



Retirement Fund for Religious

# Spring 2010 Newsletter

Volume 23, No. 1

## Diocesan Coordinators: Sharing in the Care

The staff of the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) is pretty small, just five full-time people. Thus we rely on a vast network of individuals and organizations across the country to help us coordinate the annual Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR) collection. Without them, there simply would be no way to conduct a nationwide appeal. With their help, the RFR is taken up at thousands of parishes each year. Countless men and women help us raise awareness about both the contributions and the needs of elder religious: (arch)bishops and pastors who support and promote the collection, religious who speak during Mass, diocesan communicators who publish and distribute our press releases, and so many others.

Of the RFR's many unsung heroes, perhaps none are more critical to our efforts than our **Diocesan Coordinators** (DCs). These busy individuals manage the appeal at the local level, and work begins several months prior to the collection. A primary responsibility for DCs is ensuring that all of the parishes in their (arch)diocese receive the necessary RFR campaign materials, including posters, bulletin inserts, and, of course, collection envelopes! Requesting materials can be time consuming as many (arch)dioceses have several hundred parishes.

Closer to the collection date, many DCs spend a great deal of time and effort promoting the RFR and disseminating information about elder religious. Working alone or with a committee, DCs may publicize the



Coordinators for the Diocese of Buffalo organize an annual luncheon for over 500 people to launch the RFR Campaign

appeal through advertisements, press releases, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), or even radio or television programming on (arch)diocesan media outlets. Additionally, DCs often help pastors and parish administrators identify and contact religious to speak about the RFR during Mass. Some DCs organize special events, such as Masses honoring senior religious or RFR luncheons.

Diocesan coordinators hold a wide-array of positions within their (arch)dioceses. Some are Vicars for Religious; others are Chancellors or work in stewardship or development. Many are members of religious institutes while others are laypeople. A number of DCs organize the RFR appeal while engaged in full-time ministry outside of the (arch)diocesan offices, and most have numerous responsibilities in addition to the RFR. For all, we are extremely grateful! Their tireless efforts are vital to communicating the RFR message and to inspiring parishioners to *Share in the Care*.

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## Reminders for Diocesan Coordinators

### Collection proceeds are due to the NRRO by March 31, 2010.

A guide to requesting campaign materials was recently mailed to you. The open period for requesting the 2010 RFR collection materials is from **March 15-April 30<sup>th</sup>**.

Visit [www.nationalcollections.org](http://www.nationalcollections.org) to update parish and collection information and to request materials. If you need assistance, please contact Beth Kennedy, RFR Project Manager, [bethkennedy@retiredreligious.org](mailto:bethkennedy@retiredreligious.org).

Thank You!

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## Planning and Implementation Workshops

In 2009, the NRRO launched Planning and Implementation Assistance, a comprehensive process to help religious institutes assess their retirement strategies and strengthen plans for the current and future care of elder members. Active religious institutes that are more than fifty percent underfunded for their retirement needs may apply to participate in this program and to receive financial and consultative assistance.

To learn more, visit:

<http://www.usccb.org/nrro/planning.shtml>



Participants in the January workshop held at Our Lady of the Snows Conference Center in Belleville, Illinois, with presenter, Catherine Keevey.

Workshops have been scheduled through 2015. Listed below are upcoming dates and locations:

- \*April 20-22, 2010 - Dayton, OH
- \*September 21-23, 2010 - Marriottsville, MD
- January 21-23, 2011 - Redlands, CA
- April 5-7, 2011 - Menlo Park, CA
- September 20-22, 2011 - Marriottsville, MD
- January 20-22, 2012 - Menlo Park, CA
- April 17-19, 2012 - Dayton, OH
- September 18-20, 2012 - Marriottsville, MD
- \*Workshops filled.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Completed Direct Care Assistance application forms must be postmarked by March 31.**

**Thank you!**

## **Profiles in Service: Sister Midge Breiter, SSND**

Sister Midge Breiter, SSND, is the RFR coordinator for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and is deeply committed to raising awareness about the needs of senior religious. Here she discusses the trials and triumphs of inspiring archdiocesan parishioners to *Share in the Care*.

### **Tell us a little bit about your background and ministries.**

**Sister Midge:** *My parents nurtured ten lively children in rural Minnesota. We learned at a young age to care about others. Responding to religious life was a natural vocation, having grown up in a faith-filled family.*

*My relationship with religious started long before I became a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND). I was educated by the SSNDs from first grade through college. They were much more serious about educating me than I was about being educated! Years later, I realize the gift of learning they instilled in me.*

*My vocation took me through years of teaching in elementary schools followed by pastoral ministry in several parishes and finally as a parish administrator. In 1991, I volunteered to be the administrator at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Kisumu, Kenya, East Africa.*

*Presently, I am employed as a caregiver for homebound people in addition to my RFR ministry with the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. I volunteer at a women's shelter and serve on the SSND Development Board and the board of East Side Learning Center, a partnered ministry with the SSNDs that provides one-on-one tutoring to low-income children.*



### **How did you get involved with the RFR? How long have you been a diocesan coordinator?**

**Sister Midge:** *A while ago I was leaving another position, and my community asked me to consider being the coordinator for the Retirement Fund for Religious. I have been in this position for almost three years.*

### **What do you find the most challenging aspect of being a diocesan coordinator? What aspect is most rewarding?**

**Sister Midge:** *The annual collection is entering its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, and the challenge is to keep the need alive as numerous women and men religious communities are still well below being fully funded. When a collection has this kind of history, it may be tempting to think “how much longer?” The reality is that more religious require care today than when the RFR started—and at a much greater cost. I really try to communicate the ongoing need.*

*To coordinate the appeal each year, I am blessed with the support of Archbishop Nienstedt, who encourages the priests and laity to support the collection. I have the expertise of the staff at our archdiocesan paper, **The Catholic Spirit**, with articles and ads. Priests realize the need and write informative articles in their parish bulletins. I have great response on the appeal weekend from women and men religious*

who speak on behalf of all religious. The generosity of the parishioners is spectacular. It is rewarding to see so many people coming together to assist elder religious.

**What do you see as the biggest challenges for the RFR in the coming years?**

**Sister Midge:** *As I mentioned before, communicating that there is still significant need is a great challenge at the local level, and I imagine the same is true at the national level. It's easy for me to say, but we have to find a way to produce materials that will speak to the hearts of the donors while giving a picture of the continued need.*

**Tell us about some of your experiences with RFR donors.**

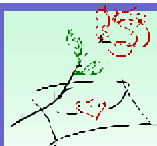
**Sister Midge:** *I am always moved when parishioners share with me the moral or intellectual impact that religious have had in their lives. Often they will recount how much they treasure the kindness and support that religious offered them.*

*In the parish I attend, the pastor wrote an article prior to the collection and explained that religious were given a modest stipend for their services, never a salary or benefits. As a response to his article, one of the parishioners prepared a Saturday evening meal at the parish and invited people to enjoy the meal and make a free-will offering. The evening was well attended, and the parish collection and the dinner raised over \$20,000. Words have power.*

**What do you wish more people knew about the RFR and/or senior religious?**

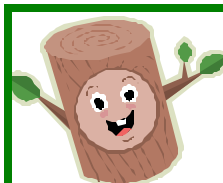
**Sister Midge:** *Many of the people who have been influenced by women and men religious are now reaching retirement age, and some are even approaching the end of their lives. I wish more people knew that it is possible to remember the Retirement Fund for Religious in their wills. I know from the NRRO's annual report that many people do include the RFR in their estate planning, but it would help if more donors were aware of this option.*

*Finally, I hope people know that retired religious remember them in prayer.*



*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.**



**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](mailto:retirement@usccb.org) to have your e-mail address added to our distribution list.*

**Thank you**



*Please send changes in address, phone, E-mail or congregational leadership to NRRO c/o Jean Smith ([jsmith@usccb.org](mailto:jsmith@usccb.org)), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.*

**Thank You!**



## Message from the Executive Director

For the last few weeks, Washington, D.C., has been recovering from its largest snowstorm in recorded history. Back to back blizzards dumped nearly four feet of snow, closing the federal government and many businesses for days. Some students missed almost two weeks of school. Massive piles of dirty snow now line the streets, and numerous potholes provide ample opportunity for me to test my reflexes on the way to the office.

During the storm and in the days that followed, talk radio, TV newscasts, and newspapers were filled with commentary on how local officials responded to this extraordinary snow event. Some remarks were positive. Most were critical: the city should have been better prepared; there should have been more snow removal equipment; electrical power should have been restored more quickly, and so on.

As I listened to the finger-pointing, I was saddened by the lack of acknowledgement that some situations are beyond human control. At the same time, I was heartened by voices of reason, suggesting that cooperation and shared resources are central to addressing situations of this magnitude.

While the pundits were busy talking, ordinary citizens were shoveling sidewalks and checking on their neighbors. Brigades of parents and students gathered to clear school bus stops. Those with electricity welcomed those without it into their homes.

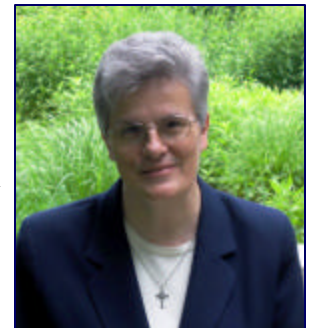
Reflecting on these events, I am struck by the similarities between individual reactions to “snow-mageddon,” as this event has been dubbed locally, and responses to the retirement funding situation in religious institutes.

As with this snowstorm, the severity of the current retirement crisis is unprecedented. Longer life spans, sky-rocketing medical costs, and the deepest recession in nearly a century have converged to create a “perfect storm.” Though religious institutes have been working to plan and save for years, the deficit in funding is exceeding all projections.

There are a few that play the blame game; but most, like the parents and students at the bus stops, grab a shovel and lend a hand. Bishops and pastors support and promote the RFR locally. Countless Catholics continue to respond generously, even though many face financial struggles of their own. Religious institutes strive to identify avenues of cooperation and collaboration that can promote long-term security for aging members. As noted in our feature story, dedicated diocesan coordinators partner with the NRRO to manage the practical and promotional aspects of the RFR collection in (arch)dioceses across the country.

Each of you reading this newsletter is critical to our efforts to address the shortfall in retirement funding. Your support makes a tremendous difference, whether it is in the form of prayer, monetary donations, promotion of the RFR, or assistance to religious institutes. To all of you who are helping religious to weather the storm, I extend deep and prayerful gratitude. May God bless you abundantly.

*Sister Janice Bader, CPPS*



## CALENDAR



Vicars for Religious Assembly, Chicago, IL

**Direct Care Assistance Applications Due**

**RFR Collection Proceeds Due**

Planning and Implementation Workshop, Dayton, OH

Retirement Needs Analysis mailed

RCRI Workshop, Chicago, IL

Direct Care Assistance checks distributed

March 15-18, 2010

**March 31, 2010**

**March 31, 2010**

April 20-22, 2010

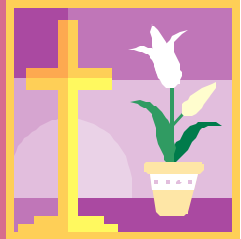
Mid May, 2010

May 24-28, 2010

June, 2010



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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.*



**NRRO Staff:** L-R, Sr. Janice Bader, CPPS; Jean Smith; Br. Bob Metzger, SM; Br. Hank Sammon, FMS, JCL; Monica Glover

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