The Catholic Light
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

Weekly E-Newsletter

November 19, 2026

Catholic Social Services to operate Scranton's Code Blue shelter for second consecutive winter



As overnight temperatures dropped to a dangerous level with the wind chill last Friday night in the Scranton area, Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton once again opened the doors of Weston Field House, offering warmth, food and a safe place to sleep to 23 people (9 women and 14 men) experiencing homelessness.

For the second consecutive winter, Catholic Social Services has partnered with the City of Scranton and Lackawanna County to staff and operate the Code Blue Emergency Shelter, which can accommodate up to 50 people on nights when extreme cold creates potentially life-threatening conditions.

The need was unmistakable last winter.

Between December 2025 and April 2026, the Weston Field House shelter operated on 77 Code Blue nights, providing a total of 2,443 individual nights of shelter. What began with just 10 people seeking refuge on the first night quickly became a much larger operation.

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A 'Night of Peace' concert helps faithful prepare for Advent



As the Church prepares to enter the Advent season in the coming days, more than 300 people gathered at Saint Maria Goretti Parish in Laflin on Nov. 14, 2026, for an evening of music, prayer and reflection, taking time away from the busyness of everyday life to renew their faith and focus on the coming of Jesus Christ.

The ‘Night of Peace’ concert featured award-winning Catholic singer-songwriters Sarah Hart and Francesca LaRosa, who shared songs and personal stories designed to inspire hope, encourage prayer and help those in attendance grow closer to the Lord and Our Lady.

Through music, storytelling and opportunities for the faithful to sing along, the evening offered participants a chance to pause, reflect and find peace as they approach the Advent season.

“There is something that happens when we play music and when we listen to music and when we sing,” Hart said following the performance.

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Father Michael Piccola, former Diocesan pastor, school principal, dies at age 74



The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, will serve as principal celebrant of a Pontifical Concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial for Father Michael J. Piccola on Friday, Nov. 20, at 11 a.m. in the Church of Saint Joseph at Saints Cyril & Methodius Parish, 604 North Laurel St., Hazleton.

Father Piccola died Sunday, Nov. 15, at the age of 74, after faithfully serving as a priest of the Diocese of Scranton for 48 years.

Born June 26, 1952, in Hazleton, son of the late Michael and Rose Giallanardo Piccola, Father Piccola was a graduate of Hazleton

High School and attended The University of Scranton, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1974.

He began his priestly formation and education at Saint Pius X Seminary, Dalton, and completed his theological training and preparatory studies at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md.

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Sisters of Christian Charity bring formation program back to Wilkes-Barre



Sister Jane Frances Poccia had already gone to college and was working as a data analyst.

Sister Philomena Fasolka imagined herself getting married, having a large family and settling down on a farm.

And Miss Therese Gasser, at 19, had already mapped out her college plans, future career and the family she hoped to have.

For each young woman, the initial thinking about the future looks very different from the life she is now exploring. For all three, learning to listen to God has meant being willing to reconsider what they once thought their lives would be.

The three young women are now living at the Saint Nicholas Convent in Wilkes-Barre as they discern their vocations with the Sisters of Christian Charity.

Sister Jane Frances, 27, and Sister Philomena, 19, are novices, having advanced into a stage of formation in which they deepen their understanding of religious life. Miss Therese is a postulant – an earlier stage in which she and the congregation continue to discern whether she is called to become a Sister.

Their presence marks an important development for the Sisters of Christian Charity: the return of its formation program to Wilkes-Barre, where the Sisters first established their American motherhouse in the 19th century.

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Bishop hosts pizza party for Rosary poster contest winners



The creativity and faith of many young artists in the Diocese of Scranton Catholic School System were celebrated Nov. 12, 2026, as winners of the Diocese of Scranton's inaugural 'Our Lady, Queen of Peace' poster contest gathered for a special pizza party with the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton.

The students, representing Catholic elementary schools throughout the Diocese, and their families first enjoyed a tour of the Cathedral of Saint Peter before gathering at the Diocesan Pastoral Center for an afternoon celebration and special recognition.

Kristen Donohue, Diocesan Secretary for Catholic Education/Superintendent of Catholic Schools, congratulated the students and praised their creativity, attention to detail and thoughtful artwork, noting how difficult it was for judges to select winners from the 1,400 entries.

"We're here to celebrate you," Donohue said. "All of the judges said it was incredibly difficult to pick winners."

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Pike County parish breaks ground on Veterans Monument wall



On Sunday, Nov. 8, 2026, Saint Vincent de Paul Parish held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Veterans Monument Wall which will be constructed in front of the church along Route 739.

Father Edward Casey, Pastor, blessed the site and Darren Brown, who is serving as chairperson of the project, presided over a short ceremony.

During the event, Joseph Brice read the names of more than 100 veterans whose names will be on the monument. Active duty Staff Sergeant Katherine Lance and her daughter participated in the groundbreaking ceremony. Her husband, Sergeant First Class Walter Brown, is currently on a year-long deployment.

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'For the unity of the Church': During in-flight presser Pope Leo says ordaining married priests could cause division



Pope Leo XIV said he believes ordaining married men to the priesthood would cause division in the Church during an in-flight press conference on his return flight from Peru Nov. 16 that included discussion of Pope Francis' Latin Mass restrictions and revealed more details about how his lung cancer was diagnosed.

During the roughly 45-minute press conference at the start of the 12.5-hour flight from Lima's Callao Air Base, Peru, Pope Leo said one of the top priorities of his pontificate is to promote unity in the Church and that he believes the power of prayer aided his recovery from his "rather significant" October surgery.

The pope also spoke about how being an American, or as he described it, "a gringo," has shaped who he is today, as he wrapped up his 12-day apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina, and Peru, the latter of which firmly claims him as "a Peruvian pope."

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U.S. Bishops approve annual Day of Prayer for racial justice



The nation's Catholic bishops have approved a motion to designate the last Sunday in October as a day of prayer for racial justice.

The decision was determined by a vote Nov. 18 amid the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' annual fall plenary, held Nov. 16-19 in Baltimore.

A total of 180 bishops voted in favor of the observance, with 15 voting against and seven abstaining.

Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, chairman of the USCCB's Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, presented the action item for consideration, saying the establishment of such a day "creates sacred space for reflection, repentance and the conversion of hearts, fostering deeper reconciliation within the body of Christ and across our communities."

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U.S. Bishops promote Intercontinental Guadalupe Novena and 'One Tilma, One Heart' initiative



On the first public day of their fall plenary assembly, the U.S. bishops heard a presentation on how the U.S. Church is participating in the Intercontinental Guadalupan Novena to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which will take place in 2031.

On Nov. 17, Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, who is vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, explained the Guadalupan event of 1531 and its account in Nahuatl, known as Nican Mopohua, before he addressed the historical context of the Spanish conquest, the Virgin's encounter with St. Juan Diego and the meaning of certain symbols on the tilma, or cloak, which has Our Lady's image miraculously imprinted on it.

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U.S. Bishops vote to advance canonization cause of teenager from Philadelphia area



Meeting in Baltimore for their annual fall plenary assembly, the members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Nov. 17 offered overwhelming support for a canonization cause for a Pennsylvania teenager who died from terminal brain-stem cancer. Her cause is expected to be opened soon.

Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, as chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, presented to the body of bishops, detailing the heroic suffering and faith of Maria Middleton, who died in 2020 at age 18.

Born in 2002, Maria Middleton's family guided and gave witness to the importance of a relationship with God. She expressed early

in her short life a love for the Marian and Eucharistic devotion, attending Eucharistic adoration starting at age 3 with her mother.

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Catholic Ministries Appeal reaches 69% of goal



To date, the 2026-2027 Catholic Ministries Appeal has raised more than $3.08 million - or approximately 69% of its $4.5 million goal. That amount reflects the generosity and commitment of parishioners supporting the vital Catholic ministries of our local Church.

The Diocese of Scranton extends its gratitude to the thousands of donors who have already made a gift or pledge. Every contribution helps sustain ministries that serve individuals and families, strengthen parishes, educate young people and spread the Good News of the Gospel.

The Catholic Ministries Appeal supports Vocations, Seminarians and Retired Clergy; Catholic media and communications; Parish Life initiatives; Catholic Social Services; Catholic education; as well as Parish Faith Formation and Social Justice Grants.

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