

# **Collection for Retirement Fund for Religious is Dec. 10-11**

The 24th annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious will be taken Dec. 10-11 in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., the appeal asks Catholics to help support more than 34,000 women and men religious past age 70.

Last year, the Archdiocese of Baltimore contributed \$455,180 to the collection. In 2011, the Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore, Carmelite Sisters of Baltimore, Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, Oblate Sisters of Providence, Order of Friars Minor Conventual, Order of the Most Holy Trinity, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart received a combined total of \$582,723 in financial assistance made possible by the national appeal.

Additionally, religious who serve or have served in the archdiocese but whose communities are based elsewhere may also benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious.

"We are continually humbled by the generosity shown this appeal," said NRRO Executive Director Sister of the Most Precious Blood Janice Bader. "Since the fund was launched in 1988, Catholics have donated \$643 million to assist religious communities in caring for their elder members."

As a result of the 2010 collection, which garnered \$26.7 million, the NRRO distributed \$23 million to religious communities to help support the day-to-day care of senior members. An additional \$2.7 million was allocated toward initiatives targeted for religious communities with the greatest needs. Ninety-three cents of every dollar aids elderly religious.

While the response to the collection is unprecedented, so is the need, according to the NRRO.

In 2010 alone, the total cost of care for women and men religious past age 70

exceeded \$1 billion dollars. Nearly 5,000 religious required skilled care.

“The real challenge for many religious communities is a lack of retirement savings,” said Sister Janice. “Most senior religious worked for years for small stipends. There were no retirement plans.”

As religious continue to age, fewer members are able to serve in compensated ministry, leading to a sharp decrease in income. By 2019, NRRO data projects that retired religious will outnumber wage-earning religious by nearly four to one.

For this reason, the NRRO implemented an initiative to provide education, consultation and financial assistance to communities that are 50 percent or more underfunded for retirement. Since that program began in 2009, 55 communities, representing some 7,000 women and men religious, have initiated targeted strategies to address their funding shortfalls.

*For more information, visit [www.retiredreligious.org](http://www.retiredreligious.org).*