

## Your gift helps to meet the needs of aging religious...

The generosity of our donors answered the recent needs of two congregations with projects that enable their elderly sisters to remain active members of their communities as they age. The Benedictine Sisters of Virginia needed to renovate their bathrooms and the Sisters of St. John the Baptist in New York wanted to install a ventilation system.

The Benedictine Sisters of Virginia have a history of 141 years of providing education and helping people in need help themselves. There are 17 retired or infirmed sisters at their monastery in Bristow, Virginia. A key component of the Benedictine charism is stability – attachment for life to one monastery. SOAR!'s grant of \$15,000 to help with renovations of bathrooms to

make them more accessible for the elderly allows the sisters in Bristow to age in place. Small but expensive changes in the bathroom facilities help elderly sisters to stay with their congregations and remain active in the ministries to which God has called them.



Since 1906 the Sisters of St. John the Baptist in Staten Island, New York have selflessly devoted their lives working on behalf of those who are God's "little ones". Many of their retired sisters live in the 100 year old Convent Building. A large rotunda at the top offers natural light but lack of ventilation causes heat to build up in the hallways outside of the elderly sisters' rooms. SOAR!'s gift of \$18,000 allowed them to install ventilation system providing the sisters with a more safe, efficient and comfortable environment.

SOAR! has just received more than 50 requests totaling over \$1 million from aging religious congregations all over the country. Your generosity will help to meet those needs and allow the sisters and brothers who have given so faithfully throughout their lives to age with stability, dignity and comfort.



The retired Sisters of St. John the Baptist and the Sister Staff at Mt. St. John Retirement Convent pause for a 'family photo'.



Sr. Joanne Marruso and Sr. Matilde Parisi pose at Sr. Matilde's 100th birthday party. This January she will be 102.

The Staff of SOAR! and the Board of Directors wish you a blessed holiday season. Merry Christmas from SOAR!

## DEAR FRIENDS OF SOAR!

Christmas Blessings!



Sister Kathleen Lunsmann, IHM President

Sounds of Christmas fill the air as I write to you today while listening to the radio station already playing carols. It seems Christmas comes earlier with each passing year. My heart is still in the season of Thanksgiving because I have so many reasons for which to be grateful. Among the special blessings for which I thank God this year are the lives of religious men and women and the generosity of the SOAR! donors who help them in their aging years. So, I say a special THANK YOU not only to you, our dear friends and benefactors, but also to the many retired religious who

served others selflessly and wholeheartedly.

Nothing brings me greater peace and joy than to be able to respond favorable to a religious congregation asking SOAR! for help for their aging members. When a Sister writes and asks SOAR! to help fund renovations needed in their motherhouse to help aging sisters, my heart is moved with compassion and I desperately want to help. Unfortunately, I cannot say "Yes" to every congregation that appeals to SOAR! for assistance. However, with your generous support,

SOAR! can help more and more congregations each year. Your faithful and continued support means that more religious can live their remaining years with the dignity they deserve.

May you know the peace in your heart this Christmas. May the coming of the Child Jesus bring joy and hope to you and your loved ones. Know that you are in my prayers and in the prayers of all the aging religious you support. Merry Christmas!

D. Kachleen Junsma

### SOAR! WANTS DONORS TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2011 TAX LAW CHANGES



The new year will bring new changes to federal taxes–estate taxes, that is. On January 1, 2011, federal estate tax laws are expected to undergo major adjustments. If your estate is worth more than \$1 million when you die–called the exemption level–it may be subject to estate taxes in 2011, unless Congress steps in before then to increase that amount.

What Does This Mean for You? It has been several years since the threshold level has been as low as \$1 million. Even with some economic downturns, chances are you own more assets than you did a few years ago, and the ones you owned back then are likely worth more now than they were before. So, it's possible your estate will now be subject to federal estate taxes. This means it may be necessary to revise your estate plan.

**Suggestion:** Review your plans with your estate planning attorney as soon as possible to determine if any part of your plan needs updated. Please consider remembering SOAR! in your will. Our legal title is: Support Our Aging Religious, Inc. (SOAR!) 900 Varnum Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017.

### Make your year-end gift online at www.soar-usa.org

Online giving is simple, efficient and safe.

Do you have room on your Christmas list for one
more gift? Please send a donation to SOAR!

to help aging religious this Christmas.



Thank You So Much!

### "Where Do I Send the Check?"

An Interview with John Fialka - SOAR! founder

### Q. Tell our readers about the beginnings of SOAR!.

A. SOAR! was inspired by readers of one of my newspaper articles and their question to me, "Where do I send the check?" Let me explain. . . I have written thousands of stories during my long career as a journalist, but none of them aroused the reaction that came after a front-page story I wrote for the Wall Street Journal in 1986. Subscribers read the article and then my phone began ringing. It went on for days.



The story had been about how the US Catholic church had established a pension fund for priests, but there wasn't any for nuns and brothers. Unbeknownst to most Catholics, the retired members in some religious orders were living on the edge of poverty. The underfunded liability—or the gap between the needs of religious orders and the funds they had to live on—was then in the neighborhood of \$2 billion.

The typical caller was a Catholic professional who had been taught by sisters—as I had been. They all wanted to know one thing: "Where do I send the check". We told the callers we needed their help in forming a specific lay organization devoted to raising money to help ease the most pressing problems of religious orders. That was how SOAR! was founded.

Q. Where did you get the name SOAR!? A. The name came from one of the callers.

### Q. What have you learned about religious from your experience with SOAR!?

A. I have been a member of SOAR!'s board and at our annual banquets in Washington. I found myself chatting with a wide spectrum of nuns. As a student of parochial schools, I thought I knew about these women and their traditions, but I really didn't. When I read about their sacrifices to build Catholic

parishes, hospitals and schools, I realized that their experiences had all the ingredients of a good story that would seem new to many Catholics, indeed to many Americans. That's how my third book, "Sisters, Catholic Nuns and The Making of America," was born. It was published in 2003 by St. Martins Press and it's still in print.

# Q. What is your hope for the future of religious life?

A. Starting in the late 1960's a lot of sisters and brothers have gone away from the religious orders and the mighty works they set in place. My hope is that the sacrifices they made and the examples they set for us will not be lost on future generations. The need for their creativity, their nurturing spirit and the strong faith that these orders instilled in others has certainly not gone away.

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God has been generous with blessings; therefore let us share our bounty with others.

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Let us remember in prayer our dear friends and benefactors who died this year. These generous donors included SOAR! in their estate plans enabling SOAR! to continue to support aging religious. We are grateful for the generosity and selfless giving of the following:

Maree Brennan

William O. Brown

Julie M. Deserrano

Gertrude H. Goetz

Anna Clarke Johnson

George Tierney

Anne Wunsche

Eternal rest grant unto them. O Lord.

Ind let perpetual light shine upon them.

May their souls and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

Imen.

Please remember SOAR! in your will. Thank you.