



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

*Office of the Bishop*

November 28, 2011

Dear Friends,

In 2010, while visiting a senior-care facility, our **Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI** noted, "Indeed, the provision of care for the elderly should be considered not so much an act of generosity as the repayment of a *debt of gratitude*." The **weekend of December 10-11** our parishes will be taking up the annual collection for the **Retirement Fund for Religious**, an opportunity to honor and thank thousands of senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests for their faithful service.

Whether or not we realize it, we are all beneficiaries of the tremendous contributions these women and men have made to the Church in the United States. Through hard work, prayer, and sacrifice, they built Catholic schools and hospitals, initiated programs to promote social justice, and ministered to the neediest among us. As I reflect on the dedication of elder religious, I remain grateful for the ways they have shaped my own faith and for the tremendous service they have offered our diocese. I hope you, too, recall a sister or brother who made a positive difference in your life.

Today, many religious communities struggle to care for their elderly members. Sky-rocketing health-care costs and decreased income make it increasingly difficult to provide necessary medications, nursing care, and basic services. Aging convent buildings and other facilities pose additional challenges in terms of safety and handicap accessibility.

I recognize this is but one of numerous worthy causes in need of support and that many in our own community face financial difficulties. I ask you simply to give what you can. In *thanksgiving* for all that senior religious have done, please join me in supporting the **Retirement Fund for Religious** and in praying for God's continued blessing on our nation's elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley  
Bishop of Grand Rapids