



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On the weekend of December 12-13, the parishes in our Diocese will conduct the annual appeal for the *Retirement Fund for Religious*, a collection that benefits some 30,000 elderly Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests.

As Christians, we are called to “serve the Lord with gladness” (Ps 100:2). Our elderly religious offer a shining example of what it means to answer this call. During their days of active ministry, they worked tirelessly to build Catholic schools and hospitals, promote social justice, and embrace the neediest among us. In retirement, many continue in volunteer ministry, and all pray for the needs of our Church and world. Inspired by love, their service—past and present—is marked by joy and a deep desire to do the will of God.

We are so indebted to these consecrated religious. I hope you will be able to show your appreciation by supporting the annual collection for the *Retirement Fund for Religious*. The fact that these religious worked for little or no compensation in years past, means that they are now struggling to meet the costs of caring for retired and infirmed members. The additional challenges brought about by COVID-19 have compounded an already difficult situation. The proceeds from this collection offers some financial support for communities in caring for older members. In addition, it helps to ensure that younger members can continue to perform the good works of their elders.

Many fine religious women and men have served and continue to serve the people of God here in the North Country as teachers, health care providers, pastoral associates, administrators, pastors, and assistant priests. We are richly blessed to have a community of contemplatives, supporting us through their ministry of prayer. We are also grateful to those missionaries (who have left their home countries to minister here in our North Country.

I encourage you to do what you can to support this collection. Most importantly, please pray for them and for an increase in their number. Know that they are praying for you!

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg