

# Special care collection helps priests pay for medical needs

A second collection Jan. 19-20 will give Catholics in the archdiocese the opportunity to support priests requiring special medical care in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, as well as those priests – regardless of age – who are convalescing following surgery, serious injury or illness.

“Give to them as they gave to us,” is the theme of this year’s Special Care for Diocesan Priests Collection, which helps cover priests’ expenses that aren’t covered by health insurance or Medicare, said Carol A. Purwin, of the division of clergy personnel for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

“We had a priest this year who suffered from severe circulatory issues and needed special stockings, which Medicare and insurance didn’t cover, and they were very expensive,” said Father Jay F. O’Connor, director of the division of clergy personnel. “We were able to provide them for him. Those stockings have greatly improved his quality of life.”

In a letter to the pastors in the archdiocese, Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien said, “It is hoped that this campaign will serve as a reminder that those of our many brother priests who are no longer in active and visible parish settings are still in need of prayers and financial support.

Further, it is hoped that it will cause our people to reflect on the sacrifices made by these men of God and on the many ways their lives were graced by their priestly work.”

The archdiocese slightly surpassed its collection goal of \$315,000 in 2007 and hopes to do the same this year, Ms. Purwin said.

The average daily cost for standard health expenses for a retired priest in the archdiocese is more than \$137 and the average daily cost for a priest residing in an assisted-living facility or nursing home is more than \$487, Ms. Purwin said.

The archdiocese currently has 67 retired priests who still have faculties for ministries, Father O'Connor said.

The special fund also pays 50 percent of the priests' expenses for hearing aids, as well as vision and dental care, he said.

"We try to provide for the health care and personal needs for our priests in ways that attempt to respect their personal dignity and acknowledge the many contributions they have made for the people of the Archdiocese of Baltimore," Father O'Connor said. "This isn't a handout, but something that should rightly be provided for them."