

Bishop's Appeal 2014 Homily

Hello, friends, this is Bishop David Ricken. I am happy to be with you through this recorded message, as together we grow in Sharing the Light of Christ. Today, I'd like to share with you how your participation in the Bishop's Appeal can make that happen.

It has been almost a year since Pope Francis was elected as our new Holy Father. What a year it has been, as he has challenged us to share the light of Christ with all we meet. As people of faith, Pope Francis asks us to go out and to make a difference in people's lives. I have been challenged by his message, and I am sure many of you have been as well.

Today we hear that same calling in our scripture readings. Isaiah the prophet promises our light will break forth like the dawn when we share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked, and help those in need.

We are called to share the light of Christ, as individuals and as God's people, the Church. I am so grateful for the generosity of many who give long hours of service and are generous contributors to our various food pantries and homeless shelters.

Through the Bishop's Appeal, we are able to do things that are difficult to do by ourselves. For example, through Catholic Charities, we literally help to give children a home through our adoption services. We assist people who may be in danger of becoming homeless by helping them deal with addictions. We also help families with budget counseling to keep them from losing their home.

Isaiah reminds us to care for our own as well, and we do that in a special way with our children. Through a gift to the Bishop's Appeal, we impact the lives of thousands of children each year by providing help and support for those who lead and direct our religious education programs and our Catholic schools. We help parishes collaborate in areas such as youth ministry, and offer wonderful experiences such as time at Camp Tekakwitha.

Jesus tells us in the gospel that we are the light of the world. We should not put a light under a bushel basket, but we place it on a stand for all to see. In so many ways, our gathering together for Sunday Mass strengthens that light within us. We hear the challenging scriptures and we receive the grace of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. We are then strengthened to go out from Mass on a mission to perform works of mercy.

The priests and pastoral leaders of our diocese are in conversation with me to discuss how we invite people back to Sunday Mass. How do we share the light of Christ with others? Through the Bishop's Appeal, the Department of the New Evangelization is working hard to provide training, inspiration and resources for our parishes and parishioners to be more comfortable to share the light of Christ within them.

We are the light of the world, and we are called to share the light of Christ with others. I invite you to join me in Sharing the Light of Christ through your participation in this year's Bishop's Appeal. Your gift to the Appeal allows us to support the priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders who serve in so many ways. Please consider making your generous gift today. Your support allows us to do what Pope Francis and the prophet Isaiah call us to do in helping to feed the bodies and the souls of those we meet.

Thank you for all you do, in your family, in your parish and in our diocese, to embrace the call to holiness. Our parishes are becoming more engaged and alive as a result. Thank you for your continued prayer, for your service and for making a gift to the Bishop's Appeal, so we can continue Sharing the Light of Christ.

At this time, I would invite your priest or pastoral leader to share a bit more about how you will be able to participate by making a pledge to this year's Bishop's Appeal. May God bless you and your family abundantly in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.