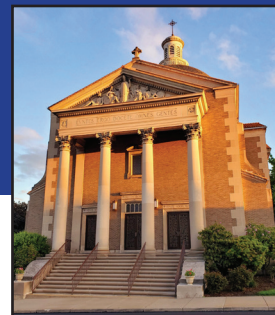
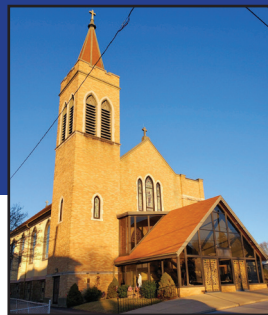


NOTICE OF COMMUNICATION TO PARISHIONERS OF BLESSED SACRAMENT AND HOLY CROSS PARISHES

MAY 31 & JUNE 1, 2025

For the last five years, the Diocese of Scranton has been working proactively to address the realities of our local church while striving to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming decade. The Diocese created its *Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process* in order to create vibrant expressions of parish life rooted in the life of Jesus Christ.



This planning process addresses the ongoing needs of parishes through the lens of four distinct priority drivers:

- Vibrancy of Parish Life (Mass Attendance & Sacraments)
- Condition of Facilities
- Financial Viability of a Parish
- Distribution and Availability of Clergy

When a concern regarding one or more priority drivers is present in a parish, or deemed critical by the needs of the parish or diocese overall, the Diocese of Scranton looks to make modifications to parishes in a proactive way so that the Gospel can be announced and the Church's sacraments celebrated in vibrant parish communities.

Blessed Sacrament Parish and **Holy Cross Parish** initially came together in a linkage under the leadership of one pastor more than a decade ago. Over the last year, representatives from both parish communities have been engaged in open dialogue regarding ways to better work together and grow together in faithfulness to Christ and His Church.

In recent years, demographic changes have resulted in a sustained decrease in Mass attendance between both parishes. Between 2019 and 2024, Mass attendance has decreased by 30 percent overall, from an average of 879 people attending Mass each weekend in 2019 to 619 attending Mass each weekend in 2024. In regard to finances, Blessed Sacrament Parish has reported a financial loss for the last three years. While the parish does not have any outstanding bills or Diocesan assessments, it has been struggling to pay its shared costs for clergy benefits and rectory expenses, including utilities and office supplies.

In the spirit of the *Vision 2030* process, conversation and consultation has taken place within the parish communities regarding the future of **Blessed Sacrament Parish** and **Holy Cross Parish**, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Discussions regarding parish priority drivers began with the Joint Parish Pastoral Council of Blessed Sacrament & Holy Cross Parishes on **May 16, 2024**. Since that date, parish representatives met and studied all priority drivers on the following dates: **June 20, July 25, Sept. 26, Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Jan. 16, Feb. 27, March 13, April 3 and April 10**.
- On **March 8, 2025**, Father Scott Sterowski wrote a letter to all parishioners, which was included in the weekly bulletin, regarding the possibility of consolidation beginning July 1, 2025. Father Scott also spoke at all weekend Masses regarding the proposal.
- Over the course of several weeks, information on all parish priority drivers were provided to parishioners via weekly bulletins:
 - **March 15 & 16**: Parish Life Statistics
 - **March 22 & 23**: Financial Information
 - **March 29 & 30**: Infrastructure Needs
 - **April 5 & 6**: Frequently Asked Questions on Consolidation
- On **April 24, 2025**, a Parish-wide Information Session on Consolidation was conducted at Saint Anthony of Padua Church in Throop. The meeting featured a presentation of data and allowed all parishioners to ask questions and provide feedback on consolidation plans. A total of 65 parishioners from both parishes attended the session.
- As part of the planning process for consolidation, all parishioners were invited to submit potential names for the newly consolidated parish between **April 26 - May 12, 2025**. The top suggestions were forwarded to Bishop Bambera.
- On **May 6, 2025**, Bishop Bambera consulted the Diocesan Presbyteral Council (a consultative body of priests from throughout the Diocese) regarding the consolidation of Blessed Sacrament Parish and Holy Cross Parish. Following a presentation of data, the Presbyteral Council voted in unanimous agreement to the proposal.

As a result of this conversation and consultation, on **May 15, 2025**, Bishop Bambera signed a formal decree (which is a document that formalizes a decision within the Church) to best address the spiritual needs of the faithful as well as the needs of the Diocese of Scranton. The decree contains the following information:

1. Blessed Sacrament Parish, with its sole worship site of Saint Anthony of Padua Church, 215 Rebecca Street, Throop, will be consolidated with Holy Cross Parish, with its sole worship site of Saint Patrick Church, 200 Delaware Avenue, Olyphant, **effective July 1, 2025**.
2. The name of the newly consolidated parish will be **Blessed Carlo Acutis Parish, pending his canonization, after which time the consolidated parish will be Saint Carlo Acutis Parish**.
3. As a result of this consolidation, **Saint Patrick Church** will be designated as the principal church of the newly consolidated parish and **Saint Anthony of Padua Church** will be designated as the secondary church of the newly modified parish.

According to Church law, diocesan bishops alone have the power to “erect, suppress or alter parishes” but can only do so after speaking to the Presbyteral Council and consulting parishioners. In this case, Bishop Bambera has determined that the newly modified Blessed Carlo Acutis Parish has more than adequate resources to serve the liturgical and sacramental needs of parishioners.

The full text of the official decree regarding the consolidation of Blessed Sacrament and Holy Cross Parishes is available on the *Vision 2030* page of the Diocese of Scranton website (dioceseofscranton.org) and is available upon request from Father Scott Sterowski.