

Bishop's Appeal Homily 2024

Hello brothers and sisters in Christ. This is Bishop David Ricken. I am so grateful to be with you today at Mass via this recorded message and to invite you to participate in this year's Bishop's Appeal. The theme of this year's Bishop's Appeal is *Living the Eucharist and Sharing the Gifts*.

Thank you for being here and gathering with your parish community. We are so privileged to be able to share in the Word of God and the Eucharist at Mass. It is so good that we do what Jesus asks of us.

Today we hear the wonderful story of Jesus visiting the home of Simon Peter and Andrew. Once He heard that Simon's mother-in-law was sick, Jesus went right to her and healed her. What an amazing encounter with Jesus! Immediately following that healing encounter, Simon's mother-in-law in turn began to serve others with her hospitality. That is a model for all of us to follow.

We gather together at Mass and encounter Jesus in the Eucharist. That encounter with Jesus here at Mass has such a power to change us. Sometimes we are comforted, sometimes we are challenged, sometimes we are strengthened and inspired, and sometimes we are healed. Jesus does all of that and more through the Eucharist. In receiving those gifts, we leave Mass as better people.

Like Simon's mother-in-law, our encounter with Jesus leads us to sharing the gifts God has given us. For her, it was the gift of hospitality, and I bet it included a delicious home cooked meal! That was her way of responding and serving Jesus and the apostles, who would later go and serve so many others.

In a sense, that model is what the Bishop's Appeal is all about. Having encountered the Lord in the Eucharist, we then share our gifts to assist those who serve. Your generosity to the Bishop's Appeal allows the people who serve as part of our diocesan mission teams to directly assist and serve the many people who minister in our parishes, our Catholic schools, and our faith formation ministries.

We have been helping more and more people encounter Jesus through experiences like the Entrust Retreat, where over a thousand people have learned how to be missionary disciples. We are raising up disciples in our Catholic schools and faith formation programs to help our young people pray about a call to the vocation of priesthood, consecrated religious life, or marriage.

In a particular way, right now we are focusing on encountering Jesus in the Eucharist. So many parishes have been promoting my Five Alive practices of the Mass, Lectio Divina, Eucharistic Adoration, confession, and the rosary as ways in which we encounter the Lord. We have been renewing the formation of those who serve at Mass in our parishes as readers, musicians, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

So many good things are happening here in our diocese. The Holy Spirit is definitely at work! Thank you so much for your past support of the Bishop's Appeal which makes so much of this possible. Again, this year, I ask for your renewed support. If you have never participated in the past, would you consider a gift this year? If you have been a faithful supporter, I humbly and gratefully request your continued participation. We encounter Jesus as we are *Living the Eucharist and Sharing the Gifts* that God has given us.

Now I ask your priest or pastoral leader to explain how you can make your pledge.

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