



Archdiocese of Philadelphia  
Office of the Cardinal  
222 North 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

December, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past years the **Annual Retirement Fund for Religious Collection** in our country has provided much needed assistance for those religious who have generously given of themselves in the service of the Gospel. In these uncertain economic times, we all recognize the additional burden placed upon religious congregations in caring for their elderly, sick and retired members.

The role of consecrated religious in the history of the American Church offers a truly remarkable witness. With great enthusiasm, and often in difficult and trying circumstances, these men and women have undertaken the challenge of bringing Christ's salvific message and comfort to so many needing that grace. From parish schools and education centers to hospitals and hospices, to academic institutions of higher learning, their selfless dedication demonstrates how God cares for His people through the hands and hearts of these chosen servants. Quickly do our thoughts turn to Bishop John Neumann and Mother Katharine Drexel, humble saints in our midst, whose testimony of lived evangelization stands ever before us.

As we appreciate the active role of religious men and women in varied apostolates, we know well that the Church's mission depends also upon the prayers and self offering of those in contemplative life. Sacrifice and prayer give life and sustenance to all our efforts.

Once again I ask you for your continued generous support for our devoted brothers and sisters in this Retirement Fund for Religious Collection, scheduled for December 12-13, 2009. Let us also gratefully remember them in our daily prayers.

Assuring you of my personal thanks, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

+ ***Justin Card. Rigali***

Justin Cardinal Rigali  
Archbishop of Philadelphia

(Please communicate the contents of this letter to your parishioners in the most appropriate manner on the weekend of December 5-6, 2009; the collection is taken up the following weekend of December 12 and 13, 2009. Collection remittance should be made payable to ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA and sent to: Office for Accounting Services, 222 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299)