

Annual Collection Helps Religious Communities Care for Aging Members

The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held Dec. 7-8 in the Diocese of Buffalo. The parish-based appeal is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), and proceeds help hundreds of U.S. religious communities to care for aging members. Some 30,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests benefit.

Last year, the Diocese of Buffalo donated \$638,000.00 to the collection. In 2019, religious communities with members serving in the diocese received financial support 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 Social Service of Buffalo, Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities, Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The 2018 appeal raised \$27.7 million, and 360 religious congregations across the nation received funding. Distributions are sent to each eligible congregation's central house. Communities combine this assistance with their own income and savings and apply it toward various retirement expenses.

"We are humbled and profoundly grateful for the countless Catholics who honor the service and witness of senior religious through their prayers and generosity," said Presentation Sister Stephanie Still, the NRRO's executive director.

Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious in 1988 to help address the profound lack of retirement savings among U.S. religious communities. Since the collection's launch, U.S. Catholics have donated \$872 million to the annual appeal.

Despite this generosity, many congregations still struggle to provide for aging members. Most older religious served for low wages that did not include retirement benefits. Today, numerous communities face a critical shortage in retirement savings. Moreover, retired religious now outnumber wage-earning members, resulting in declining income and a rising cost of care.

Proceeds from the annual collection allow the NRRO to offer assessment tools, educational programming, services and resources that enable communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs. The NRRO also coordinates an extensive network of volunteer consultants, including experts in eldercare and financial planning, to help congregations lower costs while enhancing care.

"Donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious enable our office to provide financial assistance for an array of direct needs," said Sister Still. "They also underwrite education and resources that help religious communities stretch retirement dollars and plan for the future."

Visit **retiredreligious.org** to learn more.

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