

My brothers and sisters, “we are disciples, sent by the Spirit,” and our job is to bring the good news to all the men and women in the world! And this good news is the news of God’s tremendous love for each person. This love of God is something felt in the heart, and experienced in our mutual care for one another.

Today, as we gather in celebration and thanksgiving for the Archbishop’s Annual Appeal, we are also celebrating the Feast Day of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Church! He was a man of great learning, but even more, he was a man of great love. When he felt the call to follow Our Lord as a priest in the Dominican Order, he encountered many oppositions. Even his own family tried to stop him from entering the Order. St. Thomas’ experience was like the experience of the apostles in the boat in today’s gospel reading from St. Mark. The wind was blowing hard against them. The waves of the Sea were tossing them from side to the other. They felt that things were out of control and they begged Jesus to do something for them!

Jesus is the one who calmed the raging sea and the wind that blew against them! He is the one who called them to have a greater faith! He brought them safely to the other shore where they would continue to follow the Lord and spread the good news! St. Thomas Aquinas, consoled by the Holy Spirit, was also led by the Lord to safely follow his vocation in spite of all the things that were against him.

In our first reading today, taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, we learn about our most ancient father in the faith, Abraham. Abraham lived by faith in God. God called him from his comfortable home in Ur, and lead him to the promised land. Abraham had never been there! He didn't know where God would lead him! But he trusted in God! This is faith — to walk with god in trust that he will guide us in good ness and peace to where we need to be.

“Faith,” the Letter to the Hebrews says, “is the realization of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

What do we hope for? Of course, we hope for the grace of salvation in our lives. We hope for the grace of the forgiveness of our sins. We hope that our loved ones will also enjoy heaven with us. But we also hope for what is good and right and true for every human being! We hope that the hungry will be fed, the naked clothed, the thirsty given to drink, and that those in mourning or gloom will see the great light of Christ! And, because we are “sent by the Spirit” we are a part of that great hope! Our actions, our decisions, our willingness to get in there and work with the grace of God is what makes faith come alive!

Our Appeal is one of the ways we do that! Through this appeal you know that good news is brought to the poor, that hungry people are

fed, that people are educated, that the elderly are tenderly cared for, and many, many children given hope for their own futures! And we make this happen together, united as Church, united as brothers and sisters in one mission!

I want to say thank you today. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Because you are generous, and you are loving, and I have seen the goodness of all that is accomplished because of this Appeal!

As we begin our 2017 Appeal I want to encourage you to go out boldly, with joyful hearts and great determination! We *are* doing God's work! We are making the world a better place — person by person and household by household! We are living our faith, realizing what we hope for, walking with God. And *He* will calm the storms before us, and allow us to fulfill His call to us as we are "sent by the Spirit."

May Our Lady of Guadalupe protect all of you and your families, and may she lead you all to her Son, the light of the world.