

# Ministry attracts many volunteers

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

CANANDAIGUA — Denise Dolan and Lena Catalano exchanged hearty greetings on a recent Wednesday afternoon, clutching each other's hands as they visited for the first time in a few weeks. Dolan then asked Catalano, "Would you like Communion today?"

"Oh, I'd love Communion today," exclaimed Catalano, 78, a resident at the F.F. Thompson Hospital Continuing Care Center.

After Dolan issued Communion the women continued their chat, with Dolan catching Catalano up on goings-on at St. Patrick Parish in Victor. Both are St. Patrick parishioners although Catalano, a lifelong member, has been unable to attend Mass there since moving to the Thompson facility three years ago.

"Well, I'm sure glad to have you back," Catalano said as Dolan prepared to leave.

"Thank you, thank you," Dolan replied. "I'll be seeing you next week."

"Oh yes, I'll look forward to seeing you," Catalano said.

And so concluded another positive outcome of the Northwest Ontario County Planning Group's pastoral visitation program. Begun three years ago, the ministry already involves 50 volunteers from the planning group's faith communities: St. Bridget/St. Joseph, East Bloomfield; St. Dominic, Shortsville; St. Felix/St. Francis, Clifton Springs/Phelps; St. Mary, Canandaigua; and St. Patrick, Victor.

The ministry was initiated under the direction of Father Doug DellaPietra, now the pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta. Caregivers undergo a six-week training session and then make regular visits to senior living centers, homes, hospitals and other health-care facilities.

According to organizers, the ministry operates in the spirit of the



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Denise Dolan (right), a parishioner of St. Patrick Church in Victor, visits Lena Catalano Jan. 8 at the F.F. Thompson Hospital Continuing Care Center in Canandaigua. Dolan visits area homes and health-care facilities as part of a multi-parish pastoral visitation program.

Second Vatican Council's emphasis that all Catholics, by virtue of their baptism, should be invited to ministry. It's also a creative way to address the priest shortage, as visitation-team members bring Eucharist while sharing friendly, prayerful time with patients and residents.

Volunteers are not permitted by church law to issue anointing of the sick or the sacrament of reconciliation. Yet Bob Pippin, coordinator of the ministry, said that the visitors are instructed to alert area priests if such a request is made. "We are a vehicle for people to contact the priest," he said.

Pippin, who belongs to St. Patrick

in Victor, emphasized that the ministry has strong representation from every faith community in the planning group. The thoroughness of this volunteerism has left a strong impression on folks such as Catalano.

"It's wonderful to be able to see these people — not only because they're from the church, but because it's company," Catalano said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The visitation ministry's next training session begins March 13. Catholics in northwest Ontario County and surrounding areas are welcome. Call Bob Pippin at 585/924-3905.

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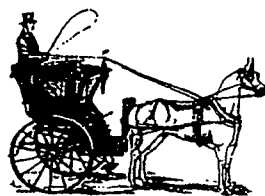
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