

Retirement Fund for Religious

Sponsored by the National Religious Retirement Office

2016 Speaker Guide

This guide offers tips and information to help you prepare for your talk as well as a sample speech. Please contact our national office or your (arch)diocesan coordinator if you need further assistance.

Prepare Your Talk

Review the facts about the retirement-funding shortage (*see page 3*).

Visit www.retiredreligious.org to learn more and to view the annual report, which includes details on (arch)diocesan donations and on distributions to religious communities.

Develop talking points or prepare a brief talk. Three to four minutes is ideal. Consider opening your talk with a personal story about your ministry or the positive impact that religious have had on your life.

Practice your talk until you are comfortable.

Deliver Your Talk

State the problem clearly—religious institutes do not have the savings or sources of income necessary to support the growing costs of retirement and eldercare.

Encourage generous participation. Emphasize that religious are grateful for all donations and are conscientious stewards of each dollar received.

Thank parishioners for their time and consideration. Assure them that religious are praying for them.

Trust yourself and speak from the heart.

A Word of Gratitude

Please accept my deepest thanks for your willingness to speak on behalf of the Retirement Fund for Religious. More than facts or statistics, it is the stories you tell—the memories you share—that remind parishioners of the selfless service of religious and that encourage generous participation. May God bless you abundantly for your witness.

Sister Susan Schorsten, HM

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Interim Executive Director
National Religious Retirement Office



Photos: (foreground) Sister Rita Polchin, SSCM, 87; (background) visit retiredreligious.org/2016photos for a list of names.

Sample Talk

Begin by introducing yourself. My name is _____, and I am here to talk to you about the Retirement Fund for Religious, an annual collection that benefits senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

At the Last Supper, Jesus told the Apostles, “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you” (John 15:16). Each of us receives a special call or vocation from God, his choice for our lives. Some are called to be mothers and fathers; others are called to the single life. Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders—known collectively as women and men religious—have answered a call to serve and love God in a particular way. As members of religious congregations, they dedicate their lives to personal and communal prayer and to serving God by ministering to those in need.

Above all, women and men religious strive to help those around them deepen their relationship with God and, in so doing, become the people God calls them to be. Many of us may remember a special sister or brother who had a profound influence on our lives. Whether a teacher in Catholic school or a spiritual director at a retreat, this person was instrumental in helping us discover God’s plan for us.

Today, many of these women and men religious are retired. Some continue in volunteer ministry, while others are frail and need assistance. Sadly, a majority of religious communities do not have sufficient income and savings to provide for older members. Many senior religious worked for years for small stipends. Their sacrifices over many decades now leave their religious communities with a tremendous gap in retirement funding. Longer life expectancies and rising health-care costs compound the challenge to provide adequate care.

The Retirement Fund for Religious was launched in 1988 by Catholic bishops in the United States. The annual collection raises funds that are distributed to religious communities across the country. These funds help eligible communities provide for the immediate needs of their elder members and develop long-range retirement strategies. Religious communities are exceedingly grateful for this assistance and are careful stewards of each dollar received.

In 2015 alone, the annual cost of care for senior religious was over \$1.2 billion. Clearly, the collection cannot eradicate the need, but it can certainly help to alleviate it. The Retirement Fund for Religious is supported solely by donations, and approximately 95 percent of contributions directly aid elder religious and their communities.

So I urge you to give to those who have given a lifetime by donating to today’s second collection. Your generosity provides vital support for prescription medications, nursing care, and more. It also helps to ensure ongoing viability for religious communities, so that younger members can continue the good works begun by their elders! Most importantly, please pray for God’s blessing on all religious. Rest assured, they are praying for you.

Thank you for your time.

Simple Steps for Talking About the Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR)

Review tips and information contained in this guide and on our website.

Arrive early to your scheduled Mass. Introduce yourself to the celebrant, and familiarize yourself with where you will speak.

Share your experience of religious life or how a religious has influenced you.

Pray for the success of the appeal and for all religious.

Relax. You have the goodwill of your audience. A single minute of your time can make a profound difference in donations to the RFR.

Visit www.retiredreligious.org to learn more.

Why We Ask You to Help

Skyrocketing Costs

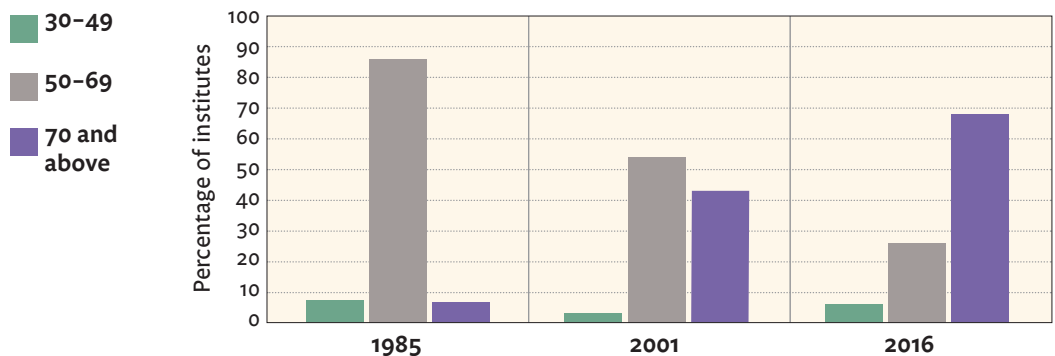
- There are nearly 33,000 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2015, the average annual cost for their care was over \$41,000 per person.
- For each of the last seven years, the total cost to support women and men religious has exceeded \$1 billion.

Insufficient Income

- Since 1985, the number of religious needing care has risen sharply while the number able to serve in compensated ministry has steadily declined. In 2015, 68 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) had a median age of 70 or older.
- For most of their lives, elder religious worked for small stipends. There were no 401(k) plans or pensions.
- Religious communities are financially autonomous and solely responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings, and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.
- The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious is \$6,312, while the average U.S. beneficiary receives \$16,092.

Since 1985, the percentage of religious institutes with a median age of 70 or older has risen from 7 percent to 68 percent of the total religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office.

Median Age in Participating Religious Institutes



How the RFR Makes a Difference

Generous Donations and Careful Stewardship

- Catholics in the United States have donated more than \$785 million to the RFR since the first appeal.
- Roughly 95 percent of donations to the RFR aid elder religious, with 5 percent used for administration.

Financial and Consultative Support

- Since 1989, nearly \$659 million has been distributed to support the day-to-day care of elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.
- An additional \$86 million has been allocated toward self-help projects initiated by religious communities, including collaborative health-care facilities and comprehensive retirement planning.
- In 2009, the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) implemented a new process to help religious communities that are critically underfunded for retirement address their funding shortfalls. Since then, the NRRO has helped 127 communities develop long-range retirement strategies.

Data on women and men religious obtained from the NRRO database of participating religious institutes as of December 31, 2015.



National Religious Retirement Office

Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious

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