



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

P.O. Box 23825 • Green Bay, WI 54305-3825 • 920-272-8194 • FAX 920-435-1330

August 12, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I near the first anniversary of my installation as twelfth bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay, I wish to express my deep gratitude for the generous welcome you've shown me and for the deep commitment towards building the Kingdom of God that you so clearly manifest each and every day in such a multitude of ways. God is alive and well and the Church is vibrant and healthy in Northeastern Wisconsin!

I've been asking you this past year, "What shall be our legacy?" And, when I visit your parishes and schools and talk with both the lay faithful and pastoral leadership, I consistently hear your desire that we reach out to our inactive brothers and sisters, to our fellow Catholics, both young and old, who are no longer regularly participating in our Eucharistic assembly. We are each of us members of the one body of Christ. Therefore, we cannot help but notice the absence of our fellow Catholics and feel the pain of separation from them.

For these reasons, I'm delighted that the Diocese of Green Bay now has the opportunity to participate as a pilot diocese to air television commercials inviting people back to our Catholic faith. Beginning next Lent, Northeastern Wisconsin will cooperate with www.CatholicsComeHome.org to air three television commercials inviting people back to the Church. These commercials were created in conjunction with the Diocese of Phoenix, where over 92,000 people (equivalent to 12% of that diocese) returned and were regularly attending Mass more than six months later. If we conservatively estimate that five percent of inactive Catholics in Northeastern Wisconsin might return to their faith, after viewing these commercials and being welcomed by our parishes, we may soon find an additional 12,500 people worshipping with us.

You'll be hearing more over the coming months about the resources available to help your parish maximize this opportunity to welcome back inactive Catholics, to help newcomers inquire about our faith, and to enliven and deepen the faith of our active, faithful parishioners and staff members. Resources will include, but will not be limited to the following: tips on creating a Radical Welcoming System; help developing/improving your parish website; materials that can guide a Pastoral Council meeting on this topic; Liturgical aids; and formation opportunities offered explicitly for everyone ranging from Pastors to DREs to Receptionists. For now, please view the commercials at www.CatholicsComeHome.org. Feel free also to direct any feedback or questions to Dr. Kristina DeNeve, diocesan Director of Spirituality and Evangelization. She can be reached at kdeneve@gbdioc.org or 920-272-8304.

There is no better time than now to share our faith. As Pope Benedict XVI expressed in his second encyclical, "To come to know God – the true God – means to receive hope. We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God." We who have been blessed by a life transforming encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ are also charged with sharing what we've gained, this Good News, with others. I hope you share my enthusiasm over this new and exciting way to do just that.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David L. Ricken*

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay