

Census program aids parishes with planning

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

In the good shepherd parable, the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to find the one who went astray.

Parishes in the Diocese of Rochester engage in similar searches when they conduct censuses — except that parishes are trying to keep tabs on both the 99 and the one.

And the censuses do turn up "lost sheep," noted Catherine Anton of Auburn's St. Alphonsus Church, 95 E. Genesee St.

"We've brought back a few families that had fallen away," Anton said. "They set up appointments with our pastor and some of them have come back."

St. Alphonsus took part in a city-wide census this May, when all seven of Auburn's Catholic parishes cooperated in the effort. Hundreds of volunteers went door-to-door asking questions about church and parish affiliation, current involvement in parish life, areas in which one would be willing to become involved, and about individual spiritual needs — both met and unmet.

Anton estimated that 90 percent of the households in the Cayuga County community were contacted through the census.

The Auburn census was perhaps the largest such collaborative effort in diocesan history. Although parishes share relevant data with area churches, they generally conduct separate censuses.

The goal of a parish census, however, is not simply to discover lost sheep who have wandered away, noted Father Peter Clifford, director of Parish Support Ministries, which includes the Parish Visitation (or Census) Program.

"(The census) is a tool for pastoral planning," Father Clifford said. "It gives you an idea of who the parishioners are, and what their needs are."

That view was shared by Sister Janice Nadeau, SSND, pastoral associate at Holy Ghost Parish, 220 Coldwater Road, Rochester.

"It's basically so you know who your parishioners are," said Sister Nadeau, whose parish conducted a census in 1989.

A census helps staff determine the number of parishioners and also helps the parish plan programs, Sister Nadeau said. She pointed out, for example, that Holy Ghost Parish conducted a census before launching a stewardship campaign. And the committee currently overseeing the parish synod sessions at Holy Ghost is using census data in its preparations.

A census also helps parish staff keep tabs on families who move to and from the parish, and on changes in families through death or children moving away from home, Sister Nadeau said.

In addition, the census allows the parish to discover shut-ins or people with transportation needs, observed Jim Fahl, who coordinated the census at St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish in Hornell last May along with neighboring St. Ann's Church.

Further, a census helps a parish acquire a pool of potential volunteers, Fahl said.

He noted, for example, that his parish's religious-education program recently needed another teacher. Using the census data, he then conducted a computer search.

"Out of 1,000 cards, I found seven people who wanted to become religious-education teachers," Fahl reported.

Although most parishes conduct their own censuses, they do receive support from the diocese through the Parish Visitation Program, which is supported by the Thanks Giving Appeal. As part of the program, parishes are made aware of what other churches have done when conducting censuses; are provided with sample question cards; and are advised about ways



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Albert Meech (right) fills out a census form after the Aug. 30 Mass at Rochester's St. Monica Church, as census-taker Pilar Glasow looks on.

to organize and train volunteers.

Anton noted that Father Clifford traveled to Auburn several times for meetings with team leaders, workers and volunteers.

Likewise, Father Clifford made a number of visits to Hornell to help with organizing census efforts there, Fahl said.

"Father Clifford was always here," he noted.

Father Clifford observed that he and

Deacon Claude Lester are simply carrying on the legacy of Father Peter Bayer, who launched the parish census program 17 years ago. Since that time, according to Father Clifford, 112 parish censuses have been performed.

Overall, Fahl observed, census data will help the parish "to be better coordinated. Our lists weren't up-to-date. Now, we're better organized because of this."

Gerald F. Campo, DDS



- No Needle Anesthesia (Ultra Soothe)
- TMJ Therapy
- All General Dentistry Procedures
- We Participate in all Blue Shield Dental Plans
- (All other Dental Insurance Plans can also be used)

Please call for more information
and to make appointments

2751 Dewey Ave., Rochester • 663-5620

★ Start Your Career Today!

- ★ LARGEST Upstate Chain of Beauty Schools
- ★ EXPERT Instructors with Top Level Experience
- ★ PERSONAL Attention
- ★ LIFETIME Placement Assistance

Our Salon is open to the public

Classes are forming now.
So, don't wait. Financial aid is available, if qualified.

CONTINENTAL
School of Beauty
the leader in style™

633 Jefferson Road Rochester, NY 14623 (716) 272-8060
2255 Ridge Road East Rochester, NY 14622 (716) 342-9011

St. Joseph's VILLA of Rochester

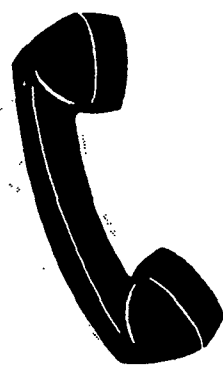
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

St. Joseph's Villa is looking for adults to work one-on-one with a young person in our care. If you enjoy teenagers and are:

- 21 years of age or older
- Able to spend 4 hours every other week with a child
- Willing to make a 1 year commitment
- Dependable, caring, fun-loving and a good role model...

You could make a great difference in the life of one of our children by sharing your talents and time. It can be a rewarding experience!

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at St. Joseph's Villa, contact Kathleen Pexton, Director of Volunteers, at 865-1550.



NEED-A-PHYSICIAN?
DIAL
473-NEED

473-6333

A free community service provided by Highland Hospital