

# Retirement Fund for Religious

## Why We Ask

- In 1988, Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious to address the significant lack of retirement funding for Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests in religious orders.
- For most of their lives, elder religious worked for little to no pay. There were no 401(k) plans or pensions.
- Religious communities are financially 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.
- Only 5 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office are adequately funded for retirement; 40 percent have 25 or fewer members. Many small communities struggle to care for elder members due to a lack of financial resources and personnel.
- Today, religious past age 70 outnumber religious under age 70 by nearly three to one.
- There are 28,418 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2019, the average annual cost for their care was roughly \$47,000 per person; skilled care averaged \$72,000 per person.
- Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded \$1 billion.
- In 2019, 72 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office had a median age of 70 or higher.
- The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious is \$6,843, whereas the average US beneficiary receives \$18,034.

Statistics on women and men religious were obtained from the NRRO database of participating religious institutes as of December 31, 2019. Visit [usc.cb.org/nrro](https://usc.cb.org/nrro) to access a full statistical report.

## How Donations Help

- Each year, hundreds of US religious communities receive financial assistance made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious. Communities can use this funding for immediate retirement expenses or invest it for future needs. Since the first collection, US Catholics have donated almost \$899 million.
- Almost \$762 million has been distributed since 1989 to support the day-to-day care of elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. An additional \$101 million has been allocated toward self-help projects initiated by religious communities, including collaborative health-care facilities.
- In addition to direct financial assistance, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational programming, services, and resources that enable religious communities to evaluate and prepare for long-term retirement needs.
- Support from the Retirement Fund for Religious helps religious communities care for senior members while continuing important ministries to the People of God.



From left: Sister Alice Garcia, SSCJ, 91; Brother Martin Gonzales, OCSO, 95; Sister Theresa McGrath, CCVI, 86; Sister Anne Cecile Muldoon, OSU, 93; Abbot Emeritus Peter Eberle, OSB, 79.



## National Religious Retirement Office

**Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious**

Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious • United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington DC 20017-1194  
Phone (202) 541-3215  
Fax (202) 541-3053