

*Cardinal Justin F. Rigali*  
*Archbishop of Philadelphia*  
**PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS**  
*Diocese of Scranton*  
*August 31, 2009*

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on this occasion.

With the resignation of Bishop Martino as Bishop of Scranton, I have been appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese. This appointment is by its nature temporary.

As the Apostolic Administrator I would like to open my remarks by offering Bishop Martino the expression of deep gratitude for all his pastoral service to the People of God in the Diocese of Scranton. The life of a bishop finds him intimately bound to the People of God who make up the Diocese that he is called to serve. Bishop Martino's resignation comes after much prayer and reflection. His decision also carries with it a deep concern for the well-being of this local Church, with its clergy, religious and laity. How will they best be served in their journey of faith? I am certain that such thoughts emerged in the Bishop's heart as he struggled with his own health issues and the needs of his people.

Bishop Martino has served the Diocese of Scranton for the past six years. He has faced many challenges during this time. Yet, undoubtedly, his greatest legacy to the Diocese of Scranton is and will be his invitation to the faithful to enter into a deeper relationship with God through prayer, and in particular through a renewed devotion to the presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. This remains a blessing for all.

Bishop Martino, thank you. May God bless you for your efforts and keep you in his care.

I would also like to express gratitude to Bishop Dougherty, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Scranton for the past fourteen years and a priest of the Diocese for over 52 years. His contributions to the administrative work of this diocese are innumerable and span many decades. His ministry as a pastor and as a bishop has touched the lives of countless numbers of people throughout the Diocese of Scranton and beyond.

Bishop Dougherty, thank you. May God bless you in the years ahead.

I wish likewise to acknowledge the presence of Bishop Timlin, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Scranton. He too has served the Diocese well both during his time as Bishop and in the years that have followed. Thank you, Bishop Timlin.

On my part I am grateful to the Holy See for this temporary assignment as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Scranton. It is an honor for me to serve during this time of transition as we await the appointment of a new Bishop. As Apostolic Administrator I am blessed now to have a special spiritual relationship with this local Church.

Understandably, given my responsibilities in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and elsewhere, it will be difficult for me to be personally present to you as much as I would like to be. For this reason I have asked Monsignor Joseph Bambara to serve during this time of transition as my Delegate with all the faculties of a Vicar General. Many of you know Monsignor Bambara. He is currently pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Mary of Czestochowa Parishes in Archbald. He brings a wealth of experience to this task, both administratively and pastorally. He will oversee the day-to-day operations of the Diocese and be my link to the Diocese in my absence. He will be collaborating very closely with me as the Church of Scranton moves forward.

I am grateful to Monsignor Vincent Grimalia and Father Joseph Kopacz who have served as Bishop Martino's Vicars General. I am also grateful to the many priests who served as Bishop Martino's Episcopal Vicars.

To assist in the work of the Diocese during my time with you, I am announcing the following appointments in addition to my appointment of Monsignor Bambara as my Delegate, as already mentioned.

- Monsignor Vincent Grimalia is appointed to serve as full-time director of the *Called to Mission and Holiness* program. It is my understanding that the people of the Diocese of Scranton have invested a great deal of time and effort into this process of parish restructuring and renewal. While I am aware of the fact that the process at times has been difficult, I also know that your efforts will help to maintain a vibrant Catholic presence in the eleven counties of the Diocese of Scranton for years to come. I am asking Monsignor Grimalia now to devote even more of his time to help with the many details of the implementation process, which he has done so well, and future pastoral planning. In addition I am asking him to continue to serve as Director of Continuing Education for Priests pro tem.
- Father Richard Loch is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for Priests pro tem.
- Father Philip Altavilla is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for the Northern Region of the Diocese pro tem.
- Father Mark Balczeniuk is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for the Eastern Region of the Diocese pro tem.
- Father John Polednak is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for the Southern Region of the Diocese pro tem.
- Monsignor Neil Van Loon is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for the Western Region of the Diocese pro tem.
- Monsignor Joseph Kelly is appointed as Episcopal Vicar for Hispanic Ministry pro tem.
- Father Anthony Generose, while remaining Judicial Vicar, is appointed Vicar for Consecrated Life pro tem.

My friends, as you know so well, the Diocese of Scranton is richly blessed. It is blessed first of all with a people of vibrant faith: our clergy, religious and laity. In that faith and openness to Christ we find our hope.

The Diocese of Scranton is blessed with good and faithful priests who do the work of the Church, even as they face various difficulties and challenges, including changing parish structures.

The Diocese is blessed with parishes in which the faith of the People of God has been celebrated and lived for many years; communities that serve the needs of so many, that offer healing and compassion, and that seek to build up the Kingdom of God in our midst.

The Diocese is blessed with the presence of four respected Catholic Universities as well as with wonderful Catholic schools and religious education programs in which our faith is taught and nurtured.

And the Diocese of Scranton is blessed indeed by the tapestry of people who make up the Church of these eleven counties. We are blessed by the presence of old and new immigrants in our parishes and neighborhoods who invite us to celebrate with them their heritage, their lives and their faith.

Change and transition are always challenging to embrace. Yet, we know that life goes on. In the Church, life always goes on with joyful anticipation of the future because the Risen Christ journeys with us. And life will go on here in the Diocese of Scranton with apostolic succession and the continuity of Catholic faith.

May we use this time of transition as a period of prayer and expectation. I invite you to work together in pursuing charity in truth. As a Diocese we look to Mary, the Mother of God, for consolation and help.

Finally, I would say that so much of the meaning of Christianity is captured in the words of Saint Paul: "Bear one another's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ" (*Gal 6:2*).

Thank you and God bless you.