



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON
300 WYOMING AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

March 1 & 2, 2025

Dear Parishioners of Queen of the Apostles Parish,
Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish,

In this weekend's Gospel for the Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jesus warns us not to focus on the splinter in someone else's eye while ignoring the wooden beam in our own, calling each one of us to be humble and have a deeper commitment to living as true followers of Christ. In this passage, Jesus is speaking to our need for an inner transformation that reflects outward in how we relate to one another.

Over the last five years, the Diocese of Scranton has been working to create vibrant expressions of parish life rooted in the life of Jesus Christ through our *Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process*. As we strive to be a "mission-driven" church, we must acknowledge and confront the significant challenges we face together, including a fewer number of parishioners, aging buildings and infrastructure, financial challenges, and a diminishing number of priests.

With this in mind, I write to inform you that Father Phil Sladicka, Pastor, Queen of the Apostles Parish, has notified the Diocese of his intention to retire. We are so thankful for his 49 years of dedicated and faithful service to the Church of Scranton.

In recognition of all our Church faces, I am directing that the parishes of Queen of the Apostles, Avoca, and Sacred Heart of Jesus, Dupont, be brought together in a linkage, with a single Pastor. This new linkage will be effective beginning in July 2025.

Your Pastoral and Finance Council members have acknowledged this linkage will take careful planning and both parishes will participate in the discussions about the particulars of linking under one pastor. This is not a consolidation, although your discussion may lead to that at some point in the future. With the Grace of God, all involved in this linkage will continue to serve and minister to our Lord and His Holy People.

By necessity, linked parishes need to work together closely and are encouraged to work towards combining Parish Pastoral Councils and establishing common committees where possible. Please know this decision is just the very first step in a process that will require the involvement and engagement of all of you, our faithful parishioners. There will be questions and choices that will need prayerful discernment. A team with members from both parishes, assisted by Diocesan staff, will be created to accompany and guide the linkage process. Professionals in pastoral formation, financial planning, communication, and engineering are ready to assist in any way necessary.

While I know change is never easy, be assured of my deep gratitude for all that you and your families have shared, and continue to share, in furthering the mission of the Church. During this 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, let us choose hope, trusting in God's providence as we walk together along the path of faith and love that Jesus has laid out for us.

Be assured that you are in my prayers as this process towards a new hope-filled future begins.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

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