



Edinburgh, 31 August 2018

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

### **Clergy pension fund**

The ministerial priesthood is one of Christ's greatest gifts to his Holy Church. Consider for a moment your own life: Think of the priest who taught you the Catholic faith when you were young; the priest who prepared you and your spouse for marriage; the priest who every week visited your elderly relatives; the priest who sustained you through the death of a loved one; the priest who brings Jesus Christ to the altar for you each day; the priest who applies the salve of Christ's forgiveness to your soul in Confession. As Catholics, we love our priests because our priests bring us the love of Jesus. Hence the priest is often referred to as *alter Christus*, another Christ.

With this spirit of gratitude in mind, I would like to raise with you a delicate but vital issue: the costs associated with the retirement of our diocesan priests, both today and tomorrow. Let me set out the figures.

At present, the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh has 25 retired priests. That number will rise steadily in the coming decades. During their years of active service, our priests receive an annual salary equivalent to £56 per week. That is why the practical support and financial generosity of our lay faithful in each parish is so necessary.

When a priest retires from active duty, the present arrangement sees the Archdiocese pay him an allowance to cover his living expenses, and housing costs, and where necessary contributions to medical expenses as he gets older. Such a package provides for a modest but dignified retirement for our priests.

In 2017, the total cost of supporting the 25 currently retired priests was £383,000. Looking ahead, the cost of the retired priests will inexorably rise over time as more of our active priests get older and, thankfully, live longer. Our financial advisers have calculated that in 8-10 years' time we will need an additional £330,000 a year.

Until now, we have asked each parish to contribute to the costs via the annual collection for the Archdiocesan Aged and Infirm Clergy Fund or AICF. Over the decades you have been generous, and we are, all of us, immensely grateful to you. This annual collection, though, now covers less than half the total sum required to support our retired priests. What is more, the AICF investment fund only covers a further 5% of the cost of each allowance.

The remaining "black hole" is currently filled by transferring funds from the general income of the Archdiocese. However, this income is already insufficient to meet the many needs of running an Archdiocese as large as ours and this shortfall will only

increase as the number of retired clergy grows. In recent years, we have had to sell some assets, but this is not a sensible long-term solution as it means that there will be less money available in the future to support our increased numbers of aged and infirm clergy, and all the other expenses of running our Archdiocese.

The sums of money which I have spoken about look rather large in relation to the average wage of many people. However, we have three great advantages: A large number of people to share the burden, a generous spirit, and time. Thankfully we have an increasing number of students for the priesthood in our seminaries. As soon as a new priest is ordained, though, we should begin to set money aside so that when he retires, God willing, in some 50 years' time, the money will already be there to meet his needs for a secure retirement.

So, what am I asking from you?

First, this year's collection for the Aged and Infirm Clergy Fund **has to raise twice the sum it did last year**. Secondly, the ways in which we raise the money - £10 and £20 notes at the end of Mass - are not sensible for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Archdiocese is a charity, and therefore **Gift Aid** can be claimed back from the Exchequer, adding 25% to the value of your donations. **Standing orders** must be put to work by all of us, as well as **legacies in wills**.

I fully understand that there are many demands on your money and wealth, starting above all with your own loved ones, and especially at a time when prices are often rising faster than incomes. However, as you know from your own experience, our retired priests and those soon to retire have dedicated their lives to our service, and we owe it to them to ensure they have a modest, dignified and secure retirement.

Please do consider the financial support that you can give.

With every blessing, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+ Leo Cushley

Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh