

First International
Conference to assist
the Catholic Church
in the former Soviet Union

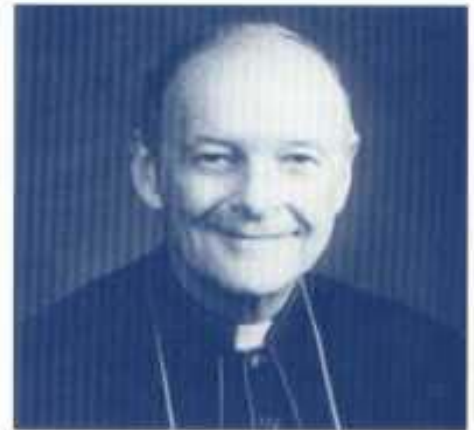
June 9 & 10, 1995
Holy Apostles Catholic Church
4925 N. Carefree Circle
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Only Catholic Church in Vologna (formerly used as a nightclub)



A Light From and On the East

Message



Dear Conference Participants,

The needs of the Catholic Church in the former Soviet Union are enormous. Catholics there rely on us, who have been so blessed with freedom and opportunity, to help them overcome the disastrous legacy of communism.

I commend the organizers of this first international conference for raising the awareness of Catholics in our country about the conditions of the Church in Eastern Europe. We need to have a greater understanding of the challenges faced by our brothers and sisters in the Faith who are now trying to make God's love known and alive in the East. Thus, the conference's theme — "A Light From and On the East" — was well chosen, bringing together in the United States a Cardinal and three bishops all recently appointed by the Holy See to lead God's people in establishing the light and love of God's presence there.

With this in mind, it is my hope that all those attending will return to their own parishes and communities spiritually renewed and with a greater awareness of the challenges facing the bishops, as well as a desire to help share the burden of those challenges in any way they can.

I express my full support and encouragement for all who partake in the work of this important conference.

With every good wish, I am

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Theodore E. McCarrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Theodore E. McCarrick
Archbishop of Newark
Chairman
Ad Hoc Committee to Aid the Catholic
Church in Central and Eastern Europe

A Light from and on the East

by Nick Krupakov

In the early spring of 1994 Father Michael A. Walsh, pastor of St. Thomas More, conceived the idea of a national conference to aid the church in the former Soviet Union. He proposed the idea to members of the parish. The response was enthusiastic. St. Thomas More Parish had already been somewhat familiar with Russia and the challenges facing the Church in Russia through Sisters who had been working in Russia and were now living in the parish, the visits of Archbishop Kondrusiewicz to the parish, and the youth the parish sponsored to go on a summer mission to Russia. Moreover the parish had sent shipments of religious goods and supplies to contacts there. St. Thomas More also sponsored 10 Russian youths to come to Denver for World Youth Day 1993. These and other factors were part of the background in sparking the inspiration for this first national conference to aid the Church in the former Soviet Union.

Approval for such a conference had to be sought from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee to Aid the Church in Eastern and Central Europe, headed by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, New Jersey. After receiving the endorsement, a committee was formed and planning proceeded. The committee decided on holding the conference on June 9 and 10, 1995, in Colorado Springs at the Holy Apostles Catholic Church which has space for about 2,000 people.

During this time of planning Father Blaine Burkey, O.F.M., Cap., of Hays, Kansas, editor of the *Siberian Newsletter*, and Father Al Bitz of Wimpleton, South Dakota, played key roles. Members of St. Thomas More's Queen of the Apostles Mission Association worked with Father Paul Wicker and a committee from Holy Apostles Church to bring the conference together.

Guest of honor and featured speakers will include the newly appointed Cardinal Kazimierz Swiatek, a former prisoner in the slave camps of Siberia for the first ten years of his priesthood; Archbishop Francis Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska; Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of Moscow, Russia; Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, New Jersey; Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J., of Novosibirsk; Bishop Jan Pavel Lenga, M.I.C. of Karaganda,

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Kazakhstan; Ted Flynn, author and humanitarian with extensive work in the former Soviet Union; Dr. Joanne Karpinski, professor at Denver's Regis University and former professor at Moscow State University; Msgr. George Sarauskas, director, Ad Hoc Committee to Aid the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe; and Rev. Werenfried van Straaten, O.Praem., founder, Aid to the Church in Need, Inc., Konigstein, Germany.

In addition to hearing firsthand from the Catholic bishops of Russia and others experienced and connected with the situation there, the conference hopes to explain how aid has and can be given. A series of workshops will be held. For example, Aid to the Church in Need,

headquartered in Konigstein, Germany, will have a workshop. Likewise, the Language and Catechetical Institute of Steubenville University, Ohio, which sends volunteers to Russia, will explain its program. The CoMission, headquartered in Colorado Springs has also been sending volunteers to Russia to teach the basics of religion. They will explain how they do this and what it entails. These are three examples of the seven to nine workshops planned. Anyone interested in the Church of Russia should find the speakers enlightening and the workshops very stimulating. Anyone interested in helping will find a way to do so.

An uplifting culmination to the already inspiration-filled days will be the final Mass on Saturday night. Concelebrated by the Cardinal, bishops, and priests present, and open to the public, it will be followed by a consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The theme of the conference is “A Light from and on the East.” The organizers hope that all those attending will be enlightened by the event and inspired to go back to their own communities and parishes to create a greater awareness and enthusiastic response to help not only by prayer but by extending a helping hand of friendship to parishes struggling for life and survival. Perhaps from these new Christian communities, helped by us in their hour of need, new springs of spirituality and missionary zeal will blossom as it did in the time of Cyril and Methodius, “So that from East to West a perfected offering may be made to the glory of His Name” (Eucharistic Prayer III). □