



Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

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Office of the Bishop

August 23, 2014

Dear Pastors, Parochial Administrators and Pastoral Facilitators,

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has written to me and all the Catholic Bishops of the United States with great concern for the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, the cradle of Christianity. Our Church mourns the terrible suffering of Christians and other innocent victims of violence in Iraq, Syria and Gaza who are struggling to survive, protect their children and live with dignity in dire conditions.

Given the extraordinary nature of this crisis, Archbishop Kurtz has asked us to consider taking up a special collection to provide humanitarian relief and pastoral support for our affected brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Counting on your generosity in response to this pressing need, I authorize this collection in our diocese.

These funds will be used by Catholic Relief Services and other Catholic agencies working in partnership with the local Church to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs facing the people in Iraq, Gaza, Syria and surrounding countries where refugees have fled. These organizations have well-established partnerships with the Catholic Church in the region, which allow them to respond quickly and efficiently to victims in some of the hardest to reach areas. Collection funds will also be used to support Church programs to aid persecuted Christians and to respond to rebuilding needs of Catholic dioceses in the impacted areas.

Our Christian brothers and sisters and other innocent victims of the violence in the Middle East urgently need the assistance of the Catholic community of the United States. I ask that you take up this collection the weekend of September 6-7 or September 13-14. Please reference *Special Collection for the Middle East* in the memo of your check.

Thank you for your support of this special collection and for your continued prayers for the victims of this crisis.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois