

2021 Bishop's Appeal Homily

Hello, brothers and sisters in Christ! This is Bishop Ricken, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today via this recorded reflection, and to invite you to participate in this year's Bishop's Appeal.

We are living through tough times unlike any others in our lives. We certainly can relate to Job in the first reading, as he says "I have been consigned months of misery." We are now entering into the twelfth month of this pandemic. During Job's troubled nights he asked the question "When shall I arise?" We ask a similar question as we wonder when life will return to normal.

I know this has been a very difficult year. All of us have been under a lot of stress in different ways. Some have lost loved ones. Some have not been able to visit loved ones for extended periods of time. Health care workers have been under tremendous pressure in caring for those who are ill. Teachers have worked hard to find ways to connect with their students. Parents have had to be so flexible in family life. All of us have lived with the anxiety that COVID has brought.

Yet, here we are. As people of faith, we know that God is always walking with us, no matter what is going on. Because we are a people of hope. That hope helps us rise each morning to face a new day with a sense of purpose and meaning. We rise with God, knowing that God will give us the strength to face the challenges of the new day. Simon Peter's mother-in-law was a person just like that. We hear in the Gospel how she trusted Jesus, grasped his hand, and got up. As she rose up, she was healed, and she began to serve them.

Her example of faith is a good one for all of us. You and I, we seek Jesus, we take his hand, and he helps us to get up, to rise again, and to serve.

I see examples of that played out over and over again across our diocese. It's happening in families, it happens in our hospitals and clinics, it happens in our schools.

In a particular way, we as the Catholics of the Diocese of Green Bay have been finding new ways to rise to meet the challenges of this time. We've been very intentional in finding ways to help parishioners and parish leaders to rise up to stay connected to others; to rise up to bring healing to others. We have helped parish leaders remain engaged with parishioners through the Reconnect to Inspire groups, through webinars with other leaders, and through special opportunities of prayer.

Through Catholic Charities, we have been intentional about reaching the underserved northern areas of our diocese with resources to give people hope. We have worked hard to help parents and students to grow in their faith even during these very challenging days.

I have found new ways to reach people, especially through the media such as the Sunday TV Mass, to help them find hope in Christ. Through these efforts we rise again as people of faith, of hope and of love. In connecting to Christ, we rise again to serve His people.

All of us have probably felt a little bit like Job at some point this past year. Jesus, however, wants to raise us up from the fear and the anxiety, and to allow us to live in His powerful presence.

Through the Bishop's Appeal, we are able to reach out in Christ's name to bring hope and healing to our communities. Now more than ever, our world needs Jesus Christ present within us to bring His peace, His comfort, and His healing.

Through the efforts supported by the Bishop's Appeal, we are able to join together to share the Gospel message as we serve God's people.

Will you join me in these efforts today by making a generous gift to the Bishop's Appeal? Together we rise again by bringing Christ to our communities across Northeast Wisconsin. I invite you to do just that through your prayerful support of this year's Bishop's Appeal. Your gift will help us to continue to reach out to offer hope to a world in desperate need of it.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this message. I now ask your priest or pastoral leader to share with you how you can participate by making a pledge to this Appeal.

And may almighty God bless you, your family, your parish and keep you safe and healthy, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.