It is really people helping people. In 2008, according to a report compiled by the Archdiocese, local parishes assisted 38,372 people. In 2007 that figure climbed to 39,465, and in 2008 a whopping 49,092 individuals were assisted.

What parishes responding to greater need during a deepening recession, or was it just better reporting?

Probably a combination both, said Robert J. Miller, director of the archdiocesan Office for Research and Planning, which compiled the report based on self-reporting by the parishes.

"It's not really a new report and we are still dealing with it. It takes between three and five months for reports and data to be processed. Since the start of the recession the parishes I think are doing more because people need more," he said.

If anything, the reports at this point just giving the entire breadth of the charitable works done in the parishes. Not every parish reported special outreach programs, and one diaconate was not as the report put it, "feeding their bread under a table. They simply never got around to signing the report, or reporting all their outreach programs.

The report breaks social outreach down into a number of categories: food programs, housing programs, addiction services, education and enrichment programs, basic needs assistance, socialization and neighborhood services, nursing care, assisted living, and health ministry. The reports breaks social outreach down into a number of categories: food programs, housing programs, addiction services, education and enrichment programs, basic needs assistance, socialization and neighborhood services, nursing care, assisted living, and health ministry.

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