



Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Vicar for Religious

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November 4, 2016 – Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo

Dear Monsignor/Father,

Peace to your heart and to your ministry!

Truly, where would the Catholic Church in America be today without the dedication, devotion and hard work of our male and female religious who were instrumental in building the Catholic school system, health/care facilities as well as with agencies such as Catholic Charities and Catholic Relief Services for the poor, unwanted and abandoned? They were on the front lines but at the same time behind the scenes humbly touching lives through their generosity of time and talent. They were and continue to be inspirational in their love of God, their love of the Catholic Faith and their love of Holy Mother the Church.

As Vicar for Religious, I ask you to please join in ardent support for the upcoming appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious** men and women and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, present and past, who have dedicated their lives to prayer, ministry and service to the Universal Church and to the Diocesan Church of Altoona-Johnstown.

Our faithful and loving religious assisted to establish the institutions that enable millions of Catholics to engage in the mainstream of our country's industry, economy and they shared with us love, faith and a belief in all that we could be choosing to invest in our future rather than their own. They need us and our financial support more than ever.

I, as Vicar for Religious, in the Diocesan Church of Altoona-Johnstown, appeal to you to be with our elderly women and men Religious as we conduct the appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious** on the weekend of the 3rd Sunday of Advent, **December 10-11, 2016**, especially those who are frail and in need of skilled care. Please support this appeal and in doing so, hold our Religious in your hearts and in your prayers as we journey with them in hope and grow with them in love of God and love of neighbor.

Our laity over the years has demonstrated their gracious willingness to give what they are able to assist our Religious in their golden years.

On behalf of all our Religious men and women who ministered and who continue to minister in this Diocesan Church, I ask the Lord to bless you and keep you always!

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Fr. Anthony Francis Spilka, OFM Conv.

Very Reverend Anthony Francis Spilka, OFM Conv.
Vicar for Religious

enclosure

Retirement Fund for Religious

Sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office

Fall 2016

Dear Pastor/Parish Administrator,

By the time our collection rolls around, I imagine you may be weary of second collections, especially given the financial needs your own parish may have. Yet please know that your support of the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR) makes a difference in the lives of roughly 33,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who benefit from the annual appeal.

In 2015, our office distributed \$25.6 million to 395 religious communities for the direct care of senior members. Additional funding was allocated for education, consultation, and resources that enable religious communities to plan more effectively for retirement. In fact, an independent study of Planning and Implementation Assistance—our program for congregations with critical funding deficits—found that 81 percent of participants reduced their retirement shortfalls.

Despite this progress, and the tremendous generosity to the RFR, too many religious communities struggle to provide a modest, safe retirement for aging members. Eldercare costs continue to rise while the number of religious requiring care grows. So I ask you to make these needs known to your parish family. This guide offers links to downloadable tools that can be used to promote the appeal in your parish, including bulletin and pulpit announcements. Most importantly, **please endorse the collection during Mass**, either by personally encouraging support or by hosting an RFR speaker.

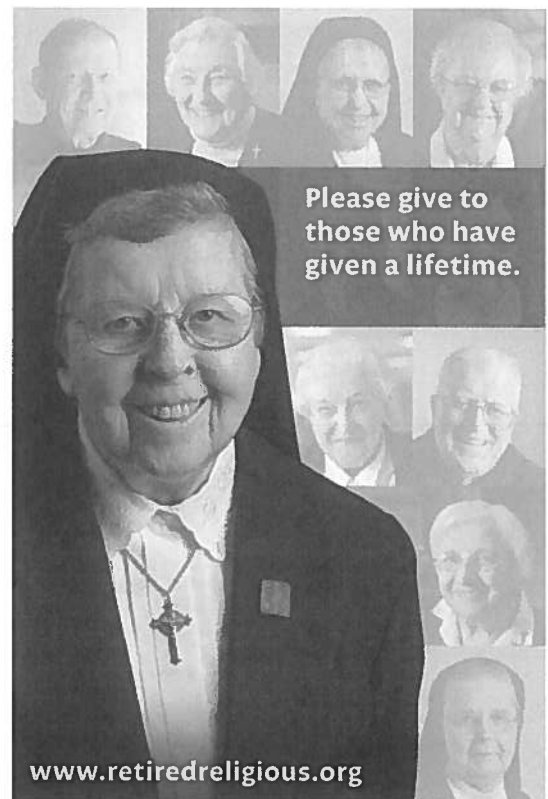
Joined with elderly religious and their communities, I offer heartfelt thanks for your assistance and prayers that God will bless you abundantly.

Gratefully,

Sister Janice Bader, CPPS

Sister Janice Bader, CPPS
Executive Director

Enc: Posters



Parish Campaign Resources

Visit www.retiredreligious.org after September 1 to download the items shown below.

Pulpit Announcement/Parish Appeal

Please read from the pulpit or include with the weekly announcements.

Aging religious need your help. Thousands of senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests spent years working in Catholic schools, hospitals, and agencies—often for little pay. Their sacrifices leave their religious communities without adequate savings for retirement and eldercare. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious collection helps provide prescription medications, nursing care, and more. Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Mass Readings

December 3–4, 2016

Second Sunday of Advent

Is 11:1-10 / Rom 15:4-9 / Mt 3:1-12

December 10–11, 2016

Third Sunday of Advent

Is 35:1-6a, 10 / Jas 5:7-10 / Mt 11:2-11

General Intercessions

For elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests, that they may enjoy the dignified care they so richly deserve as they continue to devote their lives to prayer and service. Let us pray to the Lord. R/.

Following the example of the Year of Mercy, we pray especially for the elderly in our nation, that they may be treated with respect and compassion and that we as a society may more fully embrace their gifts of wisdom and grace. Let us pray to the Lord. R/.

Bulletin Announcements

Week before the collection

Your donation works for aging religious. “I read that roughly 95 percent of donations to the Retirement Fund for Religious aid senior religious,” a donor writes. “That’s wonderful when we truly want our donations to *work*.” Your gift works for elderly religious by helping to furnish medications, nursing care, and more. Please support next week’s collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, and give to those who have given a lifetime.

Week of the collection

Aging religious need your help. Senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests have offered their lives in service to others—educating the young, comforting the sick, seeking justice for the oppressed. Today, many are frail, elderly, and in need of assistance. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious helps to furnish medications, nursing care, and other necessities. Please give generously to today’s second collection.

Week after the collection

Thank you for supporting senior religious. A sister from Indiana writes, “Because of your kindness, our elderly sisters will have the comfort, security, and joy of living out their remaining years here in their home. You truly honor them and their many years of service by your generosity.” Religious across the United States offer sincere thanks for your generosity to last week’s collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Note: Printed posters, bulletin inserts, and supplemental envelopes are provided to parishes at no charge to promote the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection. Shipments for this year’s collection have already been processed, but if you would like to increase or decrease future shipments, please contact your (arch) diocesan coordinator.

Simple Steps for Promoting the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR)

Announce

the collection during Mass and in the parish bulletin.

Distribute

bulletin inserts and collection or direct response envelopes.

Display

RFR posters.

Invite

a religious or lay volunteer to speak about the RFR during Mass.

Share

the contributions that women and men religious make to the Church.

Lifetimes of Service

Each year, proceeds from the Retirement Fund for Religious underwrite financial assistance to hundreds of religious communities while supporting education and resources that strengthen retirement planning and improve eldercare. Nearly 33,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests benefit. These religious have offered their lives in service to our Church and world, ministering in Catholic schools, hospitals, parishes, and social service agencies. Many continue to serve; others are committed to a ministry of prayer and presence. Meet a few of them below.

Sister M. Susan Polchin, SSCM, 93, coached girls' basketball.



Father Michael Gantley, OSM, 91, acts as role model for members in formation.



Sister Anne Mika, OCD, 92, made altar breads and still does bookkeeping.



Father Jerome Kodell, OSB, 76, served as abbot of his community for 25 years.



Sister Luanna Brucks, CPPS, 91, ministered for 30 years as a teacher and 10 years as a church musician.



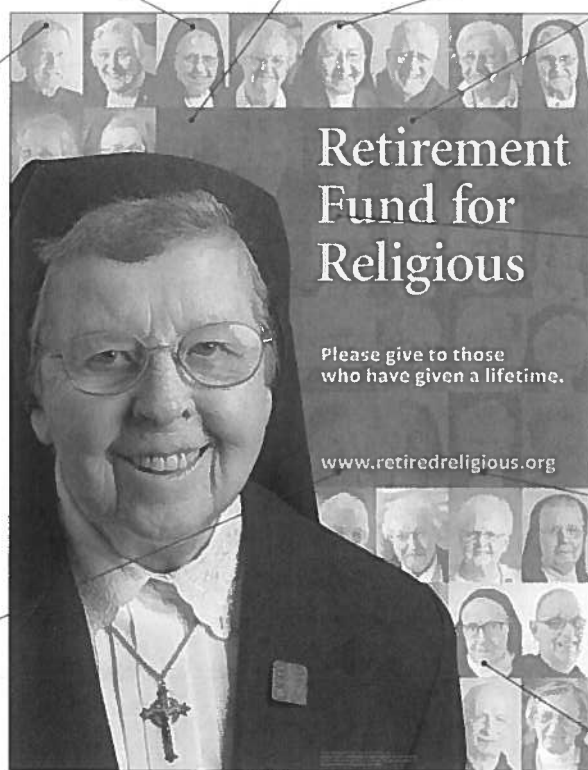
Sister John Margaret Walsh, CDP, 79, spent 55 years in Catholic education.



Sister Viola Marie Spire, CPPS, 83, has been sewing altar cloths and vestments for 50 years.



Sister Margaret Kob, OCD, 89, rises at 4:30 a.m. to pray.



Sister Donna Marie Ivanko, SSCM, 81, currently ministers as a preschool director.



Sister Rita Polchin, SSCM, 87
 "Be faithful to your prayer life and have a sense of humor," says Sister Rita. This philosophy has served her well during nearly 70 years of religious life. A former teacher and principal, Sister Rita continues in volunteer ministry today.



National Religious Retirement Office

Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious

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For campaign materials, visit:
www.retiredreligious.org

Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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