

Mike Heck Guest Speaker Talk 2024

Thank you, Father. And good morning, everyone! My name is Mike Heck. I am a proud Catholic, and I am a volunteer for the Annual Catholic Appeal.

When someone like me is asked to speak at a parish, it is a bit of a leap of faith - we could be assigned to speak at any parish in the city, in St. Louis County, or anywhere in the nine surrounding counties that make up the Archdiocese. But here I am with you, and I am grateful to be here at **(parish)**. You are a good parish; a generous parish; and I am here to thank you!

The scope of what you give to the needs in the Archdiocese are diverse, and immense. Over 50 ministries and offices are able to operate because of gifts to the ACA. And of course, I am also here to encourage your support this year for the ACA.

But like you, I hesitate to do so. There is much to fear. I fear because of:

- inflation, and maybe running out of money someday
- failing health
- not being able to support my family
- change around me - my employment, the Archdiocese, etc.
- Crime, human trafficking, war

There is much to fear. But do you know what I fear the most? The answer is kind of a "1A" and "1B".

- 1A - That the day I am called, will I go towards the pearly gates, or not? And,
- 1B - If I do, will I have the right answer? The answer to the question I expect Jesus to ask me as he meets me at the pearly gates.

That meeting might go like this: Jesus says, "Hi, Mike. I asked you to do one thing - to love Me, and to love one another. How did that go for you?"

And I think I will reply: "Well, Jesus, I tried, I really did. But at times I was a little afraid - there was a lot to be afraid of..."

Then what? As I think about it, Jesus might say, "Mike, be not afraid. How many times have I told you that? I did that for you so you would not be distracted by fear, but focused on love. To reach out in love."

To reach out in love to those in need:

- To the homeless, like those served by St. Patrick Center, where the number served is up 50% over the last three years
- To the refugees and immigrants, like the students from 16 different countries being educated at St. Francis Cabrini Academy
- To those who lack basic medical and dental care, especially in our rural counties, being served by the mobile medical and dental clinics
- To the mothers of the unborn, foster care and adoption services, Catholic education, the seminary, food pantries, and many more.

There is much need to "Reach Out in Love"!

The theme for the ACA this year is precisely that: "Reach Out in Love and fill every heart with hope." You can respond in many ways - pledge cards, texting, QR codes, calling the ACA office, online, scan to give.

I thank you for allowing me to be with you. I thank you for living our Catholic faith. And I thank you on behalf of those served by your gifts.

Please join me in prayers as I share with you the Annual Catholic Appeal prayer.

Lord God, we thank You for the untold blessings You have bestowed upon us. We offer these blessings back to You. We lay before You the labors and fruits of the Annual Catholic Appeal. We pray that our sole desire be to serve Your holy will. United as Catholics, let us be reminded of our baptismal call to follow our Lord, Jesus Christ, in His service to others. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Louis, pray for us!