

NEWS RELEASE



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Parishes to conduct collection for elderly religious

Changing demographics leave retirement funds underfunded

November 11, 2009 (OMAHA, NE) – Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of Omaha will conduct the 22nd annual appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious on December 13. This year’s collection theme is “Share in the Care.”

In 2008, the Archdiocese of Omaha contributed \$160,870.74 to this collection. The Mount Michael Benedictine Abbey, Notre Dame Sisters, Servants of Mary, and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas received in 2009 a combined total of \$493,310.16 in financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund.

The collection is coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., and benefits thousands of elderly women and men religious whose communities lack adequate funding for retirement.

“The collection has been the most successful campaign in the history of the Church in the United States, which is testimony to the gratitude many feel for the services they have received from religious orders,” said Sister Janice Bader, a Sister of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Missouri, and NRRO executive director.

“I am continually heartened by the overwhelming generosity of Catholics to this fund each year,” she said. “Even in these difficult financial times, Catholics across the nation find a way to give back to the women and men religious who sacrificed so much for our Church and our world.”

The 2008 collection drew over \$28.2 million. Since 1988, Catholics have donated nearly \$589 million to the annual appeal. Approximately 95 percent of these donations are distributed to support the care of senior religious.

The 2008 appeal enabled the National Religious Retirement Office to distribute over \$23 million to 483 religious institutes. These funds supplemented the day-to-day care of elder religious and helped religious institutes implement long-range retirement strategies. The NRRO also distributed nearly \$3 million in targeted financial assistance to support self-help projects, such as collaborative health care facilities, initiated by religious institutes.

The retirement crisis developed as demographics of religious institutes changed. Now there are more elderly than younger members. The problem has been compounded by skyrocketing health care costs. Today, there are more than 35,000 women and men religious over age 70; more than 5,500 religious require skilled care.

(more)

Historically, older religious worked for small stipends, with surplus income reinvested in their ministries, such as schools and social service agencies. Retirement was not a priority in the past when there were enough younger members to care for older ones.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, the number of religious age 25 to 74 is expected to decrease sharply. With this decline, the income of religious institutes will drop precipitously.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 148 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to more than 221,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 58 elementary schools, 18 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 44,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Office of Family Life lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. www.archomaha.org