**2017 Retirement Fund for Religious (RFR)** [**retiredreligious.org**](http://www.retiredreligious.org)

Sample letter—(Arch)bishop to pastors

Soon, our parishes will conduct the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection. I urge you to join me in offering your prayerful and vocal support to this appeal.

In his homily on the World Day of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis remarked, “Putting Jesus in the midst of his people means taking up and carrying the crosses of our brothers and sisters.”1 Through prayer and ministry, our senior religious did just this. As they cared for the sick, aided the needy, and educated countless children, they sought to shoulder the crosses of those they served—making tangible the love of Jesus. Today, we see the legacy of these selfless women and men carried forth in the ongoing ministries of their religious communities.

Yet many communities struggle with insufficient retirement savings. Rising health-care costs and decreased income compound the challenge to furnish adequate eldercare. In 1988, U.S. bishops initiated the annual appeal to help address the deficit in retirement funding. Proceeds offer financial assistance and services that help congregations care for aging members while continuing to focus on mission and ministry.

So I invite you to encourage a generous response to the collection. Consider hosting a speaker at Mass or make the appeal yourself. Share with parishioners the contributions religious have made and continue to make to our Church and world. Most importantly, please announce the collection from the pulpit.

I understand that many worthwhile causes vie for the limited resources of parishioners; I ask you simply to urge their support. May we all unite in love and thanksgiving for the elderly religious who “put Jesus in our midst.”

Pope Francis, Homily, XXI World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2017, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/consecrated_life/documents/papa-francesco_20170202_omelia-vita-consacrata.html>.