

2020 Bishop's Appeal Homily
February 2, 2020 – Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This is Bishop Ricken. I am so happy to be with you today via this recorded message.

Today we celebrate a special feast of hope, called the Presentation of the Lord. It is a feast that comes 40 days after Christmas and traditionally is a day for the blessing of candles. The Christ Child came as a light into the world, and continues to give hope to our world today.

We know our world is in need of hope. The prophet Malachi speaks of the coming of the Lord's messenger who will purify God's people, refining them like gold or silver. The story of God's people in the scriptures, as well as our own personal stories, is that we continually need to be purified and come to more authentic worship of God and love of neighbor.

There are many struggles in our lives today. There is pain in our families and in our world. So many relationships are broken and hurting. We watch loved ones turn to opioids and other means to alleviate their pain. Our interactions with others have become so polarized that we refrain at times from discussing anything of importance. We are certainly in need of hope and healing.

Into our world comes the Christ Child. On this feast of the Presentation, He comes bringing hope and light, not just to Mary and Joseph, but also to Simeon and Anna, and now to us. He comes not taking away all of our struggles, but He gives us grace and strength to face them.

Our children, like the Christ Child, are a primary source of hope for our world. As we watch our children grow and develop, we nurture them in such a way that as they rise to adulthood, they are able to bring renewed hope to our families and communities.

Our theme for this year's Bishop's Appeal is *Rising in Faith*. Through the power of Christ and our faith in Him, we are able to be instruments to allow hope to spring up and rise. As Catholic Christians, we desire to allow Christ to raise us up to bring his hope to a hurting world. We do that individually and in our families, and we also do that together as Church.

As the Church in the northeastern Wisconsin, the Diocese of Green Bay supports children and families in so many ways. Through Catholic Charities, we help parents to rise in faith through the adoption process. Through our youth ministry programs, we strive to connect our young people with Jesus so that they may truly encounter Him in a personal relationship. Through our faith formation programs and Catholic schools, we assist parents in nurturing their children to grow in wisdom and in grace.

When you make a gift to the Bishop's Appeal, you become part of this effort to help our children and families to rise in faith to meet the challenges of our world today. Through our service and outreach efforts, we extend a hand to those in need to raise them up by bringing them Christ's message of hope.

Thank you for all you do to rise in faith through your service. Together, we can do even more. That is why today I invite you to prayerfully consider making a generous gift to the Bishop's Appeal.

At this time, I would like to invite your priest or pastoral leader to share some more information about how you can participate by making a pledge to this year's Bishop's Appeal.

Thank you so much, and may God bless you abundantly that we may rise in faith together with Christ in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.