

POLICY 1.9 Protocol for Taking Parish Census

Consistent with Policy 1.8, it is expected that every Catholic community in the Archdiocese will retain a parish registration list, which will be kept up to date as much as possible. Form 1.8.a will be used ~~for~~ throughout the Archdiocese. A concerted effort may need to be made in any parish community that has not been keeping such a list of registered parishioners up to now. Once the registration list is complete, keeping it current should not be difficult. It could be updated as each parishioner makes a request at the parish office or of the parish priest for certificates, reception of sacraments, etc.

In most small communities in the Archdiocese, the rudiments of such a registration list can be put together by the parish priest in conjunction with one or more parishioners who have lived in the area for many years and would thus be able to identify the Catholic families in the community either from a voter list or from a municipal map.

From such a list, it is highly recommended that the parish priest, along with a well-respected member of the community, pay a brief visit to each household in the parish. This is easily done when the priest is new to the parish, as the visit can be the occasion for the families of the parish to meet him and for him to be familiar with the families and their place of residence. In many instances, this may be the first visit by a priest to their home in many years, if it ever occurred at all. The saying has yet to be disproved, “A home-going priest makes for a church-going people.”

The parish should publicize the home visits, through the bulletin, posters, emails and any other appropriate means. Parishes are also encouraged to use the local Catholic school, where there is one, to send out notification to families. There should be at least two weeks’ notice of the visits and the announcements should include the proposed days and hours of the visits. If possible, parishioners should be encouraged to choose when they will be visited and provide their address.

The priest and accompanying parishioner(s) should always wear and display a Church Badge, provided by the parish. Form 1.8.a should be filled out during this visit. Parishioners who may question or object to the completion of the whole form should be free to fill out as much of the form as they feel comfortable doing.

When such visits are made, especially at the homes of those who are known not to have participated in the life of the parish, the reaction of the householder might be delight, or indifference, or anger. The priest and his companion-visitor should always be prepared to deal with any of these reactions. The willingness to listen and hear (receive) the response of the householder is paramount. In some instances, a subsequent visit to such a home might be recommended.

If a family residing within the boundaries of one parish chooses to practice in a neighbouring parish, the parish in which that family resides will make note of the fact, and ensure that the parish at which they practice is aware of their affiliation.

It is baptism in the Catholic Church, or subsequent reception into the Church by those baptised in another Christian body, that binds persons to the Catholic Church. It is hoped that all such persons, whatever their church practice, be registered as parishioners. The parish priest may wish to distinguish the practicing from the non-practicing, for his own purposes. The parish is not to register those

Catholics who have indicated that they presently practice their faith in another religion or other Christian bodies.

Accepted by the College of Consultors on 02 May 2012

Amended by the College of Consultors on 20 October 2015