



CENSUS 2010: A VITAL CIVIC — AND FAITHFUL — OBLIGATION

Parish Bulletin Insert

In the middle of March, Census 2010 forms will be mailed or delivered to every household in the United States. All forms are to be filled out and returned April 1, 2010, National Census Day. It is vitally important that you take the time to fill out your census forms.

Why is it so important to fill out the census forms?

The United States census, first taken in 1790, gives us a picture of ourselves that helps us know our cities, towns and neighborhoods better, and to plan for the next decade.

Isn't the census just a nose count that doesn't really mean anything?

In one sense, certainly the census is a nose count. But the census information provides population statistics that impact on our representation in the United States House of Representatives. The statistics are also used to help determine how more than \$400 billion in federal funds will be spent locally each year on hospitals, roads, schools, low income family support, senior centers, social services, public works projects and so much more. The census provides the statistical basis for how a good deal of our tax dollars are spent.

Weren't we short-changed in the last census?

Exactly. It is estimated that in Census 2000 that as little as 66 percent of all the people in the greater Pittsburgh area were counted. We cannot have that happen again. It is not only our civic responsibility to fill out the census forms, but a social responsibility as

well. That means that we have a responsibility, in faith, to take part in the 2010 Census.

Why would the Church be interested in an accurate census?

The Diocese of Pittsburgh and local parishes use census information to get a clear picture of our changing neighborhoods and how that will impact parish life now and in the future. It helps determine how to best serve the poor and needy among us, our needs in educating our children and caring for our sick, even our needs in evangelization by giving us a better picture of our neighborhoods. Many times, the groups undercounted in the census are the same groups that the Church serves in its charitable and outreach ministries. Without an accurate count, it can be difficult to help these people get the assistance they need. Those most likely to be left out are the poor and the immigrant.

Does the census include illegal immigrants?

The census is meant to count everyone living in the United States and makes no judgment about anyone's status. That is how it has been since 1790. It has always counted non-citizens as well as citizens since the purpose of the census is to find out who is living here.

Is the census used to catch illegal immigrants or others who might have broken the law?

The census is not used – and cannot legally be used – to track down illegal immigrants. Or people who haven't paid their taxes. Or people with legal troubles

of any kind. The Census Bureau which conducts the census does not involve police, immigration authorities, the Internal Revenue Service or the FBI. The goal is to accurately count the people who are living in the United States. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share individual information with any government agency.

Who can look at my individual census response?

Individual census records are not shared with anyone and can never be published in any form. To do so would be a violation of federal law. Your neighbor can't see it, and you cannot see your neighbor's form. Your congressional representative can't see it, your senator can't see it, the president can't see it. Census questionnaires can't be used in a court of law and are not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Individual privacy in filling out the census is protected by law and the penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine up to \$250,000 and imprisonment up to five years. No authority – neither a local judge nor a Supreme Court justice – can obtain personal identifiable data from the Census Bureau.

The idea of somebody coming to my door asking questions is worrisome.

Census workers may knock on your door before the census forms are mailed to verify address information. They will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag and a confidentiality notice. All of which you should ask to see. No Census Bureau worker would ask for your Social Security number, banking or credit card information. Also, the Census Bureau will **NOT** contact you by e-mail. Any e-mail contact claiming to represent the Census Bureau is a scam or a fraud.

Most important, no one will come to your door to ask census questions if you fill out the form sent to you in March and mail it back.

Is identity theft possible through filling out the census form?

No. Social Security numbers are not used and no personal financial information such as banking account or credit card numbers, are used. The privacy of the forms are protected by stringent federal law and there is no information contained in the census that could be utilized for identity theft.

Can the census be abused by political parties or the White House?

The Census Bureau runs the census. The entire census process is transparent and is closely watched by Congress, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Commerce and other entities to ensure that no political party, no administration, no government agency can manipulate the process or violate confidentiality. All eyes are on the process to make certain that does not happen.

Why would the Church lend its support to such a strictly civic undertaking?

Archbishop Jose Gomes of San Antonio, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity, has said it best: "The U.S. census is a useful tool for learning about God's people, who and where they are, and many other facts that shed light on their lives, possibilities and struggles. A Church that seeks to evangelize is characterized by outreach. The U.S. census gives us important information to do that."