tournament raises funds to support the education and formation of the Diocese's seminarians, along with other vocation initiatives including Quo Vadis and Fiat Days and the newly established Saint Pius X Seminary in Scranton.

Just as importantly, the golf tournament gives supporters the opportunity to spend time with the seminarians, priests, and Diocesan staff.

"We are blessed in the Diocese of Scranton to have 16 seminarians right now. That is one of the highest numbers that we've had in years," Father Ryan Glenn, Director of Vocations, said. "It is a reality that there is a significant financial cost."

Father Alex Roche, Diocesan Secretary for Clergy Formation and Director of Seminarians, said the tournament benefits both those preparing for the priesthood and the faithful who make their formation possible.

"It's good for them (seminarians) to see and meet the people who are supporting their education and formation," Father Roche said. "But it's also good for the supporters to meet the men that someday might be assigned to their parish."

Many golfers return year after year because of that unique opportunity.

"I've been playing in this tournament for the last ten years," Don Prescavage of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Plains, said. "It is a big commitment to be a priest. We just had one of our parishioners commit to becoming a seminarian, so the tournament means even more to me this year."

Jordan McAndrew of Saint John Paul II Parish in Dunmore also said this year's tournament carried special meaning as two of his friends prepare to enter the seminary.

"Everyone here is extremely excited about being able to support the Diocese and support the seminarians who are going to be part of our parishes within the next couple years," McAndrew said. "There is a huge sense of community, a huge sense of involvement and a lot of pride in our Diocese today."

For the seminarians in attendance, the golf tournament served as a visible reminder that vocations are nurtured by the entire Church.

"It's wonderful to see so many people supporting vocations," seminarian Matthew Kelly said. "This is a great time to connect with each other."

"It means a lot to me. It's good to see that there is a lot of support for us and to know that so many people around the Diocese are willing and able to support us," seminarian Liam Barry added.

A complete listing of tournament sponsors will appear in the Aug. 20, 2026, edition of *The Catholic Light*.

To support vocations or the Saint Pius X Seminary, contact 570-207-2250 or email development@dioceseofscranton.org.

Honoring the legacy of Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

SCRANTON – For more than 70 years, Catholics found a spiritual home inside Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel in West Scranton, where they celebrated baptisms and weddings, mourned loved ones at funeral Masses, and gathered week after week around the altar in prayer.

On Saturday, June 27, 2026, those memories filled the small church one final time as approximately 150 parishioners gathered with gratitude, but also sadness, to celebrate the Closing Mass of the IHM Chapel, which was a secondary worship site of Saint Patrick Parish in West Scranton.

Father Richard E. Fox, Pastor of Saint Patrick Parish, served as principal celebrant and homilist of the 5:30 p.m. Mass. Concelebrating was Father Joseph R. Kakareka, a retired Diocesan priest, who has assisted at the Chapel for many years.

“Thank you all for coming and being part of this sad Mass,” Father Fox said in welcoming the faithful. “It is certainly not a happy occasion for anybody.”

The history of Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel dates back to 1953, when it was constructed at the direction of Bishop William Hafey, Fourth Bishop of Scranton, following a devastating fire that destroyed the nearby Saint Ann’s Maronite church.

In constructing the IHM Chapel, Bishop Hafey had hoped the new church would lead to a cooperative effort involving Saint Patrick Parish and Saint Ann’s Maronite Parish – but that did not materialize – with hundreds of letters exchanged between Scranton, Rome, Beirut, and Washington, D.C.

Fast forward to 2026, the decision to close Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel came after discussion and consultation through the Diocese of Scranton’s *Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process*. After examining Mass attendance trends, the significant financial challenges facing Saint Patrick Parish, and mounting maintenance needs at the Chapel, the recommendation was made to close the worship site.

Rather than dwelling on those realities during his homily, Father Fox encouraged parishioners to reflect upon the countless memories of grace they had experienced inside the church since its dedication in 1953.



More than 150 people attended the Closing Mass for Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel in West Scranton on Saturday, June 27, 2026. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

“So, I have to ask this question,” Father Fox began his homily by saying. “Has anybody in this church been here since the first Mass that started way back in the early 1950s?”

Several hands rose throughout the pews. “You’ve seen the span from the first parenthesis when it opened to the second parenthesis tonight,” the long-time pastor continued. “It certainly is a world of experiences. Certainly, a world of memories.”

Looking around the church, Father Fox invited parishioners to absorb every familiar detail one last time.

“This Mass not only brings back all those memories, it helps us to experience once again all of those times in our lives,” he said. “After tonight, you are expected to be able to take those memories and carry them in your hearts.”

Comparing memories to dreams that quickly fade, Father Fox encouraged the faithful to create what he described as a mental “reel” of the chapel so they can continue sharing its story for years to come.

“When people talk about this particular place ... you can enter into that conversation with your particular perspective because you remember all the things that happened,” he explained. “I believe that we can keep that same technique alive here in our own day and age – to continue to tell the stories of what happened here at the corner of North Garfield and Oram Street.”

The conclusion of the liturgy provided parishioners with a final opportunity to say goodbye.

Father Fox led prayers throughout the church, stopping at the ambo, the cry room, the Marian statue and finally the altar before inviting everyone to come forward individually. Each person was encouraged to touch the altar, make the Sign of the Cross, and process out of the church one final time.

Among those given the honor of locking the Chapel doors for the last time were longtime parishioners John

(Jack) and Paula Keenan.

“It is a sad day, bittersweet because we have been coming here for so many years,” Paula Keenan said.

She said she will especially remember the chapel’s crucifix and Marian statue as well as the atmosphere that made the church unique.

“It was so intimate coming to Mass here,” she reflected. “That is what I appreciated the most.”

Following the locking of the doors, the Blessed Sacrament was reverently transferred by limousine from Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel to Saint Patrick Church on Jackson Street, where the People of God will continue to carry the church’s mission forward.

Thousands expected for annual Solemn Novena to Saint Ann

Continued from Page 1

A Spanish-language Mass and Novena prayers will be celebrated Wednesday, July 22, at 5:00 p.m., welcoming the Diocese’s growing Hispanic Catholic community to participate in the Novena in their native language.

One of the most anticipated services each year is the Mass of the Anointing of the Sick on Thursday, July 23, at 1:30 p.m. The annual liturgy draws hundreds of pilgrims seeking the grace and strength offered through the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, while family members and caregivers often gather in prayer alongside them.

Families are especially invited to the Children’s Mass on Saturday, July 25, at 10:00 a.m., which includes a special blessing for children and grandparents. The annual celebration reflects Saint Ann’s enduring role as patroness of mothers, grandparents and families and has become a favorite tradition for many who attend the Novena.

The ten-day pilgrimage will conclude on the Feast of Saint Ann, Sunday, July 26, with Masses celebrated throughout the day. The Solemn Closing Mass at 6:30



The Closing Mass of 2025 Solemn Novena to Saint Ann is celebrated in Scranton. This year’s Closing Mass will be held Sunday, July 26, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

p.m. will be celebrated by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, and traditionally draws one of the largest gatherings of the annual Novena.

Confessions will be available before and after each Mass and Novena service throughout the ten days. Weather permitting, the 8:00 a.m., 11:45 a.m., and 6:30 p.m. Masses and Novena services will be celebrated outdoors.

Pilgrims are also invited to visit the parish food pavilion at the bottom of the hill for refreshments during the Novena.

Saint Ann’s Monastery and Basilica are located at 1239 Saint Ann Street in Scranton. All are invited and encouraged to participate in this year’s Solemn Novena.

SOLEMN NOVENA

IN HONOR OF

Saint Ann

JULY 17 TO 26, 2026

PREACHERS: FR. RICK FRECHETTE, C.P. AND FR. JACK CONLEY, C.P.

NOVENA DEVOTIONS

After 8 & 11:45 A.M. & 6:30 P.M. Masses;
Novena Devotions only at 3:30 P.M.

DIVINE LITURGY - BYZANTINE RITE

Tuesday, July 21, 6:30 P.M.

DAILY MASSES

7:00, 8:00 & 11:45 A.M. & 6:30 P.M.

CONFESSIONS

Lower Basilica for 30 minutes prior to each Mass &
the 3:30 P.M. Novena Service, and after all services

MASS OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Thursday, July 23, 1:30 P.M.

CHILDREN'S MASS & NOVENA PRAYERS

Saturday, July 25, 10:00 A.M.;
Special Blessing for Families and Grandparents

SUNDAY, JULY 19

MASSES

7:00 A.M., 8:00 A.M.,
11:45 A.M., & 6:30 P.M.

NOVENA DEVOTIONS

After 8:00 & 11:45 A.M. & 6:30 P.M. Masses;
w/Novena only at 3:30 P.M.

SAINT ANN'S FEAST DAY SUNDAY, JULY 26

CONFESSIONS 4:00 A.M.

MASSES & DEVOTIONS

4:30, 7:00, 8:00, 10:00 & 11:45 A.M.
3:30 P.M. (Novena only)

LANGUAGE SERVICE

1:30 P.M. - POLISH in Upper Basilica
4:45 P.M. - SPANISH in Upper Basilica

Individual Blessing with Relic of St. Ann After Each Devotion

SOLEMN CLOSING SUNDAY, JULY 26, AT 6:30 P.M.

Pontifical Mass celebrated by Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.

CTV COVERAGE OF THE SOLEMN NOVENA

Friday, July 17 through Saturday, July 25 at 12:00 pm; 3:30 pm; and 7:00 pm
(except Thursday, July 23, will air at 8:00 pm)

Closing Mass live Sunday, July 26 at 6:30 pm; Rebroadcast Monday, July 27 at 12:00 pm

BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. ANN PASSIONIST MONASTERY

1239 SAINT ANN STREET

SCRANTON, PA 18504

For the convenience of the people attending the novena, refreshments will be available on the monastery grounds during the entire novena.



Couples renew vows, celebrate gift of marriage at Wedding Anniversary Mass

SCRANTON – A total of 172 married couples from 69 parishes across the Diocese of Scranton gathered at the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Sunday, June 28, 2026, for the annual Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Mass which honors couples marking milestone anniversaries.

The liturgy was celebrated by the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, on the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time and included couples celebrating 10, 25, 40 and 50 years of marriage and beyond.

In all, the couples attending the Mass signified 6,580 years of married life.

In his homily, Bishop Bambera reflected on the Sunday Gospel from Saint Matthew, acknowledging that Jesus' words about the demands of discipleship might initially seem surprising in the context of a celebration of marriage.

He noted, however, that authentic discipleship is rooted in selfless love, sacrifice and perseverance. Those are all qualities that also define a faithful married life.

"Your marriage has endured not because the years have been perfect, but because you have come to see marriage as part of something much bigger than yourselves," Bishop Bambera said, pointing to the "mystery of God's love discovered in your lives together."

He encouraged all couples to recognize both the struggles and blessings that shape their vocation, and to see "the face of God abiding within the heart of the one you love."



Couples participating in the Diocese of Scranton's annual Wedding Anniversary Mass on June 28, 2026, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton share special moments of love and affection. This year, a total of 172 married couples participated. (Photos/Mike Melisky)

Following the homily, couples renewed their marriage vows and at the conclusion of the Mass, a reception followed the Mass at the Diocesan Pastoral Center across the street from the Cathedral.

Among those celebrating their 10th anniversary were Thomas (T.J.) and Christina Masteller of Saint Jude Parish in Mountain Top, who reflected on the grace they have experienced in their marriage.

"There is so much grace in celebrating the sacrament," Christina said. "We know that there is strength in that, and Lord knows you need that in a marriage."

Her husband added that forgiveness is essential.

"There are going to be ups and downs and trials," Thomas added. "Nothing is

easy, but being able to forgive one another is the most important piece."

John Gablonski and Rita Ives of Saint Faustina Kowalska Parish in Nanticoke, who are also marking 10 years, spoke of the gift of finding one another later in life.

"We're actually second marriages. We're both widows and just the fact that we met each other and we're able to be together in marriage is a great gift for us," Rita said. "I never thought that we'd celebrate any type of milestone anniversary."

"It was a pleasure to be able to do this," John added. "It was very spiritual. It was amazing."

Celebrating 25 years of marriage, Katherine and Diego Pelaez of Saint Luke Parish in Stroudsburg emphasized faith

and communication as the secrets to a happy marriage.

"To have Christ first in your marriage," Katherine said.

Diego added, "Having God in the center of our life, in the center of our lives basically to keep us together, along with communication, quick forgiveness and compromise."

Those were very similar sentiments shared by Bishop Bambera, who indicated that marriage is sustained through faith, forgiveness and the daily decision to love selflessly.

Quoting Pope Leo XIV, the Bishop reminded couples that "Marriage is not an ideal ... but the measure of true love between a man and a woman."

Bishop to celebrate Mass of Remembrance on Thursday, July 23

SCRANTON - More than 30 new names have been inscribed in the Book of Remembrance ahead of the Diocese of Scranton's annual Mass of Remembrance of Victims of Violent or Tragic Death, which will be held on Thursday, July 23, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Peter in Scranton.

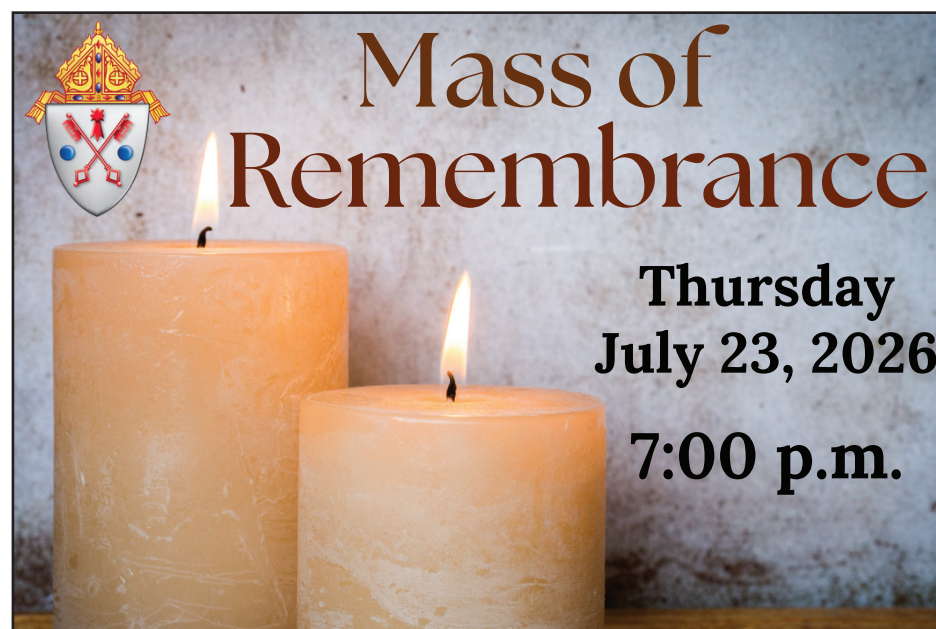
This Mass is offered for the families and friends of those who have died in tragedy, especially through murder, suicide, or accident.

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal

celebrant of the Mass.

While the official deadline to register a loved one's name in the Book of Remembrance has now passed, names can still be added before the date of the Mass by calling the Diocesan Office for Parish Life at (570) 207-2213.

CTV: Catholic Television of the Diocese of Scranton will provide live coverage of the Mass of Remembrance. The Mass will also be livestream on the Diocese of Scranton website, YouTube channel and across all social media platforms.



APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTORS:

Reverend David P. Cappelloni, from Pastor, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Dunmore, and Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish, Dunmore, to Pastor, newly consolidated parish, Saint John Paul II Parish, Dunmore, effective July 1, 2026. Father Cappelloni will continue to serve as Director of Continuing Formation for Clergy.

Reverend Joseph P. Elston, V.F., from Pastor, Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish, Saint John the Evangelist Parish, and Saint Joseph Mareello Parish, all located in Pittston, to Pastor, newly consolidated parish, Communion of Saints Parish, Pittston, effective July 1, 2026. Father Elston will continue to serve as Dean of the Pittston Deanery.

Reverend Michael J. Kloton, from Pastor, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Freeland, and Administrator *pro tem*, Saint Patrick Parish, White Haven, to Pastor, newly consolidated parish, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Freeland, effective July 1, 2026. Father Kloton will continue to serve as Pastor, Good Shepherd Parish, Drums.

Reverend Edgar Ramirez, FSSP, from ministry within the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, to Pastor, Saint Michael Parish, Scranton, effective July 1, 2026.

SACRAMENTAL MINISTER:

Reverend Peter J. O'Rourke, from Sacramental Minister, Saint Patrick Parish, White Haven, effective July 1, 2026.

PAROCHIAL VICARS:

Reverend Anthony Dorsa, FSSP, from Pastor, Saint Michael Parish, Scranton, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Michael Parish, Scranton, effective July 1, 2026. Father Dorsa will continue as the Director of Fundraising Operations for the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter.

Reverend Thomas J. Dzwonczyk, S.T.L., from Parochial Vicar, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Dunmore, and Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish, Dunmore, to Parochial Vicar, newly consolidated parish, Saint John Paul II Parish, Dunmore, effective July 1, 2026.

Reverend Matthew Kane, FSSP, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Michael Parish, Scranton, to ministry within the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, effective July 1, 2026.

Reverend Jackson Pinhero, O.S.J., from Parochial Vicar, Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish, Saint John the Evangelist Parish, and Saint Joseph Mareello Parish, all located in Pittston, to Parochial Vicar, newly consolidated parish, Communion of Saints Parish, Pittston, effective July 1, 2026.

Reverend Kenneth M. Seegar, to Senior Priest, newly consolidated parish, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Freeland, effective July 1, 2026. Father Seegar will continue to serve as Senior Priest, Good Shepherd Parish, Drums.

NEWLY ORDAINED:

Reverend Jan Carlo Perez, to Parochial Vicar, Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, Brodheadsville, effective July 15, 2026.

DEACONS:

Deacon Andrew A. Fazio, from diaconal ministry, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish, Dunmore, to newly consolidated parish, Saint John Paul II Parish, Dunmore, effective July 1, 2026.

Deacon David E. Marx, from diaconal ministry, Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish, Saint John the Evangelist Parish, and Saint Joseph Mareello Parish, all located in Pittston, to diaconal ministry, newly consolidated parish, Communion of Saints Parish, Pittston, effective July 1, 2026.

Deacon James M. Rebarchick, to diaconal Ministry, newly consolidated parish, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Freeland, effective July 1, 2026. Deacon Rebarchick will continue to serve as Deacon, Good Shepherd Parish, Drums.

Bishop Bambera begins Camino Pilgrimage in Spain

REDONDELA, SPAIN - The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, has started a seven-day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain, carrying with him the prayers and intentions of hundreds of people from across the Diocese of Scranton.



Beginning July 13, Bishop Bambera and Father Brian J.W. Clarke, Pastor of Saints Cyril & Methodius Parish in Hazleton, set out on the ancient pilgrimage route toward Sanitago de Compostela.

As of press time for *The Catholic Light* on Tuesday, July 14, the pair had completed the first two days of their journey, traveling from Vigo to Redondela before continuing on to Arcade.

Before departing for Spain, Bishop Bambera invited the faithful to entrust him

with their personal prayer intentions so he could remember them during his daily prayer and reflection along the Camino. In response, he received 406 prayer intentions in both English and Spanish.

Over the course of this week, the Bishop is expected to continue walking approximately 100 kilometers across northern Spain, making his way through Pontevedra, Caldas de Reis, Padron and Teo before concluding the pilgrimage in Santiago on Sunday, July 19.



BISHOP BAMBERA'S SCHEDULE

July 10 - 21 - Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage
Spain

July 23 - Mass in Remembrance of Deceased Loved Ones
Cathedral of Saint Peter, Scranton, 7:00 p.m.

July 26 - Closing Mass of Solemn Novena to Saint Ann
Saint Ann Basilica, Scranton, 6:30 p.m.

August 2 - Closing Mass for Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
University of Scranton, Scranton, 2:00 p.m.

August 11 - Catholic Ministries Appeal 2026 Regional Kick-Off Reception
Saint Ann Parish Hall, Williamsport, 6:00 p.m.

August 13 - Catholic Ministries Appeal 2026 Regional Kick-Off Reception
BVM Queen of Peace Parish, Hawley, 6:00 p.m.

August 18 - Catholic Ministries Appeal 2026 Regional Kick-Off Reception
Church of the Epiphany, Sayre, 6:00 p.m.

Vacation Bible School brings Moses' story to life in neighborhood creek

SCRANTON – The story of Moses being rescued from the Nile River is one that many children read in the Bible. At Mary Mother of God Parish's Vacation Bible School, youngsters were able to watch a reenactment of it unfold before their eyes.

On the final day of the parish's four-day Vacation Bible School, held June 22-25, children walked just a block from the Holy Rosary Church to Leggetts Creek, where volunteers reenacted the Old Testament story of the infant Moses being placed in a basket among the reeds and discovered by Pharaoh's daughter.

The memorable lesson helped the young children better understand how God protected Moses, who would later lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt.

"We don't have too many



Molly Fenwick, left, and other volunteers from Mary Mother of God Parish in Scranton reenact the story of Moses being rescued from the Nile River by using Leggetts Creek in North Scranton on June 25, 2026. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

mountains around here, but we do have Leggetts Creek and it's moving just enough that it can move the basket down the river," Father Cyril Edwards, Pastor of Mary Mother of God Parish,

said. "I'm not a teacher by trade but teachers say, 'Teach me and I'll get it, but involve me and I'll understand.'"

Father Edwards said using the creek will hopefully help the

children experience Scripture in a way that they will long remember.

"I hope they understand that God works in mysterious ways. The baby being in the river was a one in a million chance that it would be found by Pharaoh's daughter," Father Edwards reflected.

The reenactment complemented this year's Vacation Bible School theme, "Jesus Loves Us."

"God never abandons his people," Father Edwards added.

The parish's Vacation Bible School welcomed preschoolers through fourth-grade students for mornings filled with Bible lessons, music, crafts, games, and prayer, while teenage volunteers helped lead activities and mentor younger children.

"I love working with my church," volunteer Molly

Fenwick said. "I have such a strong faith, and I love getting to share my faith with the younger generation in hopes that their faith is very strong too."

"I like being with the kids and just helping and giving back," volunteer Anna Woody said.

For fourth-grader Annabelle Converse, the creek activity became one of the week's highlights.

"People were down there and they showed examples to help people picture it," she said.

Along with learning Bible stories, children also took home lessons that will last well beyond the summer.

"We're learning kindness," Annabelle said.

Her classmate, Anna Belle Mackey, agreed.

"Always be nice to everybody," she said.

Kids grow in faith through fun and friendship at Vacation Bible School

DUNMORE – From making colorful necklaces and singing songs for Mass to learning about God's gift of creation, children participating in this year's Vacation Bible School in Dunmore discovered that faith is best experienced together.

Held June 15-19, 2026, on the grounds of Saint Rocco Church, the weeklong program welcomed children from Saints Anthony and Rocco Parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, just days before the two communities consolidated into what is now Saint John Paul II Parish.

Guided by teen and adult volunteers, campers rotated through music, craft, Bible stories, outdoor games, and hands-on activities, all centered around this year's rainforest theme.

For Avery Shivock, who will enter fourth grade this fall, this summer marked her final year as a Vacation Bible School camper

before she hopes to someday return as a volunteer.

"There are a lot of fun activities here," Shivock said. "You make new friends and learn new things. It's really nice."

Among her favorite activities is the craft station, where campers created colorful necklaces on the opening day.

"You learn how to be helpful; you learn a lot about the Bible. There is a great variety," she added.

Many of the volunteers guiding the young campers once stood in their shoes.

"I've been doing this camp since I was a little girl and now helping at it is a great experience," high school volunteer Mollie Urban said. "I honestly love being able to help the children. It's very fun and I love seeing the smiles on their faces."

Anna Polishan, a senior from Our Lady of Mount Carmel



High school volunteers help to lead a music session during Vacation Bible School for students of the former Saints Anthony and Rocco and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parishes in Dunmore on June 15, 2026. The two parishes consolidated on July 1, 2026, and took on the new name of Saint John Paul II Parish. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

Parish, helped lead the music sessions, teaching songs the children would later sing during the closing Mass of Vacation Bible School.

"I want the kids to know that faith doesn't have to be boring,"

she said. "It can be fun and it can be joyful, and I think music is a really great way to do that."

Throughout the week, children learned that God is present in every moment of their life.

Fifth-grader Grace Markovich said one lesson especially stayed with her.

"We learned that God is with us when we're sad, happy, sick. He's always with us, no matter what," Markovich said.

For Sister Donna Cerminaro, M.P.F., Director of Religious Education, seeing former campers return as volunteers each year has become one of the program's greatest blessings.

"We have been doing this for about 15 years," she said. "We have many volunteers. In fact, our leaders are high school kids and seventh and eighth graders. They keep on coming back every year. They just walk through the door and say, 'I am here to help.'"

Sister Donna loves to watch the program continue to bear fruit year after year.

"I hope they have a better understanding of God and a better understanding of the Bible," she said.

More than 130 students attend Vacation Bible School in Moscow



MOSCOW - More than 130 young students and 100 volunteers took part in Vacation Bible School at Saint Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow during the week of June 22-26, 2026.

This year's theme was "Rainforest Falls" and an elaborate miniature rainforest was set up in the lower level of the church and volunteers even built a moveable indoor/outdoor boat.

At the conclusion of the weeklong event, a cookout was held for all of the students and families.

Vacation Bible Camp brings kids together in Pike County



MILFORD - Over the course of three days, Vacation Bible Camp at Saint Patrick Parish in Milford, directed by catechist Laurie Barcia, brought 29 children together for a fun-filled and faith-centered experience.

The campers enjoyed Bible lessons, exploring Scripture and engaging activities, including crafts, games, art and sports, including volleyball and kickball.

The combination of Bible teaching, teamwork, outdoor activities and artistic projects, supported by a great team of volunteers, made the camp experience a memorable opportunity for spiritual growth, friendship and fun for everyone involved.

Historic Shrine preserves Saint John Neumann's missionary spirit

SUGAR RIDGE – More than 170 years after Saint John Neumann walked through the hills of northeastern Pennsylvania to minister to small communities of Catholic settlers, the faithful continue making the journey to a church that preserves his remarkable legacy.

On July 12, 2026, faithful gathered at the Saint John Neumann Shrine in Sugar Ridge for the first of three summer Masses celebrated annually at the historic chapel, officially known as the Church of Saints Philip and James.

Designated as the Diocese of Scranton's official Saint John Neumann Shrine in September 1977, the simple country church occupies the very site where the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia blessed the original church in July 1854.

"Saint John (Neumann) was known for many things. One was traveling," Father Bert Kozen, Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore, said. "Whether by train, by coach, by horseback or by foot. As a matter of fact, he preferred foot because being five-foot-two, he found it difficult to ride a horse because his feet wouldn't have reached the stirrups."

According to local history, Bishop Neumann was visiting Catholics in Towanda when Katherine Leahy learned of his presence and walked several miles to ask him to visit the Irish Catholic families living near present-day Sugar Ridge.

True to his reputation as a tireless missionary, Bishop Neumann gladly made the journey on foot, celebrated the sacraments, blessed the land for a new church, and even assisted the local men as they began clearing timber for the original chapel.

"Another gift that Saint John



Father Bert Kozen, Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Dushore, delivers the homily at the first of three summer Masses at the Saint John Neumann Shrine in Sugar Ridge on July 12, 2026. (Photo/Dan Piazza)

Neumann had was the ability for languages. He spoke German, his native language, English, and he actually picked up Gaelic," Father Kozen explained. "His Gaelic was so attuned, people thought he was one of them and he wasn't."

For parishioner John Lambert, praying in the area where a future saint once walked carries profound meaning.

"To walk the ground where someone who was raised to be a saint is pretty neat," Lambert said. "To have it in your own backyard is something special."

Lambert knows well the intricacies of the Shrine property. He says the church has no heat – which is why they choose to have select Masses in the summer. Even more interesting, while the church has electricity, there is only one outlet in the building.

Although he was a bishop for only eight years, the future-saint left his mark throughout the wide expanse which would later comprise the Diocese of Scranton. Bishop Neumann blessed corner stones; he confirmed; he heard confessions; he baptized children; and he placed his signature on many parish ledgers.

The faithful say he left a spiritual legacy that is significant even today.

"He lived in times similar to today, troubled times," Lambert explained. "The people he ministered to here were not well liked. It was the time of the 'know-nothings' and church burnings in Philadelphia. We were looked down on. We were the 'dirty Irish.' But he came. And he wasn't Irish."

Patrick Cullen's connection is even more personal.

His great-great-great grandmother, Katherine Leahy, was the woman who invited Bishop Neumann to Sugar Ridge.

"He was good enough to come out this way, give the sacraments, bless the land and clear a spot for the first church," Cullen said. "I think it's a great example of living your faith."

The remaining summer Masses at the Saint John Neumann Shrine will be celebrated on Sunday, Aug. 2, and Sunday, Sept. 6, at 2:30 p.m. The September liturgy will include a Healing Mass followed by a parish picnic hosted by the Knights of Columbus.



SUMMER PARISH PICNIC, FESTIVAL AND BAZAAR LISTING



Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary in Wilkes-Barre — July 16-18. Annual Parish Bazaar held on the Saint Nicholas Church grounds, 226 South Washington St., Wilkes-Barre, beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, and following the 4 p.m. Vigil Mass on Saturday. Bazaar features a variety of ethnic foods and traditional American menu items, including Mexican & Caribbean specialties. Event includes cash prize raffle drawings, bingo, bountiful baskets, and picnic games for all ages. Giant flea market hours: Thursday, 1 to 9 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 3 to 9 p.m. Live musical entertainment nightly from 7 to 10:30 p.m. by Flaxy Morgan (Thursday); Popstar Drive (Friday); and Kartune (Saturday).

Communion of Saints in Pittston — July 16-18. The new Pittston City Catholic parish will host a grand Summer Picnic on the grounds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 237 William St., Pittston. Event features a wide variety of picnic and homemade ethnic foods, including cannoli, pizza, sausage & peppers, and pizza frita; games for all ages, bountiful theme basket raffle drawings, and huge indoor flea market. Nightly musical entertainment will feature local band favorites Bugeye McGuire, Flaxy Morgan and The Taxmen.

Saint Eulalia in Roaring Brook Township — July 17 & 18 (5 to 10 p.m.). Summer Festival held on the church picnic grounds, 214 Blue Shutters Road, will feature homemade ethnic & picnic foods, Grandma's Attic flea market, and activities for all ages. Friday musical entertainment: Steel Velvet (classic rock), 5:45

to 8:45 p.m. Saturday: Electric City Steel Drum Project, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., followed by Alex "The Crooner," 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Hanover Township — July 17-19. "Big Tent Bazaar 2026" held on the church grounds, 420 Main Road, Buttonwood section, on Friday, 6 to 11 p.m.; Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight; and Sunday, 4 to 10 p.m. Featuring homemade ethnic foods & baked goods, potato pancake express, full-service Tiki Bar, theme baskets, raffle drawings & assorted games. Live nightly entertainment features Souled Out (Friday); OZ and Pop Star Drive (Saturday), and Lance Thomas Band (Sunday).

Saint Catherine of Siena in Moscow — July 23-25. Saint Catherine of Siena Parish will host its popular donations-only Rummage Sale and Ethnic Food Tent at the Moscow Country Street Fair on Thursday, Friday & Saturday. With the theme "Hometown Roots and Cowboy Boots," the Moscow Country Fair is celebrating its 10th anniversary of bringing music, art, and cultural entertainment and attractions to the borough's downtown. The Saint Catherine's food stand is featuring halupki, kielbasi, halushki, and many other menu favorites. For more information, call Christian Brown at (570) 309-1063.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Hunlock Creek — July 24 & 25 (5 to 10 p.m.). Parish "Summer Fest 2026" held on the church grounds at Lake Silkworth, 2011 State Route 29. Tent-covered two-day event features a huge indoor flea market, theme baskets, festival games, and homemade picnic & Polish/ethnic foods. Live musical entertainment provided

by Kartune (Friday) and Popstar Drive (Saturday).

Christ the King in Archbald/Eynon/Jermyn & Mayfield — July 24-26. Summer picnic held on the grounds of Saint Mary of Czestochowa Church, Betty & Main Streets, Eynon, beginning on Friday & Saturday at 5 p.m., and Sunday, at 3 p.m. Festival includes numerous ethnic & American food favorites, beer tent, bake sale, children's games, basket & cash raffle drawings, and "House of Treasures" market. Live musical entertainment features CC Music (Friday, 6 to 10 p.m.); Almost Famous (Saturday, 6 to 10 p.m.); and Fabulous 45's (Sunday, 3 to 7 p.m.).

Saint Luke's in Stroudsburg — July 30. A Youth & Family Night: "A Night of Faith & Fun" will be hosted on the grounds of Saint Luke Church, 818 Main St., Stroudsburg, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The family-friendly event features a hot dog cookout, "s'mores" treats, a bonfire, cornhole games, and music. All are welcome.

Saint Robert Bellarmine in Wilkes-Barre — July 30, 31 & Aug. 1. The "St. Al's Church Bazaar" held Thursday, 6 to 10 p.m.; Friday, 6 to 11 p.m.; and Saturday, 5 to 11 p.m., on the Saint Aloysius Church grounds, 143 West Division St., Wilkes-Barre. Picnic foods include sausage & peppers, potato pancakes, halushki, and pizza; bazaar also features games for all ages, bingo, and flea market. Nightly musical entertainment: Triple Fret (Thursday); Popstar Drive (Friday); and Strawberry Jam (Saturday).

Continued on Page 13

Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary Parish
226 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, WILKES-BARRE • 570-823-7736
(on the grounds of St. Nicholas Church)

Fr. Joseph Verespy, Fr. Fidel Ticona,
Deacon Michael Golubiewski, and Parishioners
Invite Everyone to the

PARISH BAZAAR

Thursday, Friday, Saturday
JULY 16, 17, 18

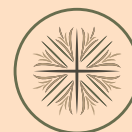
Opens 5:30PM Thursday & Friday • Opens after 4PM Mass on Saturday

Giant Flea Market (Thurs 1-9 PM; Fri. & Sat. 3-9 PM)
Games • Bingo • Fun for All Ages • Ethnic Food • Bountiful
Baskets • Raffle (1st prize 50-50) + 50 prizes

Live Music 7:00 PM to 10:30 PM 🎵

Thursday: Flaxy Morgan • Friday: Popstar Drive • Saturday: Kartune

**Bratwurst, Haluski, Pierogies, Potato Pancakes, Piggies, Pizza,
Chicken Wings, Mexican/Caribbean Food, Fried Dough,
Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, French Fries and more!**



Saint Eulalia
— PARISH —

SUMMER FESTIVAL | **JULY 17-18**
5-10 p.m.

Homemade Food, Grandma's Attic, & more...

WEEKEND ENTERTAINMENT:

FRI., JULY 17

5:45-8:45 PM

» Steel Velvet (rock band)

SAT., JULY 18

5:30-6:30 PM

» Electric City Steel Drum Project

6:30-8:30 PM

» Alex "the Crooner"

214 Blue Shutters Road, Roaring Brook Township
sainteulalias.com

**For the full list of Parish Summer Picnics, visit the Diocese
of Scranton website at dioceseofscranton.org.**



SUMMER PARISH PICNIC, FESTIVAL AND BAZAAR LISTING



Our Lady of Victory in Tannersville — Aug. 1 & 2. The parish's Annual Summerfest will be held Saturday (4 to 8 p.m.) & Sunday (11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.) on the Our Lady of Victory parish grounds, 327 Cherry Lane Road, Tannersville. Festivities feature homemade foods & baked goods, tricky trays, used book sale, and fun for all ages. All food items available for sit-down or takeout service. Preview schedule for tricky tray items: July 18, 4 to 7 p.m.; July 19, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.; July 25, 4 to 7 p.m.; and July 26, 11:30 to 2 p.m.

Saint Ann Basilica in Scranton — Aug. 2. Saint Ann Basilica Parish in West Scranton hosts its 12th annual "Car Show & Chicken BBQ" on Sunday, Aug. 2, from noon to 4 p.m., featuring an all-day car show starting at 9 a.m. Event includes barbecue dinner, picnic foods, music, vendors & raffles. Dinner tickets: \$15; Vehicle registration: \$10 (in advance) or \$15 (at show). Call rectory office at (570) 342-5166 for more information.

Gate of Heaven (Dallas) & Our Lady of Victory (Harveys Lake) — Aug. 2. The 75th Anniversary Committee of Gate of Heaven Parish in Dallas will host a combined parish picnic gathering with Our Lady of Victory Parish in Harveys Lake. The Sunday summer festival begins at noon at the Gate of Heaven Parish Center. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and soft beverages will be provided. Those attending are requested to bring a covered-dish food item.

Communion of Saints in Pittston — Aug. 6-8 (5 to 10 p.m.). The Pittston City parish will host "Summer Fest '26" on the grounds and pastoral center (Church & Broad streets) of Saint John the Evangelist Church in downtown Pittston. Event features a wide variety of picnic foods & attractions, including a big basket raffle, cash bingo, children's games, and raffle drawings. Nightly entertainment schedule: Smoke in Mirrors (Thursday), Bugeye McGuire (Friday), and Flaxy Morgan (Saturday).

Saint Jude's in Mountain Top — Aug. 7-9. Parish's 73rd annual "Picnic in the Grove" held Friday & Saturday, from 4 to 10 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 8 p.m., at the Saint Jude Grove, 420 South Mountain Boulevard (Route 309), Mountain Top. Features ethnic & traditional picnic foods, including homemade pierogi and halushki; summer refreshments, live music, games & activities for all ages.

Saint Matthew's in East Stroudsburg — Aug. 7-9. Summer festival held on Friday & Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 6 p.m., on the parish grounds, 78 Ridgeway St., East Stroudsburg. Three-day event includes live entertainment, international foods & homemade desserts, beer & wine garden, kids' games & family bingo, raffle drawings, and mega cash raffle. Featured music headliners include: Joey & The T Birds, Video Daze Band, Tempo Allegre, and more.

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CHRIST THE KING PARISH PICNIC

The Catholic Community of Archbald, Eynon, Jermyn, & Mayfield

JULY 24, 25, 26, 2026

Friday— CC Music	Saturday— Almost Famous	Sunday— Fabulous 45's
6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.	6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.	3:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.
Picnic starts at 5:00 P.M.	Picnic starts at 5:00 P.M.	Picnic starts at 3:00 P.M.

Beer Tent, Bake Sale, and the following Ethnic and American cuisine:
Cabbage & Noodles, Potato Pancakes, Pierogi with onion & butter or deep fried, Pigs in the Blanket, Pagach, Sausage Plain, Sausage with peppers, Steak & Cheese, Steak & Cheese with Peppers and Onions, Steak Sub Hoagie, Texas Burger, Kielbasa with Kraut, Texas Weiner, Wimpie, Porketta, Clam Chowder, French Fries, Hamburger, Hot Dog Plain or Hot Dog with Kraut, Pizza, Pizza-Frita, Funnel Fries

Visit the
**Choice is Yours Raffle Stand, Children's Games, Florence's Basket Raffles,
Match-for-Cash, Pull Tab Games, House of Treasures
PLUS CASH RAFFLE!!**

Held on the grounds of St. Mary of Czestochowa Church, corner of Betty & Main Streets, Eynon.



St. Joseph Melkite Greek-Catholic Church Lebanese-American Food Festival

**FRIDAY
AUGUST 7
4-9pm**

**SATURDAY
AUGUST 8
4-9pm**

**SUNDAY
AUGUST 9
1-7pm**



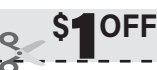
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SUMMER PARISH PICNIC, FESTIVAL AND BAZAAR LISTING



Saint John the Baptist in Larksville — Aug. 7-9. Saint John's Summer Bazaar will be held Friday, 6 to 10 p.m.; Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m.; and Sunday, 3 to 8 p.m., on the parish grounds, Nesbitt St., Larksville. Featuring a large variety of Polish, Slovak & American picnic foods, including sausage, funnel cakes; homemade menu items include fries, potato pancakes, halushki, pierogi, clam chowder, rice pudding & assorted desserts. More than 50 theme baskets headline other attractions, including games & summer refreshments. Live nightly music features John Stevens' Doubleshot (Friday, 7 to 10 p.m.), The Legends Oldies Band (Saturday, 7 to 10 p.m.), and DJ Rob Sax (Sunday, 5 to 8 p.m.).

Saint John Paul II in Dunmore — Aug. 7-9. The Dunmore parish's annual three-day "Italian Festival in Honor of Saint Rocco" held on the grounds and pavilion area at Saint Rocco Church, 122 Kurtz St., Bunker Hill section. Festivities include homemade ethnic & picnic foods, games & activities, theme baskets, cappuccino & cookie stand, designer purse stand, plush animal stand, and live daily entertainment. Sunday's Saint Rocco Feast Day Mass celebrated at noon, followed by procession of statues at 1 p.m. Entertainment schedule: Friday, 6 p.m., Dunmore High School marching units & cheerleaders, followed by Picture Perfect at 7 p.m.; Saturday, 6 p.m., Holy Cross High School cheerleaders, followed by Popstar Drive at 7 p.m.; Sunday, 2:30 p.m., Vinsko Entertainment, followed by Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School cheerleaders (4 p.m.), The Luongo Brothers Band (6 p.m.), fireworks display (9 p.m.) & raffle drawings (9:30 p.m.).

Our Lady of Peace in Hazleton — Aug. 7-9. Our Lady of Peace Parish at Most Precious Blood Church welcomes the community for its summer celebration of the 127th "La Madonna del Monte Festival & Saints of Cilento Festival" at 4th & Seybert Streets, Hazleton. Preceding the annual tradition, spiritual observances during July 31-Aug. 9 will honor the saints of Italy's Cilento region: Saint Aniello, Saint Mauro, Madonna del Monte, and Saint Nazarius. Festival activities on Friday, 3 to 8 p.m., and Saturday, 4:30 to 9:30 p.m., feature homemade ethnic & picnic foods; refreshments, adult beverages, tricky trays, and games & attractions for all ages. Live entertainment on Friday (5 to 7 p.m.) with Jim Cerminaro, singing Italian favorites; and Saturday (6 to 9 p.m.), featuring Kartune. The traditional procession with the statues of the Cilento Saints follows the Sunday (Aug. 9) Mass at 10:30 a.m., concluding with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto. Sunday pasta dinner served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the church hall.

Saint Carlo Acutis in Throop — Aug. 14-16. Parish's annual Family Festival includes Friday night Youth Sports Event at Throop Civic Center for ages 16 & under, including baseball, soccer & basketball skills competition; contact Ed Long (570) 561-8764 to register. Saturday (8:30 a.m.): Family Bicycle Ride from Olyphant to Throop; contact Joe Butash (570) 237-6667 for information/registration. Saturday (3 to 9 p.m.): Outside food stands and live music with Kozmic Kidz (4 to 8 p.m.). Sunday: Bingo starts at 1 p.m. in St. Anthony's Hall (doors open at noon); includes basket raffles & cash drawing.

Saints Peter & Paul in Plains — Aug. 15 & 16. Parish's summer weekend indoor flea

market open on Saturday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Event offers treasures for all,

including jewelry, housewares, children's toys, home decor, pet accessories, and seasonal items.

Continued on Page 15

SAINT JOHN'S Church Bazaar

Friday: 6PM-10PM Saturday: 5PM-10PM

Sunday: 3PM-8PM

ON THE PARISH GROUNDS, NESBITT STREET, LARKSVILLE, PA

**FRIDAY - SATURDAY - SUNDAY
AUGUST 7 • 8 • 9**



Live Music Nightly

Friday - John Stevens' Doubleshot 7pm-10pm
Saturday - The Legends Oldies Band 7pm-10pm
Sunday - DJ Rob Sax 5pm-8pm

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We make our own Potato Pancake batter, Haluski Noodles, Pierogies, Clam Chowder, Rice Pudding, Desserts & More.
We even peel and cut our own French Fries.





SUMMER PARISH PICNIC, FESTIVAL AND BAZAAR LISTING



Continued from Page 14

Menu favorites & refreshments available from various food trucks located in the parking lot outside the parish hall.

Prince of Peace in Old Forge — Aug. 16. The Old Forge parish sponsors its annual Roasted Chicken & Basket Raffle event on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the parking lot of Arcaro & Genell restaurant, Main Street, Old Forge. Prepared by Arcaro & Genell's, the dinner is take-

out only. Cost is \$17 per person, including roasted half-chicken, corn, pasta salad, roll & dessert. Advance orders encouraged; contact the parish rectory at (570) 457-5900 by Aug. 10. Tickets also at all weekend Masses.

Saint Michael's in Canton — Aug. 29. Canton parish is sponsoring its "St. Michael the Archangel Motorcycle Rally," beginning with registration at 8 a.m. at Saint Michael Church. Breakfast follows, with

kickstands up at 9 a.m. for the nearly 80-mile ride on paved roads. Event concludes with BBQ chicken lunch and "Show Me the Money" bingo party at the Troy American Legion. Cost, including breakfast, ride & lunch: \$35/rider & \$10/passenger, in advance (online); \$45/rider & \$15/passenger at the door.

Queen of the Apostles in Avoca — Aug. 29. The Avoca parish at Saint Mary Church will host an "Irish Night"

starting at 6 p.m. in Queen of the Apostles Hall, 742 Spring St., Avoca. The evening features an authentic Irish buffet dinner created by Chef Eugene Philbin, including classic Irish sausage, slow-cooked tender beef with a Guinness stout gravy, roasted garlic mashed potatoes with cabbage & Irish butter, seasonal vegetables roasted with local herbs, mixed green salad and Irish soda bread; homemade desserts & soft drinks. Patrons may provide their own additional beverages. Live musical entertainment by The Quietmen, featuring classic Irish & Celtic folk tunes, popular acoustic songs & all-time favorites. Event also includes a theme basket

raffle and cash prize drawing. Tickets cost \$45 each or \$320 for table of eight. For reservations, contact Jim McMahon at (570) 881-5068.

Saint Mary of the Lake in Lake Winola — Sept. 2-7 (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.). Lake Winola parish will sponsor a basket raffle at the annual Wyoming County Fair, held through Labor Day on the county fairgrounds at 9141 US 6 in Meshoppen. Saint Mary of the Lake Booth at the Wyoming County Fair will feature raffle drawings on a variety of bountiful theme baskets. For more information, contact Lucy Ziman at (570) 563-1622.

SUMMER FEST '26

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Friday - Bugeye McQuire

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Saturday	Sunday
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Catholic Youth Center gives children a summer filled with opportunity

WILKES-BARRE — For several hundred kids across the Wyoming Valley, this summer is about much more than just a break from school.

It is about discovering new places, making lifelong friendships, and learning new skills at the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre.

The CYC has once again become a summer destination for many local families, with 209 children enrolled in this year's summer camp program and another 30 youngsters already on a waiting list. The strong demand reflects both the popularity of the program and the vital role it plays in serving families throughout the community.

"We start getting calls in February hoping to reserve space for our camp," CYC Executive Director Mark Soprano said. "It's a very popular program."

Operating from the day schools dismiss for summer until classes resume in the fall, the CYC provides families with dependable, full-day care while giving children experiences many might not otherwise have.

"It's an easy transition for parents," Soprano explained. "They don't have to worry about where their kids are going in the summer."

For many working families, particularly those facing economic challenges, that consistency provides welcome peace of mind. As the school year ends, children simply transition from the CYC's before- and after-school programs into its summer program, where every day brings something new.

Rather than repeating the same routine, the CYC fills each week with themed activities, guest presenters and field trips that combine recreation with education. Campers spend time playing sports, swimming, visiting local parks and even tending the facility's growing garden.

Throughout the summer, the kids will travel to places like the Electric City Aquarium, Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour, Hillside Farms, Frances Slocum State Park, Kirby Park and even the Pennsylvania State Capitol.

"We try to make it interesting for the kids, that they're not doing the same thing day after day," Soprano said. "We want to



Students attending the summer camp program at the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre get to experience many educational activities like learning about reptiles and alligators, as they did during a presentation on June 29, 2026. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

make it as interesting and fun as possible for the kids but also educate them a little bit about the area and different things around."

One recent conversation Soprano had with campers reinforced why all the

opportunities matter.

"When I was picking the kids up on one of the last days of school, I asked them, 'What are you doing this summer?'" Soprano recalled. "The only activity I got from the kids was, 'I'm going to my



Students participating in the summer camp program at the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center also get plenty of time for recreation and fun in the facility's two gymnasiums. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

cousin's swimming pool.' That struck me. These kids aren't going to be doing anything, and they'll be spending a majority of their summer with us here at the CYC."

Continued on Page 17

CYC helps students build a love of reading one page at a time

WILKES-BARRE — For many students, summer can mean taking a break from books.

Staff members at the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center don't want that to be the case this year — and are working to build a lifelong love of reading with their youngsters.

This summer, a number of children participating in the CYC's summer camp program are taking part in a special literacy initiative designed to keep young minds engaged.

"This past school year, we partnered with the McGlynn Center for a tutoring program for our children which is very needed. To piggyback on that, we're doing a summer reading challenge," CYC Executive Director Mark Soprano said. "They have 55 children there. We're selecting 55 children here at the CYC and we will see which group of kids reads more."



Lola Williamson, left, and Gianna Ranieli, enjoy reading during their experience at the summer camp program at the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center in Wilkes-Barre. This summer, the agency is holding a friendly competition with the McGlynn Center in Wilkes-Barre to see which agency can have students read the most. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

Through a partnership with United Way, the CYC has several thousand books available, and students are allowed to bring them home and even keep them if desired.

"We're encouraging parents to read with their children in the evenings and on the weekend. We want them to make it a

habit of reading," Soprano added. "We know that when kids leave school in the springtime, especially reading, regresses a little bit. We don't want that to happen with our children."

For many campers, reading has become one of the highlights of the day.

Continued on Page 17

Young pilgrims encounter Christ at Steubenville Conference

STEUBENVILLE – More than 150 young people, clergy, and chaperones from parishes across the Diocese of Scranton spent the weekend of July 10-12, 2026, discovering they are far from alone in living their Catholic faith.

A Diocesan delegation of 155 pilgrims – including 113 youth, 35 chaperones, one deacon and six priests – traveled by bus to the Steubenville Youth Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio.

Through engaging speakers, Eucharistic Adoration, worship, music, and the Sacraments, the students joined thousands of other young Catholics from across the country for a weekend centered on growing closer to Christ.

For many, including 18-year-old Hannah Rocco of Saint Eulalia Parish in Roaring Brook Township, it was their first experience at the nationally recognized conference.

“I’m super excited,” Rocco said before departing. “I’m excited to meet people



A total of 155 pilgrims represented the Diocese of Scranton at the Steubenville Youth Conference in Ohio on the weekend of July 10-12, 2026. The pictures above show young adults participating in workshops and Eucharistic Adoration. (Photos/Dominick Costantino)

from other parishes. I’m hoping for good Adoration and prayer time, but mostly the connection.”

That desire for connection was echoed by brothers Michael and Ayden Biagi, who participate in the life of Saint John Paul II Parish in Dunmore.

“I’m looking forward to growing in my faith,” Michael said. “I think it’s going to bring a whole lot of people together that are all the same age and show us that it’s

okay to not be like the rest of the flock and follow what the world wants and instead follow what God wants us to follow.”

His younger brother, Ayden, looked forward to meeting other Catholic teenagers who openly share their faith.

“I’ve never done an experience like this,” he said. “I’m excited that you can profess your faith and not be like – is this person going to judge me based on this.”

Father Thomas Dzwonczyk, Assistant Pastor of Saint John Paul II Parish, accompanied the Biagi brothers and several other young people from his newly consolidated parish, calling the conference

an opportunity for them to deepen their faith while forming lasting friendships.

“For them to experience this and say it’s okay to be ‘on fire’ for Jesus, and then to bring that back here to the Diocese of Scranton, it’s going to be wonderful,” Father Dzwonczyk said. “I hope they realize there are people right here who are taking the faith seriously and want it to be a major part of their life.”

As they returned home, the pilgrims expressed their gratitude to the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton for their prayers and support of the Catholic Ministries Appeal which makes experiences like this possible.

CYC summer camp engages minds and bodies

Continued from Page 16

For Victoria Ortiz, who will enter fifth grade this fall, that’s exactly what makes the CYC summer program special.

“It’s fun,” she said. “We do multiple activities. We go to the park. We go swimming. We do fun activities.”

Ortiz had just participated in a reptile presentation from a local business where she got to touch various snakes and even an alligator.

“I got scared for the alligator because it looked scary and it was big,” she added.

Jasper Gomez Colon, who is entering sixth grade, likes the CYC summer program because it gives him the chance to stay active and spend time with friends.

“Every time we come to the gym in the morning, I play basketball,” he said. “Every time I play with my friends, I’m getting better. We get to swim too. It’s really fun.”

While children enjoy the activities, staff members recognize that the greatest impact often goes far beyond games and field trips.

For nearly eight years, Dontaye

Dutchin has worked at the CYC, wearing many hats while mentoring the children entrusted to the program.

“It’s the kids,” Dutchin said. “Every day there is something new. I feel like there is a purpose here. When I come in in the morning, everyone is like, ‘Mr. Dontaye!’ They fulfill me. The kids get their hooks in you and it’s impossible to walk away from them.”

Dutchin says many of the children simply need someone willing to listen and care.

“These kids have a lot of tough stories,” he said. “Whenever anyone has a tough weekend or a tough day, I say, ‘Let me hear about it.’ A lot of them don’t have anybody else.”

As Dutchin finished sharing that thought, one of the campers quietly walked up behind him and wrapped both arms around him in an unexpected hug.

That spontaneous gesture captured the importance of the CYC without words – highlighting the Wilkes-Barre facility is a place where children find not only a fun-filled summer, but caring adults who remind them they are valued and supported.

Competition shows importance of reading

Continued from Page 16

“I like to read chapter books, and I like to read princess books,” Lola Williamson, who will enter second grade this fall. “When you read, you get to learn about things.”

Her favorite? Sleeping Beauty.

Williamson says keeping up with reading during the summer has its rewards when school begins again.

“I like to do it because I get good grades, sometimes 90s and 100s,” she added.

Fellow camper Gianna Ranieli, who is also entering second grade, enjoys discovering new stories through books.

“I practice in the summer with my dad. I read really hard words and try to pronounce them,” Ranieli said. “It’s very fun to read. I love reading.”

When the summer reading challenge ends at the end of July, the CYC is



A young student reads during the summer camp program at the CYC in Wilkes-Barre.

planning to hold a pizza party with prizes and awards for participants.

“We’re looking forward to a celebration and really rewarding the kids, whether they read one page or 100 books, for their accomplishments this summer,” Soprano said.

Music and culture unite hundreds on World Refugee Day

SCRANTON — Music became a powerful force for unity, bringing together cultures, generations, and communities at the Diocesan Pastoral Center on Saturday, June 20, 2026.

From a performance by Ukrainian singers to energetic dances celebrating the traditions of Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Hispanic cultures, each act drew applause from the crowd gathered for the tenth annual World Refugee Day celebration in Scranton.

The performances — featuring everyone from young children to seasoned professionals — helped to spark conversations that crossed cultural boundaries.

By the end of the event, many people who had spent the day watching from their seats were invited up onto the stage together, offering a joyful witness that community can be built one song, one dance, and one friendship at a time.

That spirit of welcome and belonging defined the World Refugee Day event, which welcomed an estimated 400 people to honor the resilience, courage and contributions of refugees who now call northeastern Pennsylvania home.

Organized by more than two dozen community organizations, the free event embraced this year's theme, "A World Where Refugees Are Always Welcomed."

"This event is to celebrate the refugees that are here in Scranton," Fikile Ryder, Director of Community for Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton and co-chair of the celebration, said. "Immigrants built the United States. Having refugees and immigrants in the United States strengthens the economy. They bring in different skills that can be used, which makes Scranton and the United States richer."

Ryder explained that refugees often leave everything behind because of war, persecution, and violence, arriving in a new country where they know few, if any, people.

"That resilience of coming and building a new life in a new country where they don't know anybody," Ryder said. "This event is for us to let them know that they are welcome."

The afternoon began with welcoming remarks from Ryder and Julie Schumacher



Above Left: More than 20 community groups filled the Diocesan Pastoral Center with information tables.

Above Right: Young children pose after their dance performance.

Left: A large crowd applauds for all the dance groups.

Cohen, Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement and Government Affairs at The University of Scranton, who served as co-chair of this year's celebration.

Father Gerald W. Shantillo, V.G., represented the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, who was in Rome during the event, followed by remarks from Scranton Mayor Paige Cagnetti, representatives of the local Congolese and Bhutanese communities, and a representative from Governor Josh Shapiro's office, who presented a proclamation recognizing June as Immigrant Heritage Month and June 20 specifically as Refugee Day.

Throughout the event, the celebration utilized multiple parts of the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

Dozens of community organizations filled the atrium with interactive exhibits and valuable resources.

The Edward R. Leahy Jr. Clinic for the Uninsured offered free blood pressure screenings, while Friends of the Poor and Catherine McAuley Center provided free clothing for anyone in need.

As an introduction to the Faith250 initiative, Temple Hesed and the Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium invited children and adults alike to create Statue of Liberty crowns and torches before posing for photographs in front of a New York

City skyline backdrop, offering a creative reminder that the 'torch of welcoming' must be passed from one generation to the next.

The gymnasium buzzed with activity as children enjoyed face painting, soccer games, hula hoops, and other family-friendly events.

Visitors were also able to sample international foods representing cultures different from their own.

"World Refugee Day is a global event, but we like to bring it local," Schumacher Cohen explained. "This is a city that is known for its immigrant heritage. Many people from around the world came here to work in the coal mines more than 100 years ago. We still have many immigrants and refugees who have come here to make it their home."

Joe Mahoney, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services, said the celebration demonstrates that welcoming refugees is about much more than words.

"We are celebrating the refugees that come and make our community great," Mahoney said. "We really want to welcome people with companionship, with food."

Reflecting on his own family's Irish roots, Mahoney said refugees enrich communities in countless ways.

"It's not just the food; it's the different ways of solving problems," he said. "We are stronger together."

2025-2026 Catholic Ministries Appeal concludes raising more than \$4.2 million

SCRANTON - Thank you for your generous support of the 2025–2026 Catholic Ministries Appeal!

Over the past year, more than 17,500 commitments were made to the Appeal, with 36 parishes meeting or exceeding their individual goals.

While the total number of gifts was slightly lower than the previous year, approximately 850 fewer, the spirit of faithful stewardship remained strong.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of you, our donors, the Appeal raised approximately \$110,000 more than last year.

The final results for CMA Commitments versus parish goals appear on the adjacent page. Notably, 68 parishes exceeded the total dollars committed this year versus last year. This is a very promising sign as we look to meeting our goals in the upcoming year.

Your support continues to strengthen the vital ministries funded through the Catholic Ministries Appeal.

This year, our Catholic Schools achieved a balanced budget through several important initiatives, including the support provided through the Appeal.

Catholic Social Services has also been able to respond to the growing needs of our communities, providing assistance to individuals and families facing food insecurity, homelessness, and other hardships.

With preparations underway for the 2026-2027 Catholic Ministries Appeal, we hope to see continued growth in support as we work to share the impact of your generosity throughout northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

None of this important work would be possible without your generosity. Thank you for your commitment to your parish, to the ministries of the Diocese of Scranton, and for responding so generously to *Our Call to Serve*.



Thank You to Everyone Who Supported the 2025-2026 Catholic Ministries Appeal. We Raised More than \$4.24 Million to Fund Critical Catholic Ministries and Programs this year!

FINAL PARISH GOAL REPORT FOR 2025-2026 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL

All Saints Parish - Plymouth.....	\$18,997.00 / \$30,365.00 (63%)	St. Brigid Parish - Friendsville.....	\$38,189.73 / \$24,916.00 (153%)
Ascension Parish - Forest City.....	\$24,239.00 / \$23,450.00 (103%)	St. Carlo Acutis Parish - Olyphant.....	\$49,563.00 / \$63,465.00 (78%)
BVM Queen of Peace Parish - Hawley.....	\$50,745.40 / \$54,575.00 (93%)	St. Catherine of Siena Parish - Moscow.....	\$87,199.00 / \$66,919.00 (130%)
Christ the King Parish - Archbald.....	\$69,935.00 / \$78,939.00 (89%)	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish - Swoyersville..	\$50,697.40 / \$72,234.00 (70%)
Corpus Christi Parish - West Pittston.....	\$63,482.00 / \$92,812.00 (68%)	St. Elizabeth Parish - Bear Creek.....	\$10,270.00 / \$18,133.00 (57%)
Divine Mercy Parish - Scranton.....	\$75,482.00 / \$52,732.00 (143%)	St. Eulalia Parish - Roaring Brook Township....	\$27,321.00 / \$55,799.00 (49%)
Epiphany Parish - Sayre.....	\$70,080.05 / \$55,304.00 (127%)	St. Faustina Kowalska Parish - Nanticoke.....	\$30,340.13 / \$58,036.00 (52%)
Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish - Hanover Twp..	\$31,922.00 / \$26,405.00 (121%)	St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish - Carverton.....	\$23,416.43 / \$17,674.00 (133%)
Gate of Heaven Parish - Dallas.....	\$30,980.00 / \$38,444.00 (81%)	St. Gregory Parish - Clarks Green.....	\$106,680.00 / \$103,117.00 (103%)
Good Shepherd Parish - Drums.....	\$19,764.20 / \$36,027.00 (55%)	St. Ignatius Loyola Parish - Kingston.....	\$88,691.17 / \$80,603.00 (110%)
Holy Child Parish - Mansfield.....	\$30,815.00 / \$28,060.00 (110%)	St. John Bosco Parish - Conyngham.....	\$73,087.00 / \$67,261.00 (109%)
Holy Family Parish - Luzerne.....	\$38,264.42 / \$31,035.00 (123%)	St. John Neumann Parish - Lords Valley.....	\$21,206.00 / \$22,112.00 (96%)
Holy Name of Mary Parish - Montrose.....	\$26,360.00 / \$20,785.00 (127%)	St. John Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$42,223.00 / \$54,995.00 (77%)
Holy Rosary Parish - Hazleton.....	\$22,473.00 / \$33,957.00 (66%)	St. John the Baptist Parish - Larksville.....	\$17,045.00 / \$33,844.00 (50%)
Holy Spirit Parish - Mocanaqua.....	\$14,155.00 / \$21,973.00 (64%)	St. John the Evangelist Parish - Honesdale.....	\$66,628.00 / \$65,424.00 (102%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Scranton.....	\$52,670.20 / \$48,632.00 (108%)	St. John the Evangelist Parish - Pittston.....	\$60,423.00 / \$55,467.00 (109%)
Immaculate Conception Parish - Williamsport.....	\$21,218.00 / \$31,530.00 (67%)	St. John Vianney Parish - Montdale.....	\$26,880.00 / \$38,919.00 (69%)
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish - Dushore.....	\$37,568.26 / \$40,293.00 (93%)	St. Joseph Mareello Parish - Pittston.....	\$32,875.00 / \$43,981.00 (75%)
Mary, Mother of God Parish - Scranton.....	\$56,800.00 / \$55,367.00 (103%)	St. Joseph Parish - Matamoras.....	\$33,541.00 / \$24,484.00 (137%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Cresco.....	\$38,325.00 / \$49,463.00 (77%)	St. Joseph the Worker Parish - Williamsport....	\$91,850.00 / \$77,986.00 (118%)
Most Holy Trinity Parish - Susquehanna.....	\$37,074.77 / \$29,015.00 (128%)	St. Jude Parish - Mountain Top.....	\$95,566.00 / \$118,992.00 (80%)
Nativity of Our Lord Parish - Duryea.....	\$34,975.00 / \$46,700.00 (75%)	St. Katharine Drexel Parish - Pleasant Mount..	\$18,218.00 / \$16,117.00 (113%)
Nativity of the BVM Parish - Tunkhannock.....	\$31,245.11 / \$40,268.00 (78%)	St. Leo Parish - Ashley.....	\$39,882.00 / \$42,544.00 (94%)
Our Lady Help of Christians Parish - Dorrance.....	\$20,070.27 / \$21,228.00 (95%)	St. Luke Parish - Jersey Shore.....	\$13,586.00 / \$21,752.00 (62%)
Our Lady of Hope Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$25,478.00 / \$36,590.00 (70%)	St. Luke Parish - Stroudsburg.....	\$128,144.11 / \$98,591.00 (130%)
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish - Montoursville.....	\$30,418.00 / \$44,141.00 (69%)	St. Maria Goretti Parish - Laffin.....	\$30,675.00 / \$42,853.00 (72%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Dunmore.....	\$38,920.00 / \$57,899.00 (67%)	St. Mary of the Lake Parish - Lake Winola.....	\$11,711.00 / \$12,667.00 (92%)
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish - Lake Silkworth...	\$26,380.00 / \$25,400.00 (104%)	St. Mary Parish - Waymart.....	\$26,380.00 / \$17,295.00 (153%)
Our Lady of Peace Parish - Hazleton.....	\$64,123.28 / \$68,275.00 (94%)	St. Matthew Parish - E. Stroudsburg.....	\$75,718.29 / \$85,088.00 (89%)
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish - Wyalusing...	\$6,035.00 / \$19,874.00 (30%)	St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish - Pocono Pines....	\$20,955.00 / \$35,107.00 (60%)
Our Lady of the Abingtons Parish - Dalton.....	\$8,147.00 / \$12,599.00 (65%)	St. Michael Parish - Canton.....	\$17,325.00 / \$20,283.00 (85%)
Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish - Pittston.....	\$12,498.00 / \$23,111.00 (54%)	St. Michael Parish - Scranton.....	\$9,030.86 / \$24,290.00 (37%)
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception - Freeland..	\$16,857.00 / \$30,207.00 (56%)	St. Monica Parish - West Wyoming.....	\$26,448.00 / \$25,312.00 (104%)
Our Lady of the Rosary Parish - Carbondale.....	\$59,294.05 / \$80,387.00 (74%)	St. Nicholas-St. Mary Parish - Wilkes-Barre....	\$68,534.72 / \$104,316.00 (66%)
Our Lady of the Snows Parish - Clarks Summit....	\$66,180.00 / \$90,939.00 (73%)	St. Patrick Parish - Milford.....	\$48,134.00 / \$22,402.00 (215%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Harveys Lake.....	\$26,079.00 / \$38,157.00 (68%)	St. Patrick Parish - Nicholson.....	\$11,302.00 / \$13,543.00 (83%)
Our Lady of Victory Parish - Tannersville.....	\$57,970.00 / \$55,538.00 (104%)	St. Patrick Parish - Scranton.....	\$29,916.00 / \$65,815.00 (45%)
Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish - Brodheads ville..	\$66,074.00 / \$83,638.00 (79%)	St. Patrick Parish - White Haven.....	\$6,260.00 / \$21,646.00 (29%)
Prince of Peace Parish - Old Forge.....	\$13,504.00 / \$28,214.00 (48%)	St. Paul Parish - Scranton.....	\$36,817.00 / \$57,471.00 (64%)
Queen of Angels Parish - Jessup.....	\$14,277.00 / \$26,058.00 (55%)	St. Peter Parish - Wellsboro.....	\$34,466.00 / \$36,284.00 (95%)
Queen of the Apostles Parish - Avoca.....	\$13,851.00 / \$32,767.00 (39%)	St. Peter's Cathedral - Scranton.....	\$115,875.00 / \$56,503.00 (205%)
Resurrection Parish - Muncy.....	\$23,625.00 / \$42,304.00 (56%)	St. Pius of Pietrelcina Parish - Hazleton.....	\$35,415.00 / \$69,058.00 (51%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Dupont.....	\$20,990.00 / \$33,534.00 (63%)	St. Rita Parish - Gouldsboro.....	\$14,577.00 / \$12,461.00 (117%)
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish - Peckville.....	\$69,215.11 / \$66,780.00 (104%)	St. Robert Bellarmine Parish - Wilkes-Barre....	\$36,691.90 / \$34,181.00 (107%)
SS Anthony & Rocco Parish - Dunmore.....	\$36,155.00 / \$54,163.00 (67%)	St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish - Scranton.....	\$40,844.00 / \$60,421.00 (68%)
SS Cyril & Methodius Parish - Hazleton.....	\$37,430.00 / \$43,903.00 (85%)	St. Therese Parish - Shavertown.....	\$86,339.00 / \$76,497.00 (113%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Plains.....	\$50,591.00 / \$81,699.00 (62%)	St. Thomas More Parish - Lake Ariel.....	\$40,273.00 / \$51,125.00 (79%)
SS Peter & Paul Parish - Towanda.....	\$84,530.00 / \$28,799.00 (294%)	St. Thomas the Apostle Parish - Elkland.....	\$9,320.00 / \$10,494.00 (89%)
St. Andrew Parish - Wilkes-Barre.....	\$11,560.00 / \$19,248.00 (60%)	St. Vincent de Paul Parish - Milford.....	\$23,320.00 / \$35,583.00 (66%)
St. Ann Basilica Parish - Scranton.....	\$40,513.00 / \$58,345.00 (69%)	Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Dickson City	\$50,772.00 / \$50,772.00 (100%)
St. Ann Parish - Shohola.....	\$22,536.30 / \$22,038.00 (102%)		
St. Ann Parish - Williamsport.....	\$23,656.00 / \$49,149.00 (48%)		
St. Boniface Parish - Williamsport.....	\$84,020.00 / \$75,345.00 (112%)		
		TOTAL RAISED (as of July 1, 2026)	\$4,243,017.16 / \$4,500,000 (94%)

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



The eighth-grade graduation class from **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** poses for a group photo inside the school gym.



The eighth-grade graduation class from **La Salle Academy in Jessup** poses for a group photo inside Sacred Heart of Jesus Church.



Before leaving school for the summer, Pre-K through sixth grade students from **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** who will celebrate summer birthdays were recognized.



Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton hosted a week-long theater camp for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. At the end of the camp, the students showcased their hard work by putting on a short play.



Falcon cheerleaders from **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** had an incredible experience at Pine Forest Cheer Camp, where they built skills, strengthened teamwork, and created lasting memories.



The faculty and staff of **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** gathered on the last day of school to celebrate the retirement of two teachers. Pictured in the center are Josie Toomey and Toni Griseto. Mrs. Toomey had a 30+ year career in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System and Mrs. Griseto had a 44+ year career.



Fifth and sixth graders at **Epiphany School in Sayre** complete their ‘Trout in the Classroom’ and ‘Eels in the Classroom’ projects by holding trout and eel release days in local rivers.



A summer art camp was held at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** during the week of June 29-July 3. On the final day, campers put their patience and fine motor skills to work to create coasters for their summer drinks.



Students from **Holy Rosary School in Durysa** helped make and serve fresh squeezed lemonade at Father Michael Bryant’s Lemonade Stand on the first night of the Nativity of Our Lord Parish Picnic.



Holy Cross High School in Dunmore held its annual Crusader Camp, offering classes related to drama, literature, and the visual arts. Students from across our Diocesan elementary schools attended for a fun week of arts enrichment.



Students from **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** participated in the community’s annual Fourth of July parade. Pictured enjoying the fun are, from left: Ava Geiger, Katie Schlude, Lila Millard, Gia Falzone and Elise Carone.



The transformative power of Catholic education is evident at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda**. Students in Pre-K through sixth grade are given many opportunities to grow in their faith throughout the year.



Families struggling with food insecurity in the Wyoming Valley received a helping hand from **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre**. Students collected more than 900 food items which were donated to the Commission on Economic Opportunity.



Juniors Florian Torok and Vishal Jaddu of **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** placed 7th in Computer Game & Simulation Programming at the FBLA National Leadership Conference in San Antonio, Texas . They were the only PA competitors in Computer Game & Simulation Programming that advanced to the final round.



Students Lidio Amico and Lena Frank, along with their teacher Mrs. Reynolds, participate in the Pre-K 3 Graduation ceremony at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** in June.

SSPX carries out unauthorized consecration of four bishops

(OSV News) - Despite a personal appeal from Pope Leo XIV, the Society of St. Pius X went ahead July 1 with the unauthorized consecration of four new bishops at its seminary in Écône, Switzerland, with Mass broadcasted live and thousands of faithful attending.

The pope warned in his letter dated June 29 - the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul - that the move would cause a formal schism and deprive followers of lawful, and in some cases valid, access to the sacraments.

“In this spirit, and filled with Christian affection, I plead with you and ask you with all my heart: please turn back!” the pope said in a letter addressed to Father Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the society, commonly known as the SSPX. The Vatican published the letter June 30.

“I urge you to consider carefully the spiritual good of the faithful, because the schismatic act you are about to undertake would deprive them of the licit and, in some cases, even valid reception of the Sacraments, which they love and seek for their sanctification,” Pope Leo wrote.

The ceremony kicked off with a lengthy oath in Latin, read by one of the newly consecrated SSPX bishops, who claimed obedience to Peter Apostle, Holy Roman Church and Pope Leo XIV - naming the current pontiff, who, along with his doctrinal chief, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, offered to continue dialogue with the SSPX on the condition that the society suspend its decision to consecrate new bishops.

After the SSPX chose not to accept, Cardinal Fernández said the consecration of bishops without a papal mandate would be considered “a schismatic act” and would incur excommunication.

Pope Leo told journalists outside Castel Gandolfo June 17 that the decision to proceed “is their choice.”

In his homily on July 1, Father Pagliarani called the consecration an “exceptional” measure “proportionate to this necessity” and in line with “a duty to keep the faith that the Church has always taught.”

Saying that “some might consider that we are facing a dilemma,” Father Pagliarani said SSPX did not choose

“between faith and the Church.”

“We belong to the Church first and foremost through faith, through the complete profession of faith, through the complete profession of the Church’s faith,” he said, noting: “We live in the same house.”

Four priests were consecrated bishops in the July 1 ceremony: Fathers Pascal Schreiber from Switzerland, Michael Goldade from the United States, Michel Poinsinet de Sivry and Marc Hanappier - both from France. Presiding over the Mass was Msgr. Alfonso de Galarreta. Organizers estimated 16,600 adults were present at the ceremony, with many children attending as well.

On June 30, following the pope’s letter, Father Pagliarani appeared undeterred from proceeding with the consecration, pressing Pope Leo to “consider the authenticity of this intention before making a decision concerning the Society of Saint Pius X.”

On July 1 the head of the society stated: “We are accused of not loving the pope,” noting that “it is because we sincerely love the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, as head of the Church, that we no longer want to see the pope humiliated alongside false pastors representing false religions.”

In 1988, St. John Paul II excommunicated the society’s founder, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991), and four bishops consecrated without papal mandate. Nevertheless, for decades, the Vatican had sought ways to fully reintegrate SSPX members into the life of the Catholic Church.

Talks between the Vatican and the society began under St. John Paul and continued during the pontificates of Popes Benedict XVI and Francis.

Pope Benedict lifted the excommunications of the four bishops in 2009, opening the way for more regular talks.

Father Pagliarani referred to the 1988 excommunications during his homily, asking: “Did those who condemned the fraternity foresee its dissolution?” “Providence had another plan,” he said, suggesting that “God has not abandoned” SSPX and calling it a “sacrifice” that the society is now “considered as rebels.”

“All evils come from sin,” Father Pagliarani added, suggesting that through

consecration unauthorized by the successor of Peter, SSPX wanted to “continue preaching the precious Blood of Our Lord, and we want to continue, in a certain way, to pour it out on souls.”

Father Pagliarani concluded with his advice for SSPX bishops: “Be as simple as doves and as shrewd as serpents,”

explaining that they must act like serpents to “discern, grasp, and capture the duplicity, ambiguity, and cunning that are in the world and in the enemies of the cross.”

“Your worst enemies will not attack you head-on; they will try to make you slip,” he concluded.

Bishop Bambera’s Statement on the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX)

July 9, 2026

It is with great sadness that I join the universal Church in acknowledging the painful division that has resulted from the Society of Saint Pius X’s (SSPX) decision to proceed with the unauthorized ordination of four bishops on July 1, 2026, without the proper pontifical mandate and against the will of the Holy Father.

Throughout the years, several popes have worked to restore full communion with the SSPX which is why these recent events have been so painful. Please join me in praying that these efforts may one day bear fruit and that the unity for which Christ prayed will be restored.

While the Society of Saint Pius X maintains a presence within the geographic boundaries of the 11 counties of the Diocese of Scranton, it is important for me to note that no parish, chapel, school, or ministry of the Diocese is currently administered by the Society or its clergy.

For any individual who has worshipped with the Society of Saint Pius X, or who may have questions about these recent developments, I want to assure you of my prayers and pastoral concern. The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued guidance for both clergy and lay faithful who wish to remain in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Most importantly, in light of the formal schism of the SSPX, Roman Catholics who desire to remain in good standing with the Church should not participate in liturgies celebrated by bishops or priests of the Society of Saint Pius X or receive the sacraments from them, including Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Canon law provides an exception only in the case of immediate danger of death.

I recognize that many Catholics who have attended the Society’s chapels have done so because of their deep love for the Church’s liturgical tradition, especially the celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal. That desire for the traditional Latin Mass can be fully lived within the communion of the Catholic Church.

Here in the Diocese of Scranton, the traditional Latin Mass is celebrated regularly at Saint Michael Parish in Scranton by priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP), a priestly fraternity that is in full communion with the Holy Father and the Catholic Church.

At this challenging time, I ask all faithful to pray for healing, reconciliation, and unity within the Church, that we remain steadfast in our fidelity to the Successor of Saint Peter.

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

Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen seeks 'Sponsors For A Day'

WILKES-BARRE - Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre has kicked off its 2026 "Sponsor For A Day" campaign.

For a donation of \$125 or more, an individual, family, business, community organization, or faith-based group can sponsor the day's meal at Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen and provide assistance to those in need. The sponsorship can be from oneself, a family, in memory of a loved one, or on behalf of a business.

The mission of Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen is to respond to the unmet need of poverty and hunger in the Wyoming Valley and as more people continue to experience food insecurity, its mission has never been more important.

In 2025, Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen served 122,079 meals to members of the community.



Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen in Wilkes-Barre has kicked off its 2026 "Sponsor For A Day" campaign. Pictured, from left: Jack Nolan, Advisory Board member, Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen, and 2026 "Sponsor For A Day" campaign chair; Mike Cianciotta, Director, Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen; and Chris Bedwick, President, Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen Advisory Board.

In addition, Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry served 2,917 families and its Clothing Room assisted 3,678 individuals.

Sponsors are recognized each day on the "Sponsor For A Day" draw-board in the Kitchen as well

as on the Kitchen's Facebook page. Past sponsors should have received letters asking for renewals as the annual campaign has now gotten underway.

New sponsors may call (570) 829-7796 for more information.

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Wind Creek Casino • September 27, \$25 slot play • \$56

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American Music Theater, Lancaster • Christmas Show • Nov. 21 plus a visit to the charming town of Lititz and a meal at an authentic amish farm \$209

Dutch Apple Dinner Theater •

Holly, Jolly Holiday Show • Nov. 28 • All you can eat buffet plus a visit to Lancaster Central Market \$209



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Pope Leo invites Americans to cultivate 'moral greatness' as he accepts Liberty Medal

PHILADELPHIA (OSV News) - Religious liberty "holds sacred the inner sphere of the person where convictions are formed and where conscience can guide the decisions made in the intimacy of the human heart," said Pope Leo XIV, as he accepted a major civic award for upholding freedom of belief on the eve of the nation's 250th anniversary.

The first U.S.-born pope shared his thoughts - which centered religious liberty within a vision of God-given human dignity, and which called the nation back to shared founding ideals - during a July 3 acceptance address for the Liberty Medal, bestowed by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, that was livestreamed from the Vatican.

Describing himself as "a son of this great country," Pope Leo asked for "God's blessings upon America's future" and prayed that the nation's 250th anniversary would be "the occasion of a solemn recommitment to these ideals that have made America a country that values peace and prosperity, a country characterized by generosity and nobility of heart."



Pope Leo XIV accepts the Philadelphia-based National Constitution Center's 2026 Liberty Medal. (OSV News photo/Vatican Media)

He noted "the moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to support, protect and cherish the lives of all, especially the most vulnerable and those whose worth is questioned."

He hoped that "the principles we have reflected upon today - a shared human dignity, equality and

the rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence - ever be a source of such unity and a guiding light for the present moment and for the years to come."

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Sisters of IHM Foundation to host annual 'Sisters Celebration' July 31 at Marywood

SCRANTON — The Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary invites the community to its 2026 Sisters Celebration on Friday, July 31, at Nazareth Hall on the campus of Marywood University.

The celebration honoring the IHM spirit and supporting retired Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters begins with a reception at 5:30 p.m., followed by the program.

The evening will feature the presentation of the Spirit of IHM Awards to three prominent area individuals for their commitment to and embodiment of the IHM spirit and mission:

Dr. Jay Bannon and his wife, Tracy; and Teddy Michel.

Tickets to the event are \$100 per person, with all proceeds helping with the care of the retired IHM Sisters.

In addition to attending the event, individuals can honor a Sister, an award recipient, or a loved one by becoming an event sponsor. Sponsorships start at \$25.

"Many individuals choose to honor a Sister who taught them in school and made an impact on their life or the lives of their family members," Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Ann Monica Bubser, Director of Development for the IHM Sisters, stated.

The event is hosted by the Sisters of IHM Foundation, established in 2013 to support retired IHM Sisters who require varied levels of care.

"Costs are rising exponentially, and we rely on your generosity to help the Sisters care for the women who gave their lives in service,



Dr. Jay & Tracy
Bannon

Teddy
Michel

asking for nothing in return," Ann Rink, president of the Foundation Board, said. "This celebration is a chance to honor them and hear the stories of those who embody the IHM mission."

Dr. Bannon and Tracy Bannon exemplify the spirit of the IHM Sisters through their lifelong commitment to faith, service, and community.

A distinguished surgeon and educator, Dr. Bannon is recognized as a community leader whose career has advanced patient care and medical education throughout northeastern Pennsylvania.

He is a board-certified and fellowship-trained general and colorectal surgeon whose stellar career spans more than 30 years.

Tracy has devoted herself to serving children, families, and those most in need through her work with schools, nonprofits, and community organizations. She is the founding moderator of the St. Joseph's Center Junior Auxiliary and the IHM Summer Service Program.

Residents of Waverly, the Bannons have five children and eight grandchildren.

Teddy Michel also embodies the Spirit of the Sisters of IHM through a life dedicated to faith, service, and community.

As director of the Ignatian

Volunteer Corps of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Michel inspires adults age 50 and older to put their

faith into action through service with local nonprofits.

For further information on

attendance or sponsorship for this year's IHM Sisters Celebration, call (570) 346-5431.



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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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MISSION MESSAGE

The Catholic Church in Venezuela Needs Our Help

By Shannon Ruiz
Diocesan Director,
Pontifical Mission Societies



When the ground shook beneath Venezuela on the evening of June 24, it did so twice: A 7.2-magnitude earthquake was followed — just 39 seconds later — by a 7.5-magnitude mainshock. Together, they unleashed destruction not seen in that country in more than a century.

More than 4,000 have lost their lives. The numbers are still moving, and the full scale of the tragedy has yet to be counted. Thousands more are injured. Tens of thousands are missing. In the coastal state of La Guaira — declared a disaster zone — entire city blocks have been reduced to rubble. In Caracas, the Cathedral stands damaged among the many churches that bore the force of the quake.

But even as the earth was still trembling, the Church was already at work.

Parish doors swung open across the archdiocese to shelter families who had nowhere to go. Caritas Venezuela activated its network in every affected diocese, gathering information and coordinating relief. Archbishop Raúl Biord Castillo of Caracas walked through the rubble of his churches and, rather than lament what was lost, pointed to what remained: the people helping one another. “Amidst all of this,” he said, “we must all form a great network of solidarity to help those brothers and sisters who are suffering material losses. Human life is what is most important.”

Pope Leo XIV, moved by the suffering of the Venezuelan people, has already sent an initial emergency donation through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity



A young man reacts amid the rubble of a destroyed building in La Guaira, Venezuela, June 25, 2026, following 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that rocked the country June 24. (OSV News photo/Gaby Oraa, Reuters)

— and the Vatican has made clear this is only a beginning, with further assistance to follow as the local Church identifies needs on the ground.

Father Ricardo Elías Guillén, National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies Venezuela, was on his way to La Guaira — the hardest-hit area — when he spoke with the US National Office. “The priests are safe,” he said. “But many parishes have been severely damaged, and much will need to be rebuilt.” And among the dead are children and young people who were part of the Missionary Childhood Association — the Pontifical Mission Society that nurtures the faith of the youngest members of the Church and channels their generosity toward children in need around the world. In La Guaira, some of those children are now among those the Church mourns.

On the ground, the immediate priorities are food, water, and medicine — supplies the local Church is already gathering and distributing. Father Guillén’s request was direct: help to keep buying what the people need most.

But before anything else, he asked for prayer. “This is a very hard trial for us,” he said, “for a people who already had so many difficulties. But we can only put ourselves in God’s hands, trust that He will sustain us, and console the people.”

That is the mission of the Church in Venezuela right now — to console, to serve, and to rebuild. It is a mission that belongs to all of us.

Please pray for the people of Venezuela. And if you are able, please give.

Bishop Bambera has invited all parishes of the Diocese of Scranton to consider taking up an optional second collection to assist those impacted by this tragedy.

All donations will be forwarded to the Catholic Relief Services Venezuela Relief Fund. You can also give online by visiting crs.org.



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National Eucharistic Pilgrimage ends in Philly

(OSV News) - As the 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage concluded amid the U.S.'s 250th anniversary, "the journey continues," Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez of Philadelphia said.

And, he added, "we're all walking to one place," with the path leading to the "powerful, transformative and lifegiving love of God."

The archbishop was the principal celebrant and homilist at the final liturgy for the pilgrimage, which took place July 5 at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia.

At the start of the Mass, Pope Leo XIV addressed the faithful in a pre-recorded video message.

The pilgrimage traveled through most of the nation's original 13 colonies - spanning 18 dioceses and archdioceses - since its May 24 launch.

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Prayer Requests for Priests

The Daily Prayer Request for Priests schedule is as follows:

July 16, Monsignor Constantine Siconolfi; July 17, Father Shawn Simchock; July 18, Father Robert Simon; July 19, Father Joseph Sitko; July 20, Father Phillip Sladicka; July 21, Father Stephen Stavoy; July 22, Father Scott Sterowski; July 23, Jesuit Father Daniel Sweeney; July 24, Saint Joseph Oblate Father Raymond Tabon; July 25, Father Philbert Takyi-Nketiah; July 26, Father John Terry; July 27, Father Fidel Ticona; July 28, Father Peter Tomczak; July 29, Jesuit Father Sean Toole; July 30, Father Daniel Toomey; July 31, Father Rawel Toppo; August 1, Pope Leo XIV; August 2, Bishop Joseph C. Bambera; August 3, Father Sudhir Toppo; August 4, Monsignor David Tressler; August 5, Father Jeffrey Tudgay, V.E.; August 6, Father Anthony Urban; August 7, Father Dias Antony Valiamarathungal; August 8, Father Brian Van Fossen; August 9, Monsignor Neil Van Loon; August 10, Father Shinu Vazhakkootathil John; August 11, Father Joseph Verespy; August 12, Father John Victoria; August 13, Saint Peter Priestly Fraternity Father Matthew Vierno; August 14, Father James Walsh; August 15, Passionist Father Mark Ward; August 16, Monsignor Christopher Washington; August 17, Father Seth Wasnock, V.E.; August 18, Father Donald Williams; August 19, Father Bryan Wright; August 20, Holy Cross Father Michael Wurtz; August 21, Father Michael Zipay; August 22, Father Joseph Adonizio; August 23, Saint Peter Priestly Fraternity Father Zachary Akers; August 24, Father Patrick Albert; August 25, Father John Albosta.

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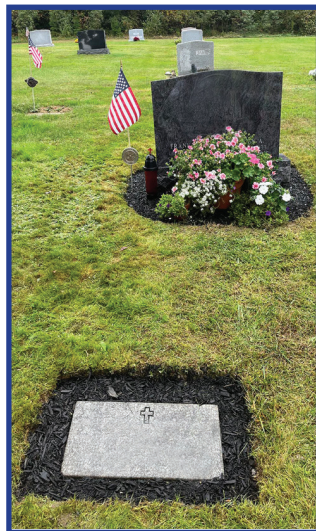
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Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese of Scranton

Monthly Meeting of the Lay Carmelites — JULY 18 & AUG. 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, Laffin. For more information, contact Chris at (570) 239-8094.

Luzerne Knights Statue Dedication — JULY 19, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus in Luzerne; revered statue monument rescued from a fire at St. Hedwig's Church in Kingston in 2023 will be blessed and dedicated at the entrance of St. Hedwig's Cemetery in Larksville. Dedication service begins at 2 p.m., led by Father Michael Boris; refreshments follow at St. Ignatius Loyola Parish in Kingston.

Weekly Pierogi & Soup Sale — JULY 19 & 22, sponsored by SS. Peter & Paul Church, 1309 West Locust St., West Scranton; sale of homemade pierogi and various soups held each week following the church's Sunday morning Mass at 11 a.m. and Wednesday morning Mass at 9 a.m. Cost: pierogi, \$10/dozen; soup, \$8/quart. For more information, call the St. Ann Basilica Parish office at (570) 342-5166.

St. Joseph Fraternity of Third Order Secular Franciscans — JULY 19 & AUG. 16, Lay Franciscan Canonical Order gathers on the third Sunday of each month; meetings hosted from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary/Chapel, 1880 Highway 315, Laffin. All interested men, women and visitors are welcome. For more information, contact Michele Sisak, OFS, at (570) 807-7996, or visit the Facebook page.

Weekly Bereavement Support Group Series Sessions — JULY 20-AUG. 10, sponsored by St. John Neumann Parish in Lords Valley; bereavement support group

meets on four consecutive Monday afternoons from 2 to 3:30 p.m. in St. John parish hall, 705 Route 739, Lords Valley. Weekly gatherings address topics dealing with the grief process to enable participants to find healing following the loss of a loved one. All are welcome; advance registration required at stvgriefgroup@att.net or by calling the parish office (570) 775-6791.

Bi-Weekly Rosary-Making Workshop — JULY 22 & AUG. 5, hosted by St. John the Baptist Parish, 126 Nesbitt St., Larksville; lessons in the creation of homemade Rosaries are offered every other Wednesday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the parish church basement. All men and women are welcome to attend and learn the art of Rosary-making for Rosaries to be distributed throughout the world. All materials are free of charge; class teacher is Barbara Morris. For information, call (570) 287-0555.

Vacation Bible School: "God's Wonder Lab" — JULY 27-31, hosted by St. Nicholas-St. Mary Parish in Wilkes-Barre; held each day from 9 a.m. to noon. Open to all children entering grades kindergarten thru fifth. Activities include outdoor games, singing & dancing, Bible stories, arts & crafts, and science experiment demonstrations. Registration fee: \$25 per child; sibling discounts available. For more information, contact Sister Elizabeth Kovacs at (717) 712-7084 or email: sisterlizk@yahoo.com.

Summer Youth Music Camp — JULY 27-31, hosted by Gate of Heaven Parish, 40 Machell Ave., Dallas; music camp for children held daily throughout the week beginning at 9 a.m., concluding with a Youth Liturgy on Sunday, Aug. 2, at 9 a.m. in Gate of Heaven Church. Camp is open free of charge to young singers ages 8 to 15; camper

gatherings include singing/choir rehearsals, games, lessons, crafts, snacks, and other activities. For information & registration, contact Gate of Heaven Parish at (570) 675-2121, or goh@goholv.org.

Church Trip to Sight & Sound Theatres Production of "Joshua" — JULY 28, sponsored by Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, 313 First Ave., Jessup; bus excursion to Sight & Sound

Theatre Lancaster departs 7:30 a.m. and returns approximately 7 p.m. Cost: \$195 per person (\$145, children 12 & younger), includes roundtrip motorcoach transportation, admission to live stage performance of "Joshua," and buffet dinner at Hershey Farms Smorgasbord. Paid reservations required in advance; contact Holy Ghost Church at (570) 489-2353.

Continued on Page 30

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Catholic Happenings Around the Diocese

25th Annual Lebanese-American Food Festival — AUG. 7-9, hosted by St. Joseph Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, 130 North St. Frances Cabrini Ave. (off lower Jackson Street), West Scranton; event held on the church grounds Friday & Saturday, 4 to 9 p.m., and Sunday, 1 to 7 p.m. Featuring homemade Lebanese/Middle Eastern foods & pastries and traditional American picnic food favorites; includes gift baskets & cash raffles. For more information, call (570) 343-6092 or visit the Facebook page.

Cash Bingo — AUG. 8, hosted by St. Maria Goretti Parish in Laflin; bingo games held from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. (doors open at 10 a.m.) in the parish hall, 42 Redwood Drive, Laflin. Admission cost: \$25 (in advance) or \$30 (at door), includes 20 games. Regular game prizes of \$100; prizes for special games (\$5 each) range from \$300 to \$1,000. Event also includes basket raffle, bake sale & cash drawing; food and beverages available for purchase. For tickets, call the parish (570) 655-8956.

Secular Discalced Carmelites Meeting — AUG. 9, monthly meeting of the Holy Annunciation Secular Community of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS); the community gathers on the second Sunday of the month, from noon to 4 p.m., at the Oblates of St. Joseph Seminary in Laflin. New members are most welcome. For more information, contact Gina Romancheck at (570) 956-9272.

"Theology on Tap" Series — AUG. 11, SEPT. 16 & OCT. 13, sponsored by the Catholic Community of Epiphany Parish, Sayre; events begin at 6:30 p.m. at Sam's Bar & Grill in Sayre. Open to youth adults, ages 21 to 40. Cover charge: \$5; additional drinks and meals are available for purchase.

Assumption Vigil Prayer Gathering: "Rosary on the Lawn" — AUG. 14, hosted by Mary, Mother of God Parish in North Scranton; Rosary devotion celebrating the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins 6:30 p.m. on the parish grounds, 316 William St., Scranton, followed by Mass in Holy Rosary Church. Those attending are asked to bring their own lawn chairs. For more information, call (570) 342-4881.

Knights 20th Annual Golf Classic — AUG. 17, sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 9832; hosted at Lords Valley

Country Club, 1004 Hemlock Farms. Registration and light breakfast at 7:30 a.m., followed by golf tournament (scramble format) with 9 a.m. shotgun start. Awards program & barbecue luncheon follow play. Cost: \$150 per golfer; registration required by Aug. 3. For information/registration, contact Bryan Bolehala at (201) 874-8060 or Bry3336@gmail.com.

Monthly Parish Bingo — AUG. 19, sponsored by the Our Lady's Guild of Our Lady of Victory Parish in Tannersville; bingo held on the third Wednesday of every month. Games hosted in the church hall, 327 Cherry Lane Road, Tannersville; doors open at noon. Bingo game cards cost 25 cents each; small snacks and refreshments will be served. Event is open to the public; for more information, contact Antoinette Martinelli at (570) 466-0830 or antoinette248@gmail.com.

Sacred Heart Enthronement Mass — AUG. 25, sponsored by the Scranton Diocesan Enthronement Guild; celebrated at 7 p.m. at Divine Mercy Parish in the Minooka section of Scranton. Principal celebrant: Father Dan Toomey, Enthronement Guild spiritual moderator; concelebrated by St. Joseph Oblate Father Paul McDonnell, host pastor. Sacred Heart Music Ministry begins at 6:45 p.m.; light refreshments follow the Mass in the parish center. For more information on home Enthronements, call Maria Pappa, Guild coordinator, at (570) 241-8172.

34th Annual Parish Golf Tournament — SEPT. 11, sponsored by Our Lady of Victory Parish, Harveys Lake; hosted at Stonehedge Golf Club in Tunkhannock. Player fee: \$120 per golfer. For more details and registration information, contact the parish at (570) 639-1535.

Continued on Page 31

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 of Scranton

St. Lucy's Drive-Thru Pasta Dinner — SEPT. 17, sponsored by St. Michael Parish, Scranton, in conjunction with The Italian Colony of St. Lucy; held from 3 to 6 p.m. in the parking lot of St. Lucy Church, 949 Scranton St., West Scranton. Dinner cost: \$15, includes penne w/meatballs, salad, bread, and two biscotti. St. Lucy's "famous" pasta sauce available for sale. For ticket information, call Joe Guido (570) 955-7469.

Annual Parish Altar & Rosary Society Birthday Tea — SEPT. 27, honoring the 75th Anniversary of Gate of Heaven Parish in Dallas; annual event will be held from noon to 3 p.m. at Appletree Terrace at Newberry Estates, Dallas. Tickets cost \$35 and include dinner, desserts, coffee & teas, and musical entertainment by Changing Habits; event also features basket raffle and cash raffle drawings, and cash bar.

Scholarship awarded to La Salle graduate



Father Gerard McGlone, pastor of Queen of Angels Parish, Jessup, is pictured with Mary Ann Malos, the 2026 recipient of the Katie Sokoloski Gilroy Scholarship at La Salle Academy in Jessup, who will attend Holy Cross High School in Dunmore this fall.

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Parish presents scholarship to two students



PECKVILLE - Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Peckville proudly presented its Catholic High School Scholarship to Brody Zielinski and Myla Zielinski, graduates of La Salle Academy in Jessup.

They will attend Scranton Preparatory School in the fall.

The scholarship is awarded to 8th grade graduates who are parishioners of Sacred Heart of

Jesus Parish and who demonstrate scholarship, service, and embrace the value of Catholic education.

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Pictured, from left: Rev. Andrew Kurovsky, Pastor, Brody Zielinski, Myla Zielinski, Gayle Castellani, Pastoral Associate.

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