

Encuentro Draws 1,100 To Second Meeting

Washington, D. C. (RNS) — Some 1,100 persons, many more than expected, took part in the Second National Encuentro of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S., and found that what was accomplished at the four-day meeting was less important than the meeting itself — which brought together Hispanics of all backgrounds.

While the theme of the gathering was evangelization, an effort to draw Hispanics closer to the Church, the resolutions introduced and the workshops scheduled centered on the problems of Hispanics and the growing need for visibility of Spanish-speaking Catholics in the affairs of the U.S. Catholic Church.

Delegate Eloy Martinez of Pueblo, N. M., said "the most significant thing about this meeting is the interaction of the people, their hearing of themselves and their vision of today's Church; the prepared talks are relatively unimportant."

Attending the Encuentro from the Rochester diocese were delegates Italo Rodriguez, Maria Sanchez, Carlos Vargas.

Observers were Alicia Salgado, Angela Rodriguez, Celerina Vargas, Martin Munoz, Mary Ramos, Sister Providencia Perez, Sister Soledad Cruz, Sister Gladys Diaz, Sister Maria Cobos, Sister Maria Cristina Juarez, Pedro Espada, Paita Benitez, Carmen Mateo, Ada Maira Isassi Diaz and Domingo Garcia.

Father Ponce said the number of observers, especially young people, went beyond all expectations. Special lodging and meal arrangements had

to be made to provide for the overflow. The attendance of more than 40 bishops, including cardinals and the Apostolic Delegate, gave an indication of the growing emergence of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S., the priest noted.

Newly-ordained Bishop Thomas Kelly, O.P., general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference, received a standing ovation when he chose to introduce, in Spanish, the message of Pope Paul blessing the "encuentro."

In his message, the Pope said the theme of evangelization is "timely and relevant," opening a wide horizon to the meeting's initiative and abilities. The pontiff urged the Hispanics to "search for and find the right path updating answers and offering adequate channels so that the Hispanic community, which must feel itself a Church community devoted to evangelization, can bring the salvific message of Jesus Christ to people within and without its confines."

During the opening session of the four-day "encuentro" (Aug. 18-21), presided over by Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York, Philadelphia's Cardinal John Krol said that significant opportunities await Hispanics in the Catholic Church today.

In an unexpected development, a large number of Hispanic youth, both delegates and observers, sought to remedy the fact that the "encuentro's" document on evangelization did not address itself to ministry involving young Hispanics.

Bishop James S. Rausch of Phoenix, Ariz., who heads the U.S. bishops' Committee on the Spanish-Speaking, said the "most important" element of the "encuentro" was the process. "As a result of the meeting and all the smaller meetings which led up to it, the Hispanic people feel much more a part of the ministry of the Church," the Bishop said.

"This weekend," said Father Frank Ponce of the San Diego diocese who coordinated the assembly, "some Chicanos have heard a rapid Cuban accent for the first time in their lives. There is a sense of Hispanics as a mosaic. We make each other whole."

Meeting at Trinity College on the campus of the Catholic University of America, only 478 of those attending were official delegates while 633 joined the Encuentro as observers officially recognized by their dioceses and eligible to participate in the six major workshops of the meeting.

Bishop Rausch, whose committee will have to sort out the meeting's recommendations for the U.S. bishops' meeting in November, revealed that he noticed among the young people present a high level of idealism but also a high threshold of frustration.

They find it difficult to realize the problems we will encounter in implementing their vision — obstacles in finding resources and appropriate organizations," the Phoenix prelate said. "What I hear these young people saying is that there is a need for a national 'encuentro,' some national organization and a national center for Hispanic youth."



Taking a break from the Second Annual Encuentro, Archbishop Roberto Sanchez, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, joins three Hispanic brothers in song.

Evangelization Stressed During National Encuentro

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Delegates to the Second National Encuentro — or Encounter — of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. wound up their four-day gathering at Trinity College here by approving a series of resolutions and proposals to be submitted to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Among the many proposals were calls for the formation of Hispanic adult and youth leaders, intensified pastoral programs for the renewal of the laity, the creation of "team ministries" in heavily Hispanic areas, and the appointment of more Hispanic bishops, priests and permanent deacons in the U.S. Catholic Church.

The 478 official delegates also urged the creation of an "ordnariate" in which bishops, clergy and laity would be included to serve the migrant farm workers in this country. Also urged was intensification of evangelization and service to those in prisons and hospitals, the engaged and divorced, innercity parish groups, missionaries and the military.

The principal theme of the meeting was evangelization, focusing on a Church seeking "continual openness" to basic communities, a Church "poor materially and spiritually so as to identify with all its members," a Church which is a "true community, recognizing the fullness of Hispanic culture," and a missionary Church in which all might feel as responsible agents of evangelization.

An Encounter document on ministries emphasized the vital importance of the diaconate in the Hispanic community, and pointed to the "rediscovery" of the gifts and vocations of lay people in today's Hispanic Church.

A paper on human rights supported total amnesty for undocumented aliens in the U.S. and recognized the rights of migrant farm workers and other oppressed groups. It also urged that social action centers in every U.S. diocese guarantee the continuous human and cultural promotion of Hispanics through specialized personnel to deal with legal, social, political and spiritual questions affecting Hispanics.

In the area of political responsibility, the En-

counter delegates criticized the Church for a lack of involvement in the political system and called for more active participation by both the Hispanic Catholic community and the institutional Church.

School systems, both public and Catholic, were urged to renew bilingual and multi-cultural education programs with government funds that provide program supervision, personnel and resources. In addition, a real and influential presence of Hispanics in the media was viewed as necessary to create a national consciousness regarding concerns and aspirations of the Hispanic community.

Another document approved by the Encounter delegates rejected assimilation of the Hispanic culture into the larger

"American" culture, particularly when it imposes the values of the dominant group and destroys personal identity. It urged the Church to apply the concept of "integration," not "assimilation" and focused on greater unity among Hispanic groups to enrich and strengthen their mutual culture.

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Archbishop Urges Women as Deacons

Baltimore (RNS) — The Archbishop of Baltimore has recommended that women be permitted to become ordained deacons and considered for other leadership positions which canon law does not require priests to fill.

In an 11-page pastoral letter on "Women in the Mission and Ministry of the Church," Archbishop William Borders acknowledged that women have been rather silent members of the Church. But he noted that in the past 20 years, the pattern of work and responsibilities for women has undergone a radical change in public life and in the business world.

The Church, recognizing these changes, is seeking more opportunities for women to use their talents effectively in leadership roles and ministries heretofore closed to them because of custom or discipline, he states.

While he did not urge that women be considered for the priesthood, Archbishop Borders did advocate the ordination of women as deacons, pointing out that last January's controversial Vatican ban on ordaining women to the priesthood "left open the possibility of

ordaining women to the diaconate."

"Through the providence of God, the diaconate was instituted to advance the mission of Christ in the service of the people of God. The providence of God is still with us," he said.

(According to a spokesman for the archdiocese, the archbishop believes that if women are to be ordained to the priesthood "the way to begin to work at it is to seek ordination to the diaconate.")

Archbishop Borders, who said he wrote the pastoral letter while he was on a spiritual retreat to pray and reflect on his own relationship to Christ and the duties of his office, also called on his priests to be more sensitive to the growing concern over male-dominated language in the liturgy.

"I am aware that some people, both men and women are put off by the at-times one-sided use and sometimes almost consistent use, of masculine nouns and pronouns in the liturgy and educational programs of the archdiocese," he said.

He also promised to attempt to "recruit" women applicants for leadership positions in the archdiocese when the canon law does not state they must be filled by priests.

"In today's society," he noted, "if the Church is to continue as a force in the world, women must enter into decisions and policy-making and accept leadership roles for the Church. Archbishop Borders declared in the pastoral.

The Archbishop pledged that "if an internship period would provide a woman with experience needed for a position for which she is otherwise qualified, we shall provide that training."

"I think we men have been taking women for granted and have been only on the receiving end of women's concerns for too long," the prelate stated.

While calling for greater participation of women in the life of the Church, Archbishop Borders nevertheless paid tribute to women who serve in the traditional roles of wife, mother and homemaker, stressing that these roles are basic to the Christian family concept and must not be neglected or downgraded.

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