



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

November 29, 2018

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On **December 8 and 9**, our parishes will be conducting the appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious**, a national collection that benefits nearly 31,000 elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who are members of 547 religious institutes throughout the country. The sad reality is that only 23 of those communities are adequately funded to care for their elderly and infirm members who have consecrated their lives to serving God and the Church.

During the 2018 World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis remarked, “There is no growth without roots and no flowering without new buds.” This analogy has certainly born out within the life of the Church in the United States. Senior religious were the roots that established Catholic schools, hospitals, and social service agencies—allowing generations of Catholics to flourish. Today the example of older religious inspires younger members to persevere in mission and ministry.

Just as our annual *Celebrate Priesthood* event helps our diocese to care for its retired diocesan priests, this national collection assists many religious communities which struggle to provide for aging members. Most elder religious served for small stipends, leaving a large gap in retirement savings. Rising health-care costs and decreased income compound the struggle to provide adequate care. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious provides vital funding for medications, nursing care, and more. It also helps religious congregations implement long-range retirement strategies, even as they continue to serve the People of God.

I recognize this is but one of numerous worthy causes in need of assistance; I ask simply that you give what you can. In thanksgiving for their faithful service, please join me in supporting the Retirement Fund for Religious and in praying for God’s blessing on our nation’s elderly religious.

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. 1 & 2 and take the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious at all Masses on the weekend of Dec. 8 & 9.