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## Churches Show Heavy Interest in WHCF

By Tammy Tanaka  
RNS staff writer

Signs of enthusiastic public response and some controversy are evident as Americans across the nation move into final phases of activities in preparation for the 1980 White House Conference on Families (WHCF).



Special  
Report

To give more people an opportunity to participate, the national conference will be held at three different sites: Baltimore (June 5-7), Minneapolis (June 19-21), and Los Angeles (July 10-12). (Persons from the Diocese of Rochester will attend the Baltimore conference.)

There has been heavy religious interest and involvement in the conference. President Carter named

John L. Carr, a former staff member of the U.S. Catholic Conference, executive director of the WHCF; a number of religious leaders of various faiths serve on the 40-member WHCF National Advisory Committee.

Hundreds of people, including representatives of the National Council of Churches and the Catholic Church, testified at regional hearings called by the National Advisory Committee last fall and early this year. The hearings were intended to give conference officials an overview of the key family issues of concern to the public. Overflow crowds attended the hearings, far exceeding expectations.

States are holding conventions to elect delegates for the national conference and to develop 10 priority issues related to family life. In both the regional hearings and at several of the state conventions already held, a basic conflict has arisen over the government's role in family life.

Many believe that government should provide more help for families. Conservative critics argue the government itself is causing many of the problems in

family life, for instance, by fueling inflation and forcing mothers into the work force.

Conservative and pro-life groups have mounted campaigns in a number of states to ensure that they will have delegates elected to the national conference this summer. They have already won two stunning victories — capturing 22 of the 24 elected slots for delegates to Virginia, and winning all eight places in Oklahoma, the first two states to hold elections.

Even the definition of "family" has become a source of controversy. The White House conference was designed to take a broad comprehensive view of the many family patterns existing today, and to promote a nationwide discussion on families in the United States. Conservatives, however, want the WHCF focused on helping to preserve and advance traditional family life.

Mary Finnerty, president of the Virginia Right to Life, said "people are tired of federal interference in the home. We want to preserve and strengthen traditional

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## The View From Tabasco

By Michael Groden

Bishop Rafael Garcia y Gonzalez, ordinary for the diocese of Tabasco, Mexico paid Rochester a visit last week to meet with Bishop Clark and the people of the diocese. Bishop Garcia led a busy schedule for the three-day visit which included meetings with diocesan leaders, special liturgies at St. John's, Humboldt St. and St. Michael's parishes, and a meeting at St. Bernard's Seminary.

During an interview the bishop gave his impressions of Rochester and its people.

On Tuesday morning Bishop Garcia and Bishop Clark met at the Pastoral Office. Bishop Garcia described the Rochester prelate as "a man who is very well prepared" for his job as leader of the diocese and "who obviously has great spirituality."

Bishop Clark and Bishop Garcia discussed their respective dioceses and agreed to continue programs they share.

For the past three years the diocese of Tabasco and the Rochester diocese have

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Bishop Garcia y Gonzalez during his talk at St. Michael's.



Photos by Terrance J. Brennan



Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

Jerome and Marcia Viana.

## They Went to the Refugees

By John Dash

The immediate impression one has on entering the refugee camp at Sa Kaew in Thailand is of colorlessness: the majority of people behind the barbed wire fence wear black or gray; only occasionally does one spot a plaid shirt or a bit of bright color, a young Rochester couple who recently worked in the camp said last week.

Jerome and Marcia Viana signed up for a two-day volunteer stint at the camp while on a tour of Asia in December. At the camp they worked with Catholic Relief Services personnel, and on their return to Rochester reported their observations to Father Joseph Reinhart of the Diocesan Missions Office. The missions office

### How to Help

Cambodian Relief  
123 East Ave.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14604

and the diocesan International Justice and Peace Commission are promoting the area drive for funds to assist the refugees.

Marcia worked one day in camp administration and the second in a rehabilitation tent.

Jerome applied himself to construction projects and materials procurement.

Jerome noted that the Thais consider Sa Kaew an "illegal immigrant camp." The refugees "are not

considered refugees," he said, explaining the presence of the barbed wire which surrounds the installation.

The camp is located about 40 miles from the Thailand/Cambodia border, a three-hour bus journey from Bangkok, Jerome said.

"It's incredible the answer the people of the world have given," to the plight of the refugees, Jerome said, specifically citing the work of CRS, among other agencies, including the International Red Cross.

The couple, interviewed at the missions office last week, recounted story after story of healing, and feeding and sheltering by CRS of the thousands who have fled the conflict in their nation.

One particularly moving account of a 12-year-old who had seen both parents killed also illustrated the horrors of the Cambodian situation. The child, Marcia said, was unable to show any emotion, nor to respond to affection. A CRS woman religious explained to her that during the Pol Pot regime, Cambodians were threatened with death if they demonstrated any emotion. As a test of obedience to that law, family members would be killed in full view of other family members. A tear or grief would bring instant death.

Jerome elaborated that he had heard that the Pol regime attempted to train the citizenry "to be soldiers,

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