



Office of the President

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Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
President

August 19, 2014

Your Eminence/Excellency:

It is with great concern for the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, the cradle of Christianity, that I write to you today. 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, I am asking you to consider taking up a special collection to provide humanitarian relief and pastoral support for our affected brothers and sisters in the Middle East.

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 and send your contributions to the USCCB Office of National Collections as soon as possible. Please reference *Special Collection for the Middle East* in your transmission. National Collections staff will provide detailed transmittal information to diocesan finance offices.

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

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops