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up to when I retired. I've been able to do some of that and still have a way to go."

Retirement also meant more of an opportunity for travel in some cases. Father Nimocks has visited his sister in Florida on a couple of occasions in his year of retirement and plans to go with her and her husband to Italy later this month. Msgr. Noon said he did plenty of traveling in his early retirement years. "Now I've seen enough airports" and he's content to stay closer to home, he said.

The diocese has 45 retired priests, 25 of whom live on their own, with five living in a parish rectory and 15 at the Villas, Mother McCrory Manor, the Mohun Health Care Center operated by the Dominican Sisters of Peace in Columbus, or other retirement facilities. Like many other senior citizens, they face the challenge of living on a fixed income and whatever they have saved for retirement, with the diocese providing help for them in a variety of ways.

All priests age 70 and older with at least 30 years of service who opt to retire receive a monthly pension of \$1,300 from the diocese, in addition to whatever they have earned through Social Security. Other income may come from retirement savings and through what they receive from parishes for Masses, hearing confession, or other activities for which a stipend is customary.

Those living on their own, including priests in the independent living portion of the Villas, pay their housing, food, car, clothing, and other everyday expenses from that money. The diocese pays 100 percent of the premiums for a Medicare supplement plan and a prescription drug plan for its priests. The priests have to make co-payments for prescription drugs.

The diocese also pays the premiums for retired priests to participate in the same dental, vision, and long-term care insurance plans as active priests and other diocesan employees.

Retired priests who are in assisted living at the Villas or elsewhere or are in a nursing home have the cost of those arrangements paid for by the diocese. In exchange, the retired priest remits to the diocese his monthly pension and Social Security payments. The diocese also provides him with a \$300 monthly allowance.

"Many retired priests in such a situation have been saving for many years for their retirement. The di-

ocese doesn't touch those savings," said Father Michael Lumpe, diocesan vicar for priests. "The assistance the diocese provides means these priests don't have to sell or otherwise give up everything they have to make them eligible for Medicaid, but can keep what they've saved through their years of service."

William Davis, diocesan finance director, said that for the fiscal year which ended June 30, the diocese provided approximately \$880,000 in benefits for assisted living or nursing home care and \$330,000 in insurance benefits of various types for retired priests, plus about \$775,000 in pension benefits, for a total fiscal expenditure of slightly less than \$2 million.

This money comes from several sources, including the diocesan assessments paid by each parish, payments made by parishes into the diocese's retirement plan, and gifts to the Bishop's Annual Appeal and to the Catholic Foundation's retirement fund for diocesan priests and for religious men and women who serve or have served in the diocese.

"When parishioners rightly ask what the parish assessment or their donations in support of the Bishop's Annual Appeal go toward, this is a very important aspect to remember – supporting and caring for our retired diocesan priests who devoted their lives in faithful service to the people of God," Father Lumpe added.


He noted that money given to the Retirement Fund for Religious collection taken every December in the Diocese of Columbus and throughout the nation does not go to support diocesan priests. It is for members of religious orders.

"One of the best ways for people to support their priests is through The Catholic Foundation's religious retirement fund," Msgr. Meagher said. "I encourage everyone who is grateful to diocesan priests for the work they have done to consider this."

"Retired priests continue to serve the church, just in a different way," added Msgr. Noon. "We need people's support and prayers as much as ever, as we continue to pray for them." Msgr. Schneider echoed those thoughts, saying, "I may not live among my former parishioners, but I haven't forgotten them, and I think most any pastor will say the same."



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