



August 26, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Please join with me in ardent support of the upcoming appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, present and past, who have dedicated their lives to prayer, ministry and service. This year's collection in our diocese is scheduled for September 26-27.

As pastors, you know that ministry in any era is challenging but the indomitable spirit of religious enabled them to build schools, hospitals and much of the social service infrastructure of this country. Religious helped establish the institutions that enabled millions of Catholics to engage in the mainstream of our country's industry and economy.

When their numbers were vast and their majority young, religious institutes invested not in pension plans but in ministry, in people and in the future of the church they served. Today, the majority of women and men religious are past age 60; a significant number are past age 80. Many institutes simply do not have the resources to meet the dramatically escalating costs of care for their growing populations of elderly.

Nevertheless, religious institutes do not assertively seek our help. Their traditions of service to others are deeply entrenched and ongoing, so I ask that you advocate on their behalf. During the appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious, please recall the role of religious in your life, the ways they have nourished your faith and defined and strengthened your values.

Our witness, our compassion and our advocacy are the best that we can offer to this appeal and to parishioners who, through their past generosity, have demonstrated their gracious willingness to give what they can. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely and appreciatively yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward K. Braxton".

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville

Please read this letter, print a synopsis of it or the suggested announcements below in your bulletin and make appropriate announcements on the weekend of September 19-20, 2009. The collection is to be taken up September 26-27.

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 13, 2009. Please make the check payable to "Catholic Diocese of Belleville" and indicate "Retirement Fund for Religious" in the lower left-hand corner of the check. Your cooperation in forwarding the check by the requested date is appreciated.

Thank you so much for your cooperation and assistance.

Suggested Bulletin Insert – Weekend of September 19-20

Share in the Care—Retirement Fund for the Religious

About 58% of women and men religious are past age 70; 7% are past age 90. More than 4,900 need skilled nursing care. Even at advanced ages, many work in compensated or volunteer ministry that benefits others. Most elderly religious receive, on average, a Social Security benefit of just \$4,402 per year, compared to the U.S. average of \$12,948. While community living provides some economies of scale, health care and living costs in most religious communities far exceed income.

The Retirement Fund for the Religious special collection is next weekend, September 26-27. Ninety-five per cent (95%) of donations received aid elderly religious. Please be generous. Thank you.

Suggested Bulletin Insert – Weekend of September 26-27

Retirement Fund for Religious Collection Today

The Catholic Church assists the financial need of elderly religious through the Retirement Fund for the Religious national appeal which will be taken up today. Today over 11,000 women and men religious need assisted living or skilled nursing care. Please be generous in today's appeal. Thank you for your support.