The Catholic population of the Diocese of Lafayette has increased along with the civil population of this area of south central Louisiana. According to statistics in the 1985 National Catholic Directory, published by P.J. Kenedy and Sons of Wilmette, Ill., the Diocese of Lafayette has a Catholic population of 329,726. The 1984 directory reported the diocesan population at 321,201. There was a corresponding increase of the civil population which is reported in the 1984 directory as 560,094, and in the 1985 directory, it is 563,027.

While conceding that more people are moving into this area, as indicated in the growth of the civil population, Msgr. H. Alexandre Larroque, Vicar General, said he feels the increase of Catholic population is mostly due to recent census-taking in many of the church parishes, resulting in a more accurate count of the number of Catholics.

The diocesan increase is in contrast to the national totals which indicate a decrease of over 100,000 Catholics in the U.S. from the 1984 to the 1985 directory totals.

While other diocesan statistics vary from year to year, the number of converts received into the church continues to rise. The 1980 directory reported 205 converts, while the 1984 directory reports 252, and in 1985, the total is 312.0. The new directory reports 7,513 infant baptisms while in the preceding year there were 7,452.

The 1985 directory reports a total of 241 priests, diocesan and religious, while the 1984 directory reported 243. There were 17 teaching brothers this year, an increase of one over last year. The number of teaching sisters declined from 103 last year to 92 this year. The number of lay teachers continues to increase from 724 last year to 769 this year.

The number of students enrolled in Catholic schools declined from 14,912 last year to 14,727 this year, while the number of public school children in religion (CCD) classes increased from 41,370 last year to 44,133 this year.

Is the population healthier, or are fewer people using Catholic hospitals? They reported 33,678 in-patients treated in 1980; with 32,073 outpatients. The 1984 directory reports 25,506 out-patients and 16,486 inpatients, while the 1985 directory reports 22,464 out-patients and 15,758 in-patients.

In the statistics for the number who died, the 1980 directory reported 3,238 deaths; the 1984 directory 3,046, and the 1985 directory 3,365.