

2025 Bishop's Appeal Homily

Hello, my brothers and sisters in Christ! This is Bishop David Ricken, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today via this recorded reflection and to invite you to participate in this year's Bishop's Appeal. This Feast of the Presentation of the Lord Jesus is a beautiful celebration, coming 40 days after Christmas. It's a real treat to celebrate the Feast on Sunday this year.

This Feast is a time to celebrate Christ's presence among us. The light of Christ, which we celebrated during Christmastime, continues to shine in our midst. As Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus in the temple, they encountered two people of deep faith. Simeon and Anna were both in the temple praying, waiting for the coming of the Lord. They were people of hope, who knew that the Lord would be coming, and they spent many years in prayer as a result. When the Christ Child appeared that day, they were overjoyed. They knew that God was indeed at work as they met the child Jesus along with Mary and Joseph.

Sometimes I feel a similar way as I see the working of God in our midst. Sometimes I am a bit caught by surprise, really, as I witness the strong presence of Jesus. I see His presence as I travel around northeastern Wisconsin. There are so many signs that give me hope. I see Christ's presence through children placed with families through the gift of adoption. Christ's light so often shines through our students as they learn about Jesus in our faith formation programs as well as our Catholic schools.

Last summer's experience of the Eucharistic Congress, both in the pilgrimage through our Diocese and in Indianapolis, was a real sign of hope for our Church and world. I am moved as I pray with many people in their parishes as we gather for Mass to worship God. In so many ways, our Church is *Bringing Hope to the World* as we bring Jesus Christ to others. As we deepen our understanding of the Holy Mass and the Eucharist, we also grow in seeing Christ at work in the community around us. This gives me a lot of hope.

Today, I invite you to participate in *Bringing Hope to the World* through your participation in this year's Bishop's Appeal.

The Bishop's Appeal allows us to support children and adults and allows God to bring hope and the presence of Christ to our world. Elders, like Simeon and Anna, who have prayed and sacrificed for so many years, are able to see the fruits of their prayers and their offerings in the young people who are brought closer to Jesus. Families are able to grow and receive support as they raise their children just as did Mary and Joseph. Children are impacted by the witness and generosity of so many of you across our diocese.

Through the Bishop's Appeal, we bring hope to the world as we give witness to Christ in our communities. Christ's light continues to be so needed in our world today.

Thank you to everyone who gave a gift to the Bishop's Appeal in the past. Your gifts are now helping people discover Jesus and the hope which He brings! Please consider making a gift of \$500 or more to the 2025 Bishop's Appeal to become a member of the Crozier Society.

If you have not given in the past, will you please join me in sharing your gifts to support the Bishop's Appeal this year? Please consider making a gift of \$60. For only \$5 a month, you can help our diocesan ministries share the hope of Jesus with more and more people. Please know whatever you are able to give is greatly needed and appreciated.

As we bring hope to the world and live the Eucharist, we are formed to share the gifts of hope we have received. Ultimately, the gift we share is Jesus Himself. Your gift will help us to make Christ present to others.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this message and invitation. 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, and your parish as we continue *Bringing Hope to the World*. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.