



Most Reverend Louis Tylka
Diocese of Peoria
Office of the Bishop

March 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For more than 40 years, and in some countries more than 70 years, communism ruled Central and Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union's many republics. The Soviet Union stretched from Eastern Europe across central Asia and beyond to the Pacific Ocean. One of its former republics is Tajikistan, in central Asia. Bordering China to the east and Afghanistan to the south, Tajikistan is today the poorest of the former Soviet republics.

The country's economic challenges—along with a population that today is 98% Muslim—make Tajikistan a true mission country for the Church, because Catholics are few and needs are great. In fact, the Church's presence is so small that the Tajikistan Church is not part of a diocese with its own bishop but is an independent mission of the pope, administered by priests from the Institute of the Incarnate Word, a missionary order from Argentina. Along with the institute's order of sisters, the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, these priests faithfully serve the pastoral needs of the people through education and accompaniment. Despite its small size and relative poverty, this community has fostered the first two priestly vocations and ordinations of two Tajik men, as well as the religious vocation of a Tajik woman who professed perpetual vows with the sisters.

With critical support from the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, the sisters continue their mission by educating the children and providing them with instruction, school supplies, school uniforms, and the food they need to develop intellectually, spiritually, physically, and socially. Guided by their faith and this material support, the sisters witness to Christ's love while carrying out their works of mercy. You can participate in their success by donating to this special collection when it is taken up in our diocese, either by contributing at Mass or through your parish's e-giving platform.

Thank you for your help to restore the Church and build the future in Central and Eastern Europe.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✝ Most Reverend Louis Tylka
Bishop of Peoria

Please Note: Kindly read this letter at all the Masses the weekend of March 1-2, 2025. Please take the collection on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. Please send the proceeds from this collection to **The Office of Finance, Spalding Pastoral Center, 419 N.E. Madison Avenue, Peoria, Illinois 61603.**

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