



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

December 1, 2017

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On **December 9 and 10**, our parishes will be conducting the appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious**, a national collection that benefits more than 32,000 elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. Our senior religious are a treasure. Their dedication and hard work laid the foundation for Catholic schools, hospitals, and numerous social service organizations. Many continue in volunteer ministry today. Their ongoing prayer and witness enrich our faith in countless ways. I am grateful for the service of religious, past and present. I hope you, too, recall a sister or brother who made a positive difference in your life.

Most elderly religious worked for years for small stipends, leaving a substantial gap in retirement savings. Unlike retired diocesan priests who are cared for by their diocese, religious sisters, brothers and priests are part of religious communities whose assets are separate from dioceses. With the ever-rising cost of health care and the increase in the number of those needing care, many religious communities now struggle to provide for their senior members. The Retirement Fund for Religious offers vital financial assistance to help meet day-to-day needs for prescription medications, nursing care, and more. Nationally, despite unparalleled generosity to the collection, the average annual cost of care for a senior religious continues to rise each year, including skilled care, which can range from \$50,000 to more than \$75,000 per year. Rising costs are compounded by the fact that more than 1 out of 3 members of religious communities is over the age of 80! The need is still very great.

I recognize that this is but one of numerous worthy causes seeking your support and I ask you to consider prayerfully what you can do to help. In thanksgiving for all that elder religious have done for us, whether individually or as a community of faith, please, "give to those who have given a lifetime" by donating to the Retirement Fund for Religious and by praying for God's continued blessing on our elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

Please read or print this letter in the parish bulletin on the weekend of Dec. 2 & 3 and take the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious at all Masses on the weekend of Dec. 9 & 10.