



Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe

OFFICE OF NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

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“Believe in the power of the Spirit of Love!”

—Pope Benedict XVI, 2008 World Youth Day Address

Dear Editor/Communications Director,

For Jiri Buzek, a biophysicist who lived the first half of his life in communist Czechoslovakia, Christianity seemed irrational, obsolete, and counter-progressive. During a time when communism encouraged the persecution of Christianity, Buzek came to rely on science, which he felt held the key to the only source of truth.

After the collapse of communism in 1989, Buzek began to question his worldview and came to realize that science alone cannot resolve all of the important questions about life. As he continued to work towards his PhD in science, he began to study religion.

Buzek identifies the most important and decisive moment in his life as the moment when he came to know that “behind all the reality [of science] there is a mystery of the *Love of God*, which came to us in Jesus Christ, and which we are called to live in.” Buzek is now a candidate for the priesthood, studying in Rome.

The theme for the 2009 Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, “Believe in the power of the Spirit of Love,” is illustrated in Buzek’s story. The Spirit of Love cannot be examined in a test tube or proven in a lab, yet God’s love is powerful and can be felt in the hearts of those who believe—and it can even be recognized and accepted by those who were taught explicitly not to believe. In spite of the history of devastation and oppression in this region, God’s perfect love has sustained and strengthened the people and the Church, creating a new generation of believers while energizing those who clung to their faith through the darkest times.

The funds generated from this Collection support vital pastoral projects in Central and Eastern Europe that build churches; train and educate pastors and laypeople; publish Catholic newspapers; sustain orphanages; evangelize children, adults, and seniors; and provide scholarships to Catholic students. Please help us to ensure the success of this year’s important Collection by using resources available at www.usccb.org/nationalcollections. Please contact the Office of National Collections Promotions staff at 202-541-3346 or ncpromo@usccb.org with questions.

Thank you for your help in promoting this year’s Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. Help us share the spirit of love with our Catholic brothers and sisters throughout that region.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. James M. McCann, SJ

Director, Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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