



SHUTTERSTOCK



Bearing the Fruits of Faith – Renewing Hope and Generosity

BY BISHOP ERIK T. POHLMEIER

The cover of our magazine this New Year reflects the theme for the Bishop's Annual Stewardship Appeal (BASA): "Sharing God's Fruit." As I reflect on this theme, my thoughts begin with gratitude. God's abundant generosity surrounds us—if we have eyes to see it. Likewise, the generous response of so many faithful people in our diocese is ever-present. In my travels around the diocese, I witness the fruits of a life with God in countless settings. It is a privilege to support the creative and heartfelt ways you serve one another.

We will launch the BASA campaign in the spirit of the Jubilee Year of Hope the weekend of March 1-2. Pope Francis has called us to be Pilgrims of Hope, and we are invited to respond with renewed focus. The practices of Jubilee and pilgrimage have deep roots in our Catholic faith. Life itself can be seen as a pilgrimage—a journey drawing us ever closer to God's Kingdom. And as we make our way on the pilgrim journey, we are never alone; God walks with us.

Of course, every journey brings challenges. Hope allows us to move forward in the face of these struggles, helping us see beyond the moment of pain or difficulty. Strengthened by the promise of eternal life, we persevere. Yet, challenges can blur our vision, distracting us and consuming our attention. When this happens, we stumble.

That is why, during this Jubilee Year in 2025, I urge a renewal in prayer at every level. Take time to examine your personal prayer life and seek ways to strengthen communal prayer within your parish. While praying for the needs of our world is important, it cannot be the whole of our prayer. To persevere in hope, we need prayer that invites God to shape our minds and hearts. I encourage you to develop the habit of asking God to share his perspective on whatever you encounter.

Life moves faster and faster, with more demands placed on us every day. It's tempting to respond quickly, just to move past the moment, but this leaves us stressed and longing for relief that never comes. True relief comes only from God, the author of our lives. Deep prayer—choosing to turn to God first and foremost—can transform how we respond to life's

demands. By cultivating the habit of seeking God in the midst of daily life, we open ourselves to hope. God guides us moment by moment and points us toward our ultimate goal: heaven.

In addition to the spontaneous prayers we offer throughout our journey, we also need to pause and bask in God's goodness. Our churches are meant to be stops along the way—oases where we can be renewed in His presence. Spending time before the Blessed Sacrament is not a luxury but a necessity for peaceful living. God, who knows the human heart, designed us to hunger for what only he can provide.

God has much to say about how we live. Sometimes, we hesitate to ask for His perspective, perhaps viewing Him only as a judge. But we must remember that our God chose to enter the world as a Savior. He decided we were worth the sacrifice of His life on the cross. This same loving God walks with us and longs to speak to our hearts. Hope is found when we take the time to listen.

As we celebrate this Jubilee Year, I invite you to reflect on the pilgrimage of your life. Commit to a prayer life that listens for God's voice, and you will discover a richer, deeper faith. From this renewed faith, you will bear abundant fruit to share with others. 🌊