



Sharing Our Faith

Recorded homily given at all
Masses on April 28/29

What would it have been like to sit at Jesus' feet and hear Him teach? That's just what the people are doing in the image on the poster for this year's Bishop's Appeal—eyes riveted on the engaging figure before them, ears wide open to the sound of His voice, hearts burning within them at the words that He speaks. "Faith comes through hearing," St. Paul wrote. He might have had scenes like this in mind.

A close look at this image makes it easy to imagine that Jesus' hearers did not keep what they heard to themselves. Like countless others after them they went and shared the faith they took away from the time spent listening to Him speak. Word got around. Soon enough some Greeks came by and said, "We want to see Jesus."

And on it went. And on it goes. Faith comes through hearing, and it leads to sharing. The faith shared way back then came down through the centuries to us. We too can sit at the Good Teacher's feet and hear the very words that He spoke. They are ours to share with those who have not yet heard or who have not listened carefully.

Paul the Apostle spent the rest of his life sharing the faith that came to him in a sudden flash of light. In the reading from Acts today he reports to the Apostles "how he had seen the Lord" on the road and "how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus"—as he

continued to do in Jerusalem, where "he debated with the Hellenists, [who] tried to kill him." As Paul's life unfolds in the pages of Scripture, he never ceases to share his intimate personal experience of the Risen Christ—with fellow believers in the fellowship of the infant Church as well as with antagonistic adversaries in the public square.

Sharing Our Faith is the theme of the 2018 Bishop's Annual Appeal. It's called the Bishop's Appeal because I'm asking you as individual parishioners in every parish to contribute directly to diocesan ministries overseen by the bishop that no individual parish has the means to take on. Let me give you some examples.

Funds from the Bishop's Appeal supported Hermiston parishioner Steve Garza's years of training for the priesthood at St. John XXIII Seminary near Boston. Once Steve is ordained deacon this June 28th, he'll have one more year to go before he comes home to Oregon to share his faith with us as a priest of Baker—no small return on our investment. And the Lord of the Harvest continues to call men from among us to follow the path Steve has trod. They too need help every year from the Bishop's Appeal.

Like our seminarians, your children and grandchildren depend on the Bishop's Annual Appeal too. Diocesan catechetical workshops equip religious education teachers in your parish to share the faith with your children so they'll be ready to receive the sacraments. Diocesan youth retreats and youth conferences bring together middle- and high-school students from many parishes to share the faith with

like-minded peers they would not otherwise get to know.

Adult faith formation benefits from diocesan gatherings which the Bishop's Appeal sponsors or from superb on-line Catholic resources which it subsidizes, including FORMED, available free of charge to every household in parishes that enroll.

It turns out that when you donate to the Bishop's Annual Appeal you're indirectly donating to your own parish as well. Your contribution to the Appeal comes back to you as a roundabout contribution to your fellow parishioners.

In the past few years you have given an increasingly generous response to the Bishop's Annual Appeal, even though we set the goal a bit higher each year. We do so in an effort to reduce our dependence on donors outside our borders and thereby to establish greater financial self-sufficiency as a diocese. Grants from such national agencies as Catholic Extension and Catholic Home Missions, for example, regularly total around 25% of diocesan operating income – not far behind the 30% brought in by the Bishop's Appeal. The more we can pay our own way, the freer we are to chart our own course.

Our freedom has limits, however. Like Jesus' hearers on the poster for this year's Appeal we must constantly return to sit at our Master's feet and listen to His words anew. For, as the Gospel tells us today, "a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine." Jesus is the vine; you and I are the branches. Apart from Him we can do nothing. But if we remain in Him, He will remain in us, and we will become His disciples. When we share our faith, we will bear fruit that glorifies the Father.