**February 2023**

Dear Friends,

When we begin Lent on Ash Wednesday, we will also take up a collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

Communism in this region fell more than 30 years ago, but the Church still struggles to rebuild after decades of oppressive rule. This is especially true in the former Soviet republic of Moldova, which, despite its political independence, is one of the poorest countries in Europe.

The Diocese of Chişinău covers all of Moldova and the unrecognized breakaway state of “Transnistria,” currently occupied by Russian forces. Today the diocese contains 20 parishes and seven charity foundations that work to meet the spiritual and material needs of the people. This spirit of love for the most poor and needy is evident in Moldova’s generous response not only to the needs of its own people but also to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Working in cooperation with Caritas Moldova, the diocese has expanded its outreach and ability to reveal Christ’s mercy to Moldova’s vulnerable children and youth by establishing a network of care and support centers, where children and youth benefit from informal education programs in a safe, caring environment. The centers also help strengthen the parenting skills of mothers and fathers.

Your support and promotion of the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe is crucial to the success of ministries such as those offered by the Diocese of Chişinău.

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

Paz y bien,

**Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks**

Bishop of Joliet