

Parish Surveyed for Time and Talent

By **ROBERT J. BYRNE**
(Catholic Press Features)

Like workers walking the ground with metal detectors in search of hidden treasure, pastors now have available to them a tool for surveying their parish for hidden human assets.

The tool is not a geiger counter but a computerized data card, and the man who supplies it is a Redemptorist "system priest" who has the "software" to unearth virtually anything a parish community contains.

The priest is Father Gerard R. Breitenbeck, CSSR, head of what is called the Redemptorist Parish Service. At Redemptorist headquarters in Missouri he has what is probably the first and only computer software company inspired by the Second Vatican Council.

The 69-year-old Father Breitenbeck explained that "at the close of the Council, we realized that there was a job to be done in the area of communications within the Church. We could see computerization coming, and decided that somebody who understood the Church had to get into it."

Their entry into the field has not been timid. The Redemptorists have a staff of 54 working in two general areas: products for the Church, which include a

monthly magazine, parish Sunday bulletins, pamphlets, and services for the church, including parish analyses, organizational surveys and self-studies and now — their newest — a parish Time and Talent Survey (TTS).

Simply stated, the TTS is a through-going inquiry of parishioners about how they would like to help out the parish or take part in parish life. In concept, it differs little from the "come and sign up at the end of the meeting" appeal for volunteers. Its execution, however, is another matter.

For a small fee, Father Breitenbeck and his staff provide a complete package, consisting of sermon outlines, inserts for the parish bulletin, an information card for each family that lists 48 volunteer jobs, computerized processing of the returns and printout.

Pre-survey material stresses the theme of Christian stewardship, namely, each person has received certain particular gifts from God which should be used for the good of both God and one's fellow man. Tithing is mentioned, briefly, as a form of financial stewardship. But the focus of this campaign is the contribution of personal service and talent to the parish community.

Father Breitenbeck explains

that the cards are collected from the parish and then prepared by the Redemptorist staff according to a computer program he helped develop. ("I'm one of the few priest-members of the Systems Management Association," he volunteered.)

The computer printout lists the names and telephone numbers of the parishioners who volunteered for a particular job. It also gives an alphabetical list of names, along with each service he has volunteered for.

The pastor of one parish of 1700 families reported satisfactory results with the Time and Talent Survey.

The rate of return on the survey cards was 56 per cent, and there were people discovered with time and talent to give to the parish.

"I'd say that we got a parish choir almost overnight," said the associate pastor, after discovering that 49 parishioners were interested in singing.

In other areas, the pastor obtained volunteers in almost every one of the jobs listed on the survey card.

"One of the big things to me, anyway, was the 113 men who volunteered to help in the Development Fund campaign," he said, adding that he also obtained enough blood donors for the parish to make its 300-pint quota for the first time.

"We've also called on the person who volunteered to be a teenage advisor, and we're in the process of forming a parish St. Vincent de Paul Society. And just this week I picked up the phone and got a lady to address a bunch of envelopes that had to go out."



Refugees from Burundi

Members of the Hutu tribe rest in a field in Swima, Zaire, after fleeing their homes in Burundi. Some reports indicate that Hutu are still being killed by members of the ruling Tutsi tribe in reprisal for an attempted coup against the government of Col Michel Micombero in April. The government of the small east African nation puts the death toll from civil strife at 80,000; other sources put it at 100,000 to 200,000. A recent United Nations report on the situation in Burundi said that 40,000 Burundis have sought refuge in neighboring countries. The Burundi Mission to the U.N. has categorically denied that there have been any wanton "killings" in their country in recent weeks. (RNS).

Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

Graham R. Hodges of Watertown says he is "a middle age, middle class white American whose modest deposits in a black bank are nothing compared to the stake he and his children and grandchildren have in a better America."

Because he is convinced that the system can really work, he wrote a practical leaflet called "Making The System Work by Depositing Money In Minority Controlled Banks."

I have long recommended that parish councils should work to get their parish funds and the monies of individual parishioners deposited in minority banks.

The chief reason for the continuing poverty of the ghetto areas is that so little of the smaller wages made by the people there stays in their community.

The publishers of Tuesday, a black supplement that is included in many newspapers across the country, claim that only three percent of the money made by black people stays in their community.

The most practical way then to get funds together that can be used to create better housing, spur new businesses, and provide for family needs in the poorer areas is through strengthening the minority banks and institutions.

In October, 1970, President Nixon announced that \$35,000,000 of federal agency funds would be deposited within a year in minority banks.

The bank deposits of churches, and other private, tax-exempt organizations, like government funds, run into tens of billions annually. This money could be put to better use in the fight against poverty through placing it in minority banks.

For example, because one man asked about this possibility, the Heart Assembly of one eastern state transferred part of its funds to three black banks.

It really takes very little effort to help the poor through deposit-

ing your own funds and the parish funds in a minority bank.

You can simply write or visit one of the minority banks or savings and loan institutions. Hodges gives a list of about 75 such institutions. There are more. And he doesn't list the credit unions in minority areas, which are usually established in a parish or a neighborhood.

While in some few cases you may receive a slightly lower rate of interest, this tiny loss would be hardly missed at all. Meanwhile, you would be putting your money where your mouth is.

Your funds would be insured, up to \$20,000 per account, in all banks and savings and loan associations, under federal law.

Insurance is also available in credit union accounts. Ask the officers when you apply to deposit your funds.

Picture Christ alive today in His ministry. He is talking to Judas. They are discussing their small treasury. What would Christ say?

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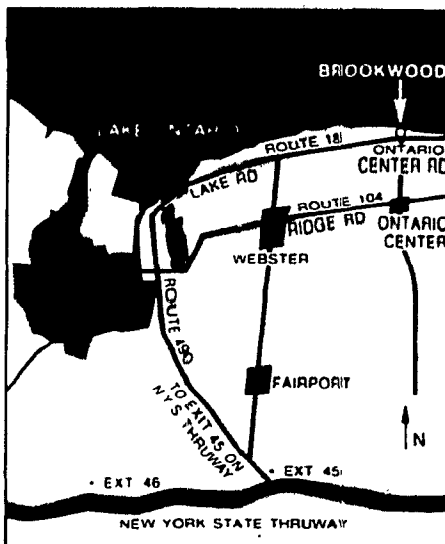
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