

# About the Retirement Fund for Religious

## Why We Ask

- In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR) to address the significant lack of retirement funding for Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders.
- For most of their lives, elder religious worked for little to no pay. There were no 401(k) plans or pensions.
- Religious communities are financially responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings, and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.
- The funding shortage is compounded by rising health-care costs and decreased income. And, as more religious reach retirement age and leave compensated ministry, income will further decline while care needs increase.
- By 2027, religious past age 70 are projected to outnumber religious under age 70 by more than three to one.
- There are more than 32,000 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2016, the average annual cost for their care was more than \$42,000 per person.
- Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded \$1 billion.
- In 2016, 67 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) had a median age of 70 or higher.
- The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious is \$6,116.22, while the average U.S. beneficiary receives \$16,321.56.

## How Donations Help

- Catholics in the United States have donated more than \$816 million to the RFR since the first appeal.
- Roughly 94 percent of donations to the RFR aid elder religious, with the remainder used to administer and promote the appeal.
- Since 1989, more than \$775 million has been distributed to support the day-to-day care of elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. An additional \$91 million has been allocated toward self-help projects initiated by religious communities, including collaborative health-care facilities.
- In addition to direct financial assistance, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational programming, services, and resources that enable religious communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs.
- Support from the Retirement Fund for Religious helps religious communities care for senior members while continuing important ministries to the People of God.



Photo (from left): Sister Gloria Rodriguez, MGSps, 80; Father Albert Busic, OCD, 81; Sister Alfonsina Sanchez, OCD, 96; Sister Mary Ann Hanson, SND, 79.

Visit <http://www.usccb.org/about/national-religious-retirement-office/upload/Statistical-Report.pdf> to access our full statistical report.

Data on women and men religious obtained from the NRRO database of participating religious institutes as of December 31, 2016.



## National Religious Retirement Office

**Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious**

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

3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington DC 20017-1194  
Telephone (202) 541-3215  
Fax (202) 541-3053