

Retirement Fund for Religious

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News

Renewed!

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At their General Assembly in November 2016, Catholic bishops of the United States voted to extend the Retirement Fund for Religious collection for an additional 10 years. Previously, the appeal was slated to end in 2017. Generosity to the annual collection has enabled the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) to provide financial assistance and a wide variety of educational and consultative support to religious institutes throughout the nation. Below is a look back at how senior religious and their communities have benefited.

\$785 million

Over the last 29 years, U.S. Catholics have donated more than \$785 million to the Retirement Fund for Religious. Roughly 95 percent of the proceeds have been distributed to religious communities for retirement needs. The remainder has been used for administration and promotion of the annual appeal.

\$659 million

Each year, the majority of proceeds from the annual collection are distributed to support the direct care of senior religious. Since 1989, nearly \$659 million has been disbursed to assist religious institutes in meeting the ongoing needs of elder members.



\$86 million

More than \$86 million has been disbursed to help religious institutes implement strategies to address retirement-funding deficits, enhance eldercare, and plan for ongoing viability.



Direct Care Assistance provides supplemental support to help religious institutes provide for retirement needs while sustaining mission and ministry.



Participants in an NRRO planning workshop.

Renewed!, continued

A Hand Up

Over the years, the NRRO has launched various initiatives to help severely underfunded religious institutes address their most pressing retirement challenges. Since 2009, the Planning and Implementation Assistance program has offered hands-on consultative support and targeted financial assistance to 126 religious institutes.



Participation in Planning and Implementation (P and I) Assistance enabled the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry to address property challenges, identify new eldercare options, and greatly reduce their unfunded liability. Former superior Sister Dolores Lahr, once a participant, now serves as a P and I volunteer consultant.

Above: (left) shown in 2012, the community's motherhouse has now been restructured, with a wing renovated as housing for the sisters, and the remainder to be developed by an outside firm; (center) then-superior Sister Dolores Lahr pictured in 2012 at the community's infirmary; (right) Sister Dolores today as a volunteer NRRO consultant.

92.2 percent of religious institutes report receiving Social Security benefits for some or all members, up from 65.8 percent in 1989.

\$41,213.90 was the average annual cost of care for senior women and men religious in 2016. Since 1989, this figure has roughly tripled.

68 percent of religious institutes reporting to the NRRO have a median age of 70 or above.

32,922 women and men religious past age 70 benefited from the Retirement Fund for Religious in 2016.

Improved Funding Status

Each year, hundreds of religious institutes apply for Direct Care Assistance. Over time, the applicant pool has varied and decreased, due to such factors as community mergers and religious institutes becoming adequately funded for retirement. However, the NRRO has tracked data on 153 religious communities that have applied every year since the collection started. In 1989, just 3.9 percent of these institutes were fully funded or nearly fully funded for retirement. By 2016, that number had increased to 45 percent.



The 2016 Retirement Fund for Religious campaign materials featured 37 senior religious. Meet them all at retiredreligious.org/2016photos/.

Note: Statistics based on religious institutes providing demographic and financial data to the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO).

Message from the Executive Director

Recently, I was asked what lies ahead for the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and religious life in the United States, particularly given the renewal of the Retirement Fund for Religious. While planning for the future is integral to the NRRO mission and our work with religious institutes, it is impossible to predict what lies ahead, plan for every contingency, or influence national or world-wide economic dynamics. So, in one sense, I cannot address these fundamental questions.

In another sense, I can easily answer because I am confident the values, priorities, and practices that have shaped religious life for hundreds of years will endure. Undoubtedly, new expressions and ministries of religious life will arise, yet the core mission will remain. Men and women religious will continue to “read the signs of the times” in embodying the Gospel. They will respond to the call to live on the edge, work for justice, and minister with loving compassion. They will serve those in greatest need in local, national, and global communities. And they will do so with courage and joy.

The NRRO will continue to support and further religious life in practical ways. Through Direct Care Assistance, religious institutes will receive immediate financial support to supplement their own retirement funds. Our Planning and Implementation process will furnish hands-on assistance to help significantly underfunded institutes assess their retirement realities and implement remedies to promote ongoing sustainability.

As future Planning and Implementation participants learned at our informational workshop in January, the planning process often calls on congregational leaders to make hard decisions. Further, it may take years to navigate and asks members to reflect deeply on the community’s charism and on their identities as religious. Workshop speakers emphasized that whether the issue is eldercare, finances, or other challenges, this planning is for the continuing of mission.

We are grateful to U.S. bishops for their decision to extend the Retirement Fund for Religious collection for an additional 10 years. Their support is a testimony to the women and men religious, past and present, who have faithfully and creatively served our Church and the People of God. What lies ahead? Truly, only God knows. Our part for the future is to trust in God’s constancy and to continue to live the values and priorities God has given us.



With gratitude,

Sister Stephanie Still, PBVM

NRRO Calendar

February

14 NRRO Webinar:
The Future Shift of Dementia Research

March

31 Direct Care Assistance applications due*

April

21 NRRO Assistance Review Committee meeting

25-27 NRRO Planning and Implementation Assistance workshop
Dayton, Ohio

May

8 NRRO Management Committee meeting

16 NRRO Webinar, Topic TBD

*Must be postmarked by this date.



National Religious Retirement Office

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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. Our mission is to support, educate, and assist religious institutes in the U.S. to embrace their current retirement realities and to plan for the future.

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Stay Connected

Please send changes in address, phone, e-mail, or congregational leadership to the NRRO, c/o Karen Canas (kcanas@usccb.org), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.



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