

Application for the 2026 Pilgrimage for American Seminarians of Czech and Slovak Heritage

Pilgrimage dates: June 23rd - July 2nd, 2026

Pilgrimage Overview:

The **North American Pastoral Center for Czech Catholics** (NAPCCC) is sponsoring a 10-day pilgrimage to the Czech Republic (Czechia) in the summer of 2026 for American seminarians and priests of Czech or Slovak heritage who desire to deepen their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the Czech and Slovak Catholic heritage in North America. The NAPCCC will sponsor 4-5 American seminarians, priests, deacons and pay the bulk of their costs for this pilgrimage. Seminarians who are accepted will be expected to pay \$500 (or more, depending on their ability) toward the cost of the pilgrimage, plus any personal expenses they accrue. Seminarians who apply should be in good standing with their Diocese, Religious Order, and Seminary. They should have the permission of their rector or superior to go on this pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage itinerary was developed by Bishop Peter Esterka, the founder of the NAPCCC. The pilgrimage will visit significant Catholic sites in Czechia and will offer seminarians an opportunity to deepen their faith, gain an understanding and appreciation for the Czech Catholic Church, connect with their heritage, and engage with Czech seminarians, clergy, and lay Catholics. American seminarians who take part in the pilgrimage will come home with a better grasp of the needs of Czech emigres to North America, and the unique cultural and religious heritage that Czech Catholics bring to America. They will also better understand the challenges of evangelizing Czech emigres in America.

The **Objectives** of the pilgrimage include:

- Strengthen the connection between American seminarians of Czech and Slovak descent and their ancestral faith traditions.
- Provide an opportunity for spiritual growth through visits to historically significant Catholic sites.
- Facilitate dialogue and mentorship between seminarians and Czech clergy.
- Explore the rich liturgical and pastoral traditions of Czech Catholicism.
- Foster future collaboration between Czech and American Catholic institutions.

See the website of the NAPCCC for an explanation of its mission, works, and projects:

<https://napccc.org/>

Application

*Please answer the following questions in an essay format and give the requested information.
(use a separate sheet for the essay)*

1. Describe your Czech Catholic background and heritage.

Please share about your family's Czech roots and faith history. For example: *"My great-grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Bohemia in 1890" or "I grew up in a village with strong Czech Catholic culture"*.

2. What Czech customs or traditions do you or your family practice, whether religious or secular?

You might include holidays, liturgical traditions, language, food, music, or family celebrations.

3. Do you have any contact with Czech immigrants or Czech Catholic communities in the U.S.?

Tell us about any friendships, parish connections, or community involvement.

4. Does your Diocese or Religious Order have any parishes, ministries, or communities with a strong Czech Catholic background?

5. Do you speak Czech or Slovak?

If yes, please indicate your level of fluency.

6. Why would you like to participate in this pilgrimage?

Share what draws you to this experience, both spiritually and personally.

7. How might you use the knowledge and experience you gain from this pilgrimage in your future ministry as a priest?

8. Please share any additional information that you feel would help the NAPCCC board discern your eligibility for this pilgrimage.

9. How do you plan to be involved with NAPCCC after the pilgrimage?

For example: supporting parish connections, helping with events, building relationships with Czech Catholic communities, or sharing your experiences with others.

1. Your full name (as it appears on your passport):

2. Your Diocese or Religious Community: _____

3. Name of seminary you attend: _____

4. Year in seminary or formation: _____

5. Date of birth: _____

6. Passport number: _____

a. Passport expiration date: _____ (must be later than February 2027)

7. Your home address: _____

8. Your mobile phone number: _____

9. Your email address: _____

10. Minimum payment required is \$500/person. If you are able to pay more, your donation can help the NAPCCC with its worthwhile projects. Payments are payable to North American Pastoral Center for Czech Catholics. *No worthy applicant will be turned down because of inability to pay.*

11. Amount you can pay: \$ _____

- Please submit a letter of reference from your bishop, vocation director, superior, rector, or other authority expressing your seminary/diocese/community's approval of your joining this pilgrimage. Submit more than one if appropriate (e.g. *from both your rector and your vocation director*)
- Submit this application and letter(s) of reference by email to:
 - Fr. Michael Skluzacek
 - mskluz75@gmail.com
- Applications and letters of reference are due by **December 10, 2025**
- You will be notified if you are accepted by **January 31, 2026**

- If you are accepted, please send your payment to: NAPCCC, c/o Mike Lawrence,
- Payments are payable to North American Pastoral Center for Czech Catholics. *No worthy applicant will be turned down because of inability to pay.*