

## **Collection Helps Aging Sisters, Brothers and Priests in Religious Orders**

Catholics in the Diocese of Buffalo will have the opportunity to “give to those who have given a lifetime” as part of the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, to be held in parishes Dec. 9-10. Coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., the annual appeal benefits 32,000 elderly Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose religious congregations lack adequate retirement funding.

Last year, the Diocese of Buffalo contributed \$794,000.00 to the collection. In 2017, religious communities serving in the diocese received financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious. These included the Clerics Regular of St. Paul, Dominican Nuns, Missionary Sisters of St. Columban, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Social Service of Buffalo, Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities, Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur and Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The 2016 collection raised almost \$30.7 million. Roughly 94 cents of every dollar aids senior religious. In June, the NRRO distributed \$25 million to 390 religious communities across the country. Communities utilize these funds to bolster retirement savings and subsidize eldercare expenses. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated to assist religious communities with the greatest needs and to promote ongoing education in retirement planning and eldercare delivery.

“We are humbled and profoundly grateful for the love and support of Catholics across the nation,” said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO’s executive director.

Despite this generosity, many religious communities still struggle to provide for aging members. Only 41 of the 539 communities submitting data to the NRRO in 2016 were adequately funded for retirement. Traditionally, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests—known collectively as religious—served for small stipends that did not include retirement benefits. Today, hundreds of religious communities lack sufficient retirement savings. Compounding the funding shortage are the rising cost of care and the decrease in income that has resulted from the declining number of religious able to serve in compensated ministry.

In addition to providing assistance for day-to-day needs, collection proceeds underwrite initiatives to help religious communities address the factors underlying their retirement shortfalls. These efforts have facilitated solutions such as collaborative care facilities, strategic partnerships with health-care providers and numerous cost-saving measures.

“I visit many religious communities and see the good works that members young and old provide,” said Sister Still. “Generosity to the annual collection ensures our office can furnish support to help these communities care for older members while continuing their ministries and witness.”

Visit [retiredreligious.org](http://retiredreligious.org) to learn more.