**Sample Bishop’s Letter**

*May be read from the pulpit or inserted into the parish bulletins.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Soon, our (arch)diocese will take up the **Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe**. The collection offers a way for Catholics in the United States to stand in solidarity with those who experience the ongoing effects of living under communism.

Grants funded by the collection support pastoral projects, scholarships, and Catholic organizations working in areas formerly under Soviet control. The bishops and people of these regions still face enormous challenges in restoring church structures and in rebuilding the cultural and spiritual life of the community, tasks that are often complicated by a lack of religious freedom.

One funded group, a Czech association for women and children and the protection of unborn life (*Obcanske sdruzeni ONZ—pomoc a poradenstvi pro zeny a divky*), has worked for 23 years to reduce the rate of abortions in the Czech Republic. When the association opened its doors in 1990 after the Velvet Revolution, half of all pregnancies in the country ended in abortion. Through innovative counseling and support programs at six regional centers for women in difficult situations, the association has played a major role in reducing the abortion rate from 50 percent down to 20 percent. The centers work to protect the human dignity of both mothers and children, advocating for the right to life of the unborn.

Recently, the association experienced a crisis when the Czech government withdrew operational support for its programs. The Subcommittee on the Church in Central and Eastern Europe provided a critical bridge grant that allowed the association to continue its operations while searching for a permanent funding solution. In 2014, the Czech Bishops’ Conference announced that it would fund the association's operating expenses from its own budget, thereby guaranteeing the future of the association and its crucial work.

In order for projects like this one to continue, the collection needs your help. Please be generous. Your donation will continue to restore and build the future of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*(Bishop’s* *name, title, and signature)*

For more information on the Church in Central and Eastern Europe,

please visit *www.usccb.org* (search “Church in Central and Eastern Europe”).