Most Reverend Louis Tylka
Diocese of Peoria
Office of the Bishop

August 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"You will be my witnesses ⋯ to the ends of the earth." (*Acts 1*:8) These words, spoken by Jesus to His followers nearly two thousand years ago, resound with particular meaning in this moment in the life of our diocese as our soon-to-be-Blessed Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen is held up as a witness of Christ worthy of imitating.

I have chosen these words of Jesus as our theme for this year's Annual Diocesan Appeal. I hope this historic moment will renew in each of us a deeper commitment to being credible witnesses of Christ in the world today.

As I travel across the 26 counties of our diocese - confirming young people, celebrating regional Masses for our 150th Anniversary, blessing new parish halls and new school gyms, visiting our seminarians or speaking with our seniors - I am inspired and encouraged by your witness. So many are striving to instill the gift of faith in the next generation.

We should never underestimate the power of our example, of our witness! A college student at a Newman Center living out her faith publicly on campus can inspire her classmate to inquire about the Catholic Church and enter our OCIA program. The witness of a young man giving his life to Christ in the priesthood may inspire another to discern his own calling at the Emmaus Days retreat. A free Thanksgiving meal or a child's backpack provided through Catholic Charities speaks of Christ's love to a struggling mother more than any words ever could. A grade school student in our Catholic school remembers not only the spelling of the word "witness" but also the teacher who encourages her to grow closer to Christ and live fully as His disciple.

You are part of this "great cloud of witnesses." (*Heb* 12:1) Your prayerful and generous financial support of our Annual Diocesan Appeal sustains the vital diocesan ministries that serve the faithful and strengthen our Church. They provide ministry support that no single parish could accomplish on its own.
I invite you to join me in supporting this year's Appeal. Together, as disciples of Our Lord, may we give convincing witness to the love of Christ in our world today.

God love you, and God bless you!

+ Louis Tylka

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Bishop of Peoria

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