

# Annual appeal supports retired religious

Our Lady of the Fields, Millersville, parishioner Ligaya Quirk said it was a desire to thank men and women religious for their services that inspired the Archbishop Francis P. Keough Council Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary to host a luau in their honor.

Called "Summer's End Luau," the Aug. 23 event at Our Lady of the Fields raised about \$2,100 (after expenses) for the Retirement Fund for Religious, according to Ms. Quirk.

"They do a lot, and we wanted to thank them," she said.

Catholics of the Archdiocese of Baltimore will have the opportunity to pay tribute to men and women religious when the annual collection is held Dec. 13-14 in parishes.

"The religious communities that have served in this country since its founding have built Catholic institutions," said Sister Constance Gilder, a Sister of St. Joseph who serves as delegate for religious for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. "They built the Catholic school system in this country. They built the Catholic hospital system. They built the Catholic social services system in this country."

She said each order brings its own charism and mission to the church and would like to see that continue.

"When we ask for money to help support our retired religious, we're asking on the one hand to help take care of them, but on the other hand, we're asking for contributions so our limited funds can be put into our mission and our charism," she said. "Ultimately we need to take care of sisters, brothers and priests who have served our church so well, but if we put all our resources there, we won't be able to continue to advance the charism and continue to be a gift to the church."

According to the National Religious Retirement Office, 58 percent of women and men religious are past age 70 and 7 percent are past age 90. More than 4,900

elderly religious need nursing care.

Sister Constance said that in her own order, there are 290 sisters living in a retirement villa in Pennsylvania.

The NRRO reports that the average cost of skilled care for one religious for one year is \$51,361.

Sister Constance said that even in retirement, those sisters who are able stay active in ministry, tutoring children, preparing them for confirmation and even writing letters to legislators regarding moral issues.

Sister Constance said the Retirement Fund for Religious continues to be one of the largest national collections, which she says is “very gratifying because it says generations of Catholics appreciate the education or care they received from religious, and they want to show their gratitude.”