

## The Ash Wednesday Second Collection

Michael Sean Winters | Mar. 4, 2014 | Distinctly Catholic

The crisis in the Ukraine has brought home how important the National Collection for the Church in Eastern Europe remains. This collection will be taken up tomorrow, Ash Wednesday. The Catholic Church in Ukraine has a long history of persecution. Like its Orthodox brethren, it was persecuted by the communists but it has also been on the receiving end of hostility from some of the Orthodox brethren.

The Collection funds a variety of projects. An innovative "big brother" project is funded by the Church to help provide mentors for the nation's many orphans. They provide support to adopting families and foster care families as well. In Eastern Europe, only 50 percent of orphans survive to reach their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, which gives you some idea of the hardships they encounter. The Collection serves other at-risk populations, such as those in prison and in the military, providing chaplains and counseling.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the entire infrastructure of seminaries in Ukraine had to be rebuilt. In some eparchies, there are three applicants for every available slot in Catholic seminaries. The Collection also funds scholarships for Ukrainian students to study in Rome, to help rebuild the intellectual life of the Church in Ukraine.

So, tomorrow, when you think about yet another second collection, remember how much good your contribution can make in the life of our Catholic brothers and sisters in Ukraine. They have suffered enough. They are likely to suffer more. We can't change that, but we can alleviate some of the suffering.

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