

BISHOP RICKEN

One of the most faith-inspiring things for me to witness is the way God uses times of great turmoil to do amazing things. Whether it's parting the sea while the Hebrews fled slavery, or Daniel escaping the lion's den, or at the very heart of our faith, Jesus rising from the dead, God always brings light to darkness and restores hope.

In many ways, this is the Paschal mystery, and we are living it right now in the Diocese of Green Bay. This past year has brought great difficulty to many people, individuals and families, and entire communities, but God has a way of using the darkest hours to do the most amazing things. No matter what pain stirs in the world around us, with the love of Jesus in our hearts, we rise again.

When I look around, I'm awed and inspired by the remarkable things being done in the name of the Catholic Church by faith-filled people throughout the Diocese, and it's all fueled and funded by you and your generosity, giving to the Bishop's Appeal.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit is at work among us.

There are so many stories I want to share that show how your gifts to the Bishop's Appeal are touching lives right now, when it's most needed, perhaps needed more than it has ever been in our lifetimes. Together, we are rising to the moment and connecting people with the love of Jesus. Let me share four examples of how we are doing Christ's work during these trying times.

First, we are connecting the underserved with much-needed mental health services through Catholic Charities. Through the difficulties of this past year, Catholic Charities has launched a new and expanded model to reach more people in more places.

JESSE

Every dollar that is given to the Bishop's Appeal, we're able to allow people who are financially struggling to receive care, to receive hope from our services, and not have to worry about providing financial money to hold the appointment, and they don't have to worry about me trying to sell them something.

All I'm looking to do, all we're looking to do is to meet them where they're at, give them hope, give them inspiration, and if life is beating them down at the moment, if they're full of anxiety or frustration, if we're able to be present in that moment and allow God to guide the conversation, I think that's what we're looking to do.

BISHOP RICKEN

I'm so moved by the good, compassionate and much-needed work Catholic Charities is doing right now, and by their commitment to bring these services to everyone in the far reaches of our Diocese.

I'm also inspired by a diocesan program called "Reconnect To Inspire" that has been touching lives and moving hearts, reconnecting people with Christ's light during a time when connection has been so very challenging.

ROSE

The "Reconnect To Inspire" experience in Winneconne and Omro went for four weeks during August, and the impact that it's had within our community has really been a good kickstart to our Fall offerings, whether it's youth faith formation or adult faith formation.

It's provided people comfort and empowered them to get on board with the virtual learning, or maybe the courage to enter into a small group setting within our church, or even just to get back into the pews at Mass.

BISHOP RICKEN

As followers of Jesus, we share His love for every person, and we want to make sure no one is lost, no one feels forgotten or abandoned. The pandemic has been particularly challenging for our youth, whose formative years have been so disrupted. Your contributions to the Bishop's Appeal have been vital in connecting with this critical and vulnerable population. So many easily could have been lost, but through the love of Jesus and the movement of the Holy Spirit, they're experiencing the concern, care, and the compassion of the Catholic Church.

MEG

When people are in middle school, and high school in particular, who you are then really shapes who you are going to be as a person for the rest of your life. So, I think that instilling Catholic beliefs in them right now, informing them as a morally good person and a good Catholic is so important because it shapes who they're going to be.

These are the years that they're being formed, and so it's really important to form them correctly.

BISHOP RICKEN

Of course, we've all found it challenging to stay connected with the faith during the past several months. Some wondered whether churches would even survive, but we're actually finding new ways to thrive, new ways to reach more people.

Using resources made available in part through the Bishop's Appeal, we began televising Mass last spring. It has proven to be a powerful way to connect with people who often feel lost or forgotten, particularly those who are home-bound, in nursing homes and in prison.

JUSTINE

I have taken many phone calls from family members of people who are home-bound that have said, my mother or my father can't get to Mass every week, this is such a wonderful gift, that

the Diocese is able to do this, and the fact that Bishop is the person who is having Mass is so impactful to them.

You know, I also want to just tell you that at Channel Five, they took every single card and letter that they got and they hung it up on the wall so that everyone there could see the impact that they were having.

This is making a difference in people's lives.

BISHOP RICKEN

This might be the most important Bishop's Appeal in the last few generations. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it has taught us that the world needs the Catholic Church now more than at any point in our lifetimes.

The world needs the love of Jesus.

As Catholics, we are being called to rise up and to bring that love to our neighbors and our communities. I ask you to prayerfully consider how the Holy Spirit calls you to share your gifts and your resources at this critical time.

Please listen and respond generously to the voice of Jesus in your heart.

Like the Hebrews entering the Promised Land, like Jesus on Easter morning, like the Apostles on Pentecost, together, We Rise Again!