



August 23, 2010

Dear friends in Christ:

During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs us to make our faith visible so that others will be led to God: “Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:16). Women and men religious heed this call by their witness to Gospel values and their commitment to serving those around them. Through their ministries, religious have founded Catholic schools and hospitals and launched initiatives that support the neediest among us. In our often troubled world, they remain a visible sign of Christ’s love.

Throughout their lives, women and men religious invest in faith and in the future of others, usually with little concern for themselves. Today, many are frail, elderly and in need of assistance. Often their religious institutes struggle to provide adequate care. The current economic downturn, which has affected so many people, also impacts elderly religious.

On September 25-26 our Belleville Diocese will be holding the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious. This fund furnishes immediate support for aging religious and helps their religious institutes implement long-term retirement strategies. Through the ongoing generosity of Catholics to this collection, many religious institutes have been able to seed and stabilize retirement savings. Others have collaborated in creating elder care solutions that benefit senior religious while serving the wider community.

I understand that times are challenging and many of you face increased financial burdens. I ask you simply to let your own light shine and give what you can to this most worthwhile collection. Most importantly, please pray for all religious, that they may continue to be beacons of faith and hope who lead others to Christ.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville