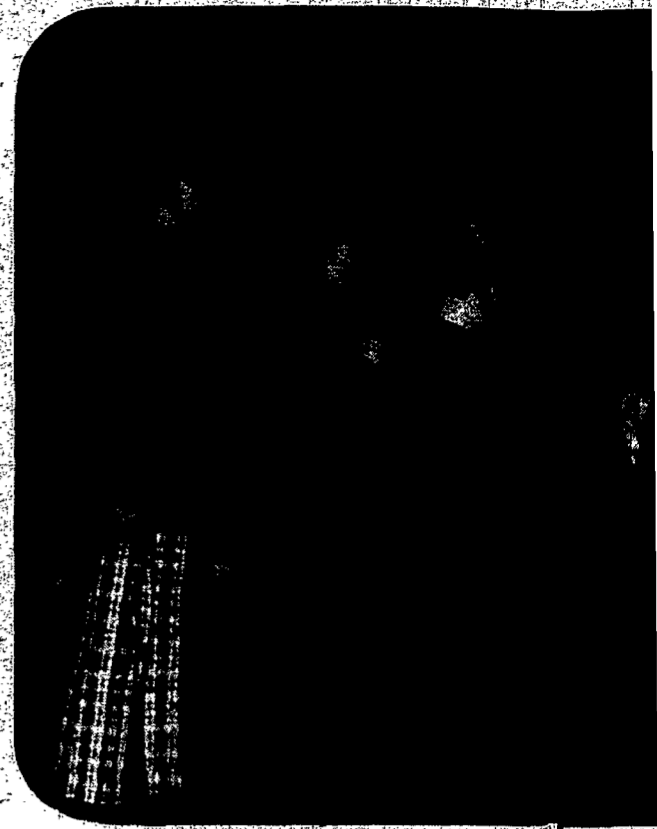




The Newhook family conducts a prayer service and leads singing at an area nursing home.



Father Edward Palumbos gives the pyx, containing the Eucharist, to the Burke family.

SERVICE ● FAMILIES ●

Extending the Ministry of the Church, Through a Greater Participation in the Eucharist

Text and Photos
By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn — In a program symbolizing hope and new life, laymen who have permission to serve as extraordinary ministers are distributing Communion to Catholic patients in the five city nursing and proprietary homes.

"Service Families" from four parishes, Sacred Heart, St. Mary's, St. Hyacinth's and St. Alphonsus, and Legion of Mary members from Holy Family, conduct a brief prayer service and distribute Communion each Sunday in the home assigned to each parish.

The homes include Auburn Nursing Home, Hewitts, Kalets, Restmore, and Washington Heights.

This approach is an outgrowth of an interparish effort to assure more comprehensive coverage in nursing homes and to extend the hand of Christian caring. Family participation in the monthly Mass and Communion in these homes brings a new dimension to the broadening nursing home ministry and provides another opportunity for Christian sharing.

"This is the parishes' way of helping those who can't come to us now to participate in the liturgy of the day," explained Father Edward Palumbos, family life chairman for the area. "The Service Families bring our parish services to those people to give them a sense of belonging to the larger community that gathers for worship each weekend."

The Service Family receives the Eucharist from the celebrant during Mass, after the congregation has received communion. The whole family is blessed then and sent out.

The Eucharist is carried to the nursing home in a container called a pyx. The family gathers in a room prepared beforehand with those who will be receiving Holy Communion. The reading and prayers which precede the distribution of Communion are shared among the members of the Service Family who encourage as full participation by the residents as possible.

The nursing home committee is pleased at the number of families responding to the call since many patients have little or no contact with the younger generation. This approach also benefits the Service Families, as well, since it involves the aged or infirm in their lives in a more personal way.

The extraordinary minister is not ordained. He or she is an ordinary Christian called to a role of extraordinary service. They represent all Christians and are a sign of their communal pledge to serve one another.

The use of the extraordinary ministers also allows the faithful to participate more fully in the Eucharistic celebration.

The nursing home involvement on the part of these lay people broadens the church's ministry through fostering the devotion to the Eucharist, the summit and center of Christian worship.



Newhook distributes Holy Communion.



Msgr. Joseph Sullivan invests members of the Legion of Mary of Holy Family. The Legion has also taken on the duties of the service families.