November 28, 2019

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the weekend of December 8th, our parishes will be conducting the appeal for the **Retirement Fund for Religious**. In 2019 this national collection assisted 30,151 elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who are members of 360 religious institutes throughout the country.

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.

As you may know, many religious communities find it increasingly difficult to provide for aging members. Most older religious worked for little or no pay. Today, their communities do not have enough retirement savings. At the same time, health-care costs continue to rise, and fewer members are able to serve in compensated 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 consider giving to those who have given a lifetime. 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 women and men.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Robert J. McManus
Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

*Please read or print this letter in the parish bulletin on the weekend of Dec. 1 and take the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious at all Masses on the weekend of Dec. 8.*