



August 29, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On September 25, 2011, our parishes will hold the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, which provides assistance for the care of elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. In his 2010 World Day for Consecrated Life address, our Holy Father underscored the unique role that religious play in our spiritual journeys: "The very fact of being consecrated makes the consecrated person, as it were, a 'bridge' to God for all who encounter him or her."

As I reflect on the role that religious have played in our Church, I am reminded of the myriad ways these dedicated women and men serve as bridges of faith. Through their service in Catholic schools and parishes, religious offer a bridge to both academic knowledge and faith formation. Through their corporal works of mercy, religious are bridges of hope, serving as instruments of God's love to the poor, the sick, the lonely and the oppressed. In a special way our elder religious are bridges of grace. While many religious continue in active and volunteer ministry, others are frail and in need of assistance. Yet, they remain committed to their vocation, accepting the limitations of aging and embracing the opportunity to focus more fully on praying for our Church and world.

I recognize there are numerous worthy causes in need of assistance and that many individuals and families continue to struggle financially. I ask you simply to offer what you can to the care of women and men who have made such enormous contributions to our Church. As St. Paul states, "Let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Thank you so much for your generosity and may God bless you and those you love abundantly.

Sincerely and appreciatively yours in Christ,

+ Edward K. Braxton

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville

Please read this letter, print a synopsis of it or the suggested bulletin insert below in your bulletin and make appropriate announcements on the weekends of September 17-18 and September 24-25. The collection is to be taken up at all Masses on September 24-25.

Envelopes for this collection should be in your parishioners' regular envelope packets. Please send the proceeds of this collection to the Chancery no later than Friday, November 11, 2011. Please make the check payable to "Catholic Diocese of Belleville" and indicate "Retired Religious" in the lower left-hand corner of the check. Your cooperation in forwarding the check by the requested date is appreciated.

Suggested Bulletin Insert
Weekends of September 17-18 or September 24-25

Retirement Fund for Religious Collection September 24-25

Share in the Care

As you recall the people who have most shaped your life, you may remember the sister who prepared you for First Holy Communion or the brother who coached your high school basketball team. Never counting the cost, these religious shared with you love, faith and a belief in all that you could be—choosing to invest in your future rather than their own. Today, these sisters and brothers may be elderly or infirm. Today, they likely receive an average Social Security benefit of just over \$4,500 annually. Today, they need you. The Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be taken up in our parish on September 24-25. Please be generous.