



January 23, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On February 22 our diocese will take up the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. This collection supports essential unmet pastoral needs in Central and Eastern Europe and areas of Asia formerly under Soviet control. Our assistance is vital to the growth and strength of the Church in these regions.

In addition to pastoral projects, scholarships and other initiatives, the collection supports Catholic organizations that work to ease the burdens facing those who live in the region. Many elderly residents of the former Soviet region of Georgia awoke one morning to find their pensions and life savings gone. Former doctors, lawyers and musicians now find themselves with the equivalent of \$50 a month to live on. This stipend doesn't even cover the cost of one loaf of bread per day, leaving nothing to pay for transportation, clothing or medicine. Collection funds are essential to keeping medical dispensaries and shelters open and ensuring that religious and lay ministers are available to help those in need.

In the neighboring Republic of Azerbaijan, Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Sisters of Charity run a homeless shelter with aid from the collection. In addition to providing bread, medical care and transitional housing at the shelter, the sisters visit the poor and elderly who are bedridden or too sick to travel to the city, helping to bring the light of Christ to those living in the darkness of poverty, illness and loneliness. The sisters combat the destruction brought on by 70 years of state atheism, which undermined Christian ideals and contributed to increased alcoholism and deterioration of the family unit.

For more information on the Church in Central and Eastern Europe and the projects funded by the collection, please visit www.usccb.org/nationalcollections. Please be generous in the collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe where *Christ, the Light, continues to illuminate the way*. Your support will truly make a difference. Thank you and may God bless you and those who are dear to you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Edward K. Braxton

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville

Please read this letter or print a synopsis of it in your bulletin and make appropriate announcements on the weekend of February 18-19, 2012. The collection is to be taken up on Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2012.

Envelopes for this collection should be in your parishioners' regular envelope packets. Please send the proceeds of this collection to the Chancery no later than Friday, April 13, 2012. Please make the check payable to "Catholic Diocese of Belleville" and indicate "Central and Eastern Europe" in the lower left-hand corner of the check. Your cooperation in forwarding the check by the requested date is appreciated.

Thank you so much for your cooperation and assistance.

Bulletin Announcement

Weekend Before the Collection – February 18-19

On Ash Wednesday we will take up the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. This collection supports Catholic organizations that provide food, shelter, medical care, catechesis and companionship for the lonely in a region still struggling in the aftermath of atheistic Soviet rule. Your donations help to restore the strength of the Church in the region. Please give generously.