

**Division of Support Ministries 1983-84**

The purpose of the Support Ministries Division is to provide parishes with support, information and technical expertise necessary to carry out ministry more effectively.

**PARISH VISITATION PROGRAM (Census)**

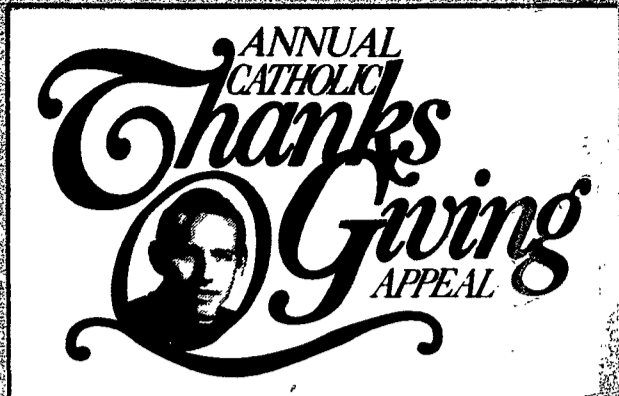
One of the primary services of the Office of Pastoral Planning and Management is to assist parishes in conducting a Parish Visitation Program (Census).

This program is far more than a "head count" of people residing within the parish boundaries. The diocesan office provides support in educating parishioners in how to make a person-to-person home visit to gather biographical, sacramental, needs and talent information. The program offers the parishioners an opportunity for peer-to-peer ministry as they make personal visits to all Catholics living in the geographical boundaries of the parish.

As a result of a recently conducted Visitation Program at St. Thomas More, Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey said that the "Parish Visitation Program is a most effective means of community building. It identifies Catholics in the geographical area and provides an inconspicuous entry into the life of the parish. A certain camaraderie is early developed among the workers who form the nucleus of the deeper parish bond. The Parish Visitation Program surfaces unknown needs to which the parishioners, in various ways, can effectively respond. It reassures those who have ceased active participation in the



Father John Walsh of St. Paul's, Webster.



**Father Gerald Connor of St. Pius X and his secretary review data filed in the computer.**



church, that they are still the object of the love and concern of their sisters and brothers in the Lord. For Catholics who have fallen away or become inactive, this visit may be the first contact with a representative of a parish in many years and may be the first step towards welcoming the person or family back into the life of the Church.

About 70 parishes in our diocese have completed the Parish Visitation Program. St. Catherine of Siena Parish and Immaculate recently completed the Parish Visitation Program and Sister Edna Stark (religious education coordinator) said the program opened our eyes to the needs of our people. Because the parish staff is so new, meetings have been scheduled for senior citizens, retreat and renewal groups, married couples with widowed, separated and divorced persons and various information was provided for the RCIA program.

**PARISH INFORMATION PROGRAM**

**DIOCESAN COMPUTER**

The information gathered is often processed on the diocesan

**PARISH COMPUTER**

With the institution of the Parish Computer Program, we have helped the parishes who are interested in having a computer at their site to get their own process their census information and other parish records. The Office of Pastoral Planning and Management developed a software package that corresponds to the one used at the diocesan office and supplies it to the parish at no cost.

Parishes have found the computer to be a help in the instant retrieval of pertinent information about their parish families. It has given parish staff an opportunity for quick access to information for ministry programs.

Father Gerald Connor (pastor of St. Pius X) stated, "The possibilities of the census are endless. The computer has saved us hours of time by sorting 1700 census cards in a few moments instead of the many hours that were needed to manually go through them to identify persons who could be contacted through Evangelization and ministry programs. The Lord has given us the capability of developing this technology - we can make use of it in service of ministry."

Father John Walsh (pastor of St. Paul's Parish, Webster) commented that he "hopes that the computer would be an asset to his religious education committee, parish staff and teachers by providing a list by age category for the 600 children in their school of religion."

Carolyn Gommel (secretary at St. Pius X) stated that she "found the computer has saved a lot of time in posting envelope contributions and in gathering information on age groups of children for sacramental programs."



Father Thomas Doherty, pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows parish, oversees the work of the computer.

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