



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS *in the*
ARCHDIOCESE of NEW YORK

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Scholas USA Service Program Empowers Students in the Archdiocese of New York

BRONX, NEW YORK— The 2025 Scholas USA Service Program recently made a profound impact on students throughout the Archdiocese of New York, bringing together 13 Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim secondary schools to engage in leadership, service, and social change. This year, Scholas clubs were established in participating schools, where student-led groups focused on addressing pressing social issues, developing action plans, and fostering dialogue to create positive change within their communities.

Scholas is a global educational and social initiative established by Pope Francis in 2013 with the mission of fostering unity, dialogue, and active citizenship among young people from diverse backgrounds. Operating under the guidance of the Vatican, the program cultivates leadership skills in youth, empowering them to become catalysts for social change while bridging cultural, religious, and economic divides.

This year's program launched in September 2024 with the "Communities in Motion" initiative, which encouraged students to develop a greater awareness of the social and political systems that shape their lives. Through this initiative, students have critically reflected on their roles in the world and deepened their sense of social responsibility.

For students in Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim schools across the New York metropolitan area, Scholas has become an integral part of their educational journey. The program not only complements academic learning but also supports a mission to nurture students morally and spiritually. Through participation in Scholas, students are equipped with the tools to become scholars and leaders who actively serve their communities and live out faith-based values.

Christian Pagan, a senior at St. Raymond High School for Boys, shared how the program has influenced his leadership perspective: "Scholas has taught me that true leadership

isn't just about me; it's about serving others. It's about us as a collective." He added, "Scholas has shown me that change isn't something we hope for—it's something we create."

Placing a strong emphasis on the leadership potential of students, William Lessa, Principal of Cardinal Hayes High School, highlighted the importance of student-driven action: "It's up to you to change the world and make it a better place," Lessa said. "We all live under the same roof and worship the same God, so it is important for us to work together, and you, young people, to be change agents."

The program's impact was also underscored by Linda Dougherty, Associate Superintendent for Catholic Identity and Secondary Schools, who spoke about the power of action: "This is the year of hope, and it's not just a word—it's about trusting in the future with action. Go out and change the world because you will make a difference." Her remarks served as an invitation for students to take ownership of the future and create lasting change, reinforcing Scholas' core mission of inspiring young people to lead by example and serve with purpose.

As Scholas continues through June, the initiative remains a catalyst for further advocacy and service within the Archdiocese. "The Scholas Service Project is not just a conclusion but a launching point for continued engagement," Scholas officials remarked. "We will continue working with school-based clubs through June, offering resources and connections to further opportunities for advocacy and service."

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Photos and Captions



ADNYSE1: Students showcase their talents while celebrating diversity and community at the Scholas USA Service Program encounter at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx on March 21, 2025.



ADNYSE2: Carmen Leon, Secondary Schools Administrator for the Archdiocese of New York, joins Scholas USA alumni and volunteers at the Scholas USA Service Program encounter at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx on March 21, 2025.



ADNYSE3: Jorge Balero, a Scholas USA Leader, engages students in a "recreo activity" focused on the calling of young people in New York during the final day of the Scholas USA Service Program encounter at Cardinal Hayes High School.



ADNYSE4: Linda Dougherty, Associate Superintendent of Catholic Identity and Secondary Schools, greets Scholas USA alumna Danielle Conte before the closing ceremony of the Scholas USA Service Program encounter at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx on March 21, 2025.



ADNYSE5: Christian Pagan, a senior at St. Raymond High School for Boys, shares how the Scholas Service Program has shaped his perspective on leadership.



ADNYSE6: Students present their reflections on their calling to serve as leaders in their communities during the closing ceremony of the Scholas USA Service Program encounter.