



Retirement Fund for Religious

Fall 2010 Newsletter

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Speaking Up for Retired Religious



A member of the New Orleans province, Brother Alan Drain, SC, relocated to New England following Hurricane Katrina. For the last five years, he has been working with Brother Paul to make the RFR appeal at parishes in Providence, Rhode Island, and Manchester, New Hampshire.

Two years later, he was asked to coordinate volunteers from his community to speak at parishes, a task he continues today. Each year, his preparations begin as early as July, when he is first contacted about possible speakers. Working with representatives from the Diocese of Providence and the Diocese of Manchester, Brother Paul matches brothers with parishes that have requested presenters. Brothers commit to speaking at all Masses at their specified parishes and make a point of staying afterwards to greet and thank parishioners.

For over twenty years, Sacred Heart Brother Paul Hebert has been speaking up for senior religious. A member of the New England Province in Pascoag, Rhode Island, Brother Paul raises awareness about the needs of elder religious by speaking at parishes in neighboring Providence and in Manchester, New Hampshire. He also recruits and coordinates other members of his community to help promote the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR).

In 1988, when the RFR was first launched, Brother Paul's provincial asked him to make the appeal in a local parish. Brother Paul, who spent fourteen years as a missionary in Africa, understood firsthand that the choices religious communities made over the years to support their ministries had impacted retirement savings. Like other missionaries, during the years he served overseas, he drew no salary. Rather, the community's own funds financed the mission. Moreover, as a member of a community dedicated to education, Brother Paul also knew of the small stipends older members used to receive in order to ensure the continued viability of their schools. So, that year, he delivered the first of what would become numerous appeals on behalf of the RFR.

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From Brother Paul's perspective, the reaction is overwhelmingly positive. "Parishioners recognize both the contributions and the sacrifices made by elder religious, and many feel that religious profoundly influenced their lives, especially spiritually. They are very responsive to our message," he said.

In preparing his talks, Brother Paul visits the RFR Web site so he can reference current statistics. "I like to let people know how many religious communities receive assistance and that 95 percent of the donations are used to help senior religious," noted Brother Paul. After that, Brother Paul prefers a more personal approach. "I tell parishioners about specific members of my community. I describe our members in their eighties who continue to volunteer in our schools or at local nursing homes. Sometimes I'll tell the story of just one brother," he revealed.

One year, Brother Paul discussed how dedicated one of the more senior members of his community was to a ministry of prayer. "After Mass, it was amazing how many parishioners came up with prayer requests," remarked Brother Paul. "Brother Lawrence was busy for weeks!"

Brother Paul and his community strive to do what they can to help the collection. "We have certainly benefitted from the generosity shown this fund. The annual support to our province here in Rhode Island and our province in New Orleans really helps," said Brother Paul.

Still, it can sometimes be a struggle to recruit enough volunteers to speak. "There are just fewer of us who are able to make the appeal," explained Brother Paul. Over the years, the requests for speakers have also diminished. Yet, Brother Paul and his community remain committed to ensuring that parishioners have the opportunity to understand the ongoing need for the RFR. He stated, "I make it my job—my responsibility—to get to as many parishes as we can."

Message from the Executive Director

Recently, I was interviewed for an article in a diocesan newspaper that will promote our national collection on December 12th. We talked about the factors contributing to the deficit in retirement funding among religious communities and, particularly, about how the small stipends earned by many older religious during their years of active ministry have now resulted in a dearth of available savings. We also discussed the demographic changes forecast for religious communities in the coming years. Using a retirement age of seventy, there are currently two wage-earning religious for every three retired members. By 2019, however, our data indicates that the ratio will be one member in compensated ministry for every four members past age seventy.

The reporter then asked me if, given this projected demographic shift, I had any hope for the future. I can understand her reasoning; the statistics are rather grim. But my hope for the future is grounded in knowledge of the past—in the certainty that our elder religious have touched countless lives in profound and lasting ways. Year after year, our donors respond with overwhelming generosity to support senior religious. Many Catholics, I believe, remember how important a religious was in helping them become who God intended, and they give in thanksgiving.

Soon, in parishes across the nation, women and men religious will be "speaking up" for their elder members. Like the parishioners whom they address, these religious recall an older religious who played an important role in their formation and vocations. They, too, are grateful for the myriad ways these elder members shaped their religious communities and advanced mission and ministry.

The Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR) owes a tremendous debt to all those who, like the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in our feature story, volunteer to speak at parishes and to advocate on behalf of our nation's senior religious. These speakers offer a link to religious life past and present, helping parishioners connect not only with their personal memories but also with the recognition of the tremendous service religious offer our Church and world. In my mind, our speakers are one of the primary reasons why the RFR has been the most successful national collection in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States.

So, yes, I have hope—hope inspired by the love and faith of Catholics across the country who generously support the RFR collection and by the witness of religious, past and present. As we joyfully await the birth of our Savior, please be assured of my prayers of thanksgiving for all those who selflessly Share in the Care.

With all good wishes for a Blessed Advent Season

Sister Janice Bader, CPPS





Share
In
The
Care

Sr. Mary Frances Angermaier, SSND, 82, Sr. Maria Felipe Lopez, SSND, 82

Please give to those who have given a lifetime
December 11 & 12

www.retiredreligious.org

Photographer (foreground photo) Jim Judkis



Help NRRO Go Green

If you are not already receiving this newsletter electronically and would like to do so, please contact us at retirement@usccb.org to have your e-mail address added to our distribution list.

Thank you

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Please send changes in address, phone, e-mail or congregational leadership to NRRO c/o Jean Smith (jsmith@usccb.org), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.
Thank You!



If you would like to make a bequest or restricted gift to the National Religious Retirement Office, the following information should be used:

To the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Incorporated for the exclusive purpose of assisting Roman Catholic religious orders in the United States to provide for the retirement needs of their elderly members.

CALENDAR



Retirement Fund for Religious National Collection	December 11-12, 2010
Direct Care Assistance Forms sent out	January 2, 2011
Planning & Implementation Workshop, Redlands, CA	January 21-23, 2011
Through Grief to New Life—Workshop for Leadership, Baltimore, MD	February 9-10, 2011



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The National Religious Retirement Office coordinates the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes these funds to eligible religious institutes for their retirement needs.

The National Religious Retirement Office supports, educates and assists religious institutes in the U.S. to embrace their current retirement reality and to plan for the future.



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