

2022 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. This year, our theme is *Hearts Filled with Hope*.

This certainly is a time for hope. In the past two years, we have been through so much, and yet we've never let go of our hope in Jesus Christ. Christian hope focuses our minds and hearts on Jesus, who is with us always. We sometimes get down and discouraged, but our faith fills us with the hope that comes from Him.

Simon Peter and his friends were probably pretty discouraged after a night of fishing with very few results. In fact, they had caught nothing at all, all night long. When Jesus came, Simon Peter simply did what Jesus asked, and their boats were filled with fish.

Our faith in Jesus is like that. We try and we try our very best, but often it is only when we listen to Jesus, and follow His lead, that we see results. Christian hope is knowing how much better life is when we follow Jesus. It gives us strength and direction to face the challenges of life.

One of the reasons for my hope is your generosity to the Bishop's Appeal. My heart is filled with gratitude, as I reflect on your amazing spirit of giving, and your past support fills my heart with hope for our future.

We have two key goals in our Diocese. The first is to increase vocations; the second is to help more people become disciples by discovering Christ in their lives.

We do this through faith formation in our religious education programs and Catholic schools. Across our Diocese, we have found new ways to engage parents to help them form a community of disciples in their own home. With support from the Bishop's Appeal, many parishes are working very intentionally to form parents in the faith as well as their children. This certainly gives me hope, as we raise up young people and parents to be leaders in the Church.

Another source of hope for me is our ongoing engagement of the Hispanic communities in our Diocese. Your support of the Bishop's Appeal allows us to help parishes in various areas of northeast Wisconsin to serve people of Hispanic origin. We have one recently ordained priest and one seminarian who have come from these communities. Wouldn't it be great if we were able to double or triple those numbers? I am filled with hope that it will happen.

Through your support of the Bishop's Appeal, we are able to reach out and care for people in need through the counseling services of Catholic Charities. At a time that has been especially challenging, Catholic Charities has been there for families and young people in need of the love of Christ. This is why my heart is filled with hope.

In our first reading today, the prophet Isaiah has a profound experience of hope. Even though the prophet is aware of his own unworthiness, he receives healing from the angel of God. In response, Isaiah is able to hear God's call to be one sent by God. "Here I am," he says, "Send me."

This is the response of a disciple. God shares love and healing with us, and our hearts are filled with hope in response. We are then ready to answer God's call.

Today, I invite you to join me in efforts to bring renewed hope to the people of our area. Your participation in this year's Bishop's Appeal is a very real and concrete way of doing just that. Please know whatever you are able to give is greatly appreciated. Your gift will bear much fruit and will fill hearts with the hope that comes from our faith in Jesus.

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 the Bishop's Appeal.

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