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No Room In the Inn?

Refugees 'Down to Wire,'
Diocesan Welcome 'Dismal,'
USCC Agent Here Says

By John Dash

The results of a Summer-long drive to gain diocesan sponsors for refugees from Southeast Asia are "at best, dismal," the United States Catholic Conference agent here said last week.

James P. Delaney, USCC Refugee Resettlement Office staffer at Catholic Family Center, also said, "We're down to the wire," on gaining new sponsors for refugees.

The drive opened last May with a letter from Bishop Matthew H. Clark to all pastors, asking "each parish to commit itself to sponsoring the resettlement of two refugee families in the next five years."

"With God's help, I believe, we can generate the needed interest and response to this appeal within each faith community."

A month later, Delaney wrote to all pastors. "I am urgently entreating you to please kindly confirm your parish's willingness and earliest readiness to 'sponsor' the resettlement of two of these refugee families or persons/cases during the next five years," he said.

"Quite frankly, Father, and despite our best current and on-going sponsorship recruitment efforts in the private sector, successes are frustratingly few and totally insufficient. USCC's pleas for sponsors have already out-stripped sponsorship commitments in the diocese."

After yet another month, Delaney wrote, July 29, to all parish council presidents asking that the question of refugee sponsorship be included on meeting agendas in the Fall.

"It is our fervent hope," he said, "that by September-October 1983 all parishes will have, either unilaterally, or in conjunction with other parishes or organizations, committed themselves to refugee sponsorship along the lines suggested by Bishop Clark."

"Despite the fact that refugees are not currently newsworthy, their genuine plight remains essentially unchanged. Resilient survivors as they may be, there are obvious limits to human endurance. Prolonged internment can only add to their deepening sense of disillusionment and despair. The Cambodian refugees in particular continue to be ravaged by on-going Thai-Cambodian border hostilities and shellings. Having barely escaped the Khmer Rouge's ruthless attempts at genocide, these remaining survivors continue to be stalked by terror and murder — even in refugee camps."

Last week, a few days before his final entreaty to parish council presidents, Delaney wrote, "Council meetings coming up in Sept. We're down to the wire. (Response to date has been, at best, dismal.)"

In a letter dated Sept. 1, Delaney outlined for council presidents details of refugee life, among them:

"Fifty-seven percent of all refugee-laden boats from Vietnam continue to be targets of brutal piratical attacks with all of the attending multiple rapes of women, murders and abductions. (Astonishingly, those who survive the

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Slain Marine's Mother:

'Only by Faith in God That I'm Living through This'

By John Dash

It is only by "my faith in God that I'm living through all this," Helen Ortega said.

Mrs. Ortega is the mother of Marine Staff Sgt. Alexander Ortega, Jr. She was told last Monday morning that her son had been killed in a mortar attack in Beirut, Lebanon.

Sgt. Ortega and his best friend, 2nd Lt. Donald Losey, of Winston-Salem, N.C. were the first members of the U.S. peacekeeping troops to be killed since the international force assembled there last summer.

Mrs. Ortega and her husband Alexander are members of Henrietta's Good Shepherd Parish, the church to which she turned when national focus on her maternal grief became too much to bear.

Summoning the press for a final statement at Good Shepherd School, 12 members of the family variously gave their memories of Sgt. Ortega, as son, nephew, cousin and brother.

But the major focus was on

Mrs. Ortega, who spoke often of prayer, of faith, of devotion to duty, and of peacefulness and charity.

Mrs. Ortega has taught Confirmation classes, sings in the choir and is generally recognized as one of the more active parishioners.

She read a letter from her son, the last, in which he described the death and suffering in Beirut, asking his mother to continue her prayers, asking himself "why God lets it go on and on."

A few hours after they learned of their son's death, the Ortegases were called by President Reagan. A day after that phone call, they were asked if they were satisfied by what the president had told them of the U.S. presence in Lebanon. Helen said, "In one way, yes; in another, no."

Her husband said, "No. I am not. I won't rest in peace until these boys are out of there — because part of me is lost."

By all accounts, Sgt. Ortega was proud of his service to his country. Though he

wasn't "gung-ho" his uncle, Jim Knopp, said, he was devoted to the Marine Corps and its defense and peacekeeping role.

Sgt. Ortega also was a peace loving man who recently told his mother, "I hope I don't have to kill anybody," while on duty in Lebanon.

And, his letters home reveal, he was shocked at the disparity between what he was led to believe about the Lebanese situation from both his Marine chiefs and the U.S. press and the situation as it is.

His sister, Bonny McKean, is particularly sharp on that point. She spoke of letters last week in which her brother described children without homes, clothing, parents, or food, elderly people in the streets — all victims of a war in which they have no part.

Through tears, she described sending her brother "care" packages of candy and sweets that he would give the children. "He loved the

children. He really cared about the children."

Sgt. Ortega and his wife Robin have a 2 1/2-year-old daughter and are expecting another child in January.

His letters home also reveal his pride and anticipation of that event.

Throughout the press conference, family members described Sgt. Ortega as gregarious, fun-loving and in love with life. "He would think nothing of knocking on the door at 1 a.m. when he got into town, to start a party," his mother laughed.

After the news came last week, his mother learned that his companion in death, Lt. Losey, was also his best friend. Lt. Losey was courting a young woman from Latin America, and Sgt. Ortega would lend his language skills to help the pair communicate.

Sgt. Ortega grew up in Holy Redeemer Parish on the city's Northeast side. He attended public schools and graduated from Franklin in

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Church Unit Joins Oct. 22 Seneca Depot Peace Rally

By John Dash

Geneva — The diocesan Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry has endorsed the Oct. 22 Peace Walk and Rally sponsored by the Seneca Depot October Action Coalition.

The rally will be at Sampson State Park, close to the Seneca Army Depot, thought by many to be the transshipment point for Pershing II and Cruise nuclear missiles, to be deployed in Europe in December.

The depot events are part of an international weekend of protest against nuclear weapons being planned elsewhere in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

The endorsement by the diocesan body's board of directors was inspired by a statement by the U.S. bishops, "The world is at a moment of crisis, the effects of which are evident in people's lives," an office press release stated. The statement was taken from the bishops' recent pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response."

Shirley Thibault, president of the board, also cited the pastoral letter in explaining the board's endorsement: "We are the first generation since Genesis with the power

to virtually destroy God's creation. We cannot remain silent in the face of such danger."

Giovina Caroscio, office director, said the board's decision is a result of study of the pastoral.

Board members are residents of Yates, Ontario, Wayne, Seneca and Cayuga counties. "While it does not speak for the 40 Catholic parishes in the region, the board and staff were commissioned (by Bishop Matthew H. Clark) and charged with providing leadership in social ministry in the Finger Lakes region," the press release said.

"The main objective of the Oct. 22 Walk and Rally is to call for a change in the United States plans to deploy the Pershing II and Cruise missiles to Europe. These nuclear weapons have unprecedented accuracy, and are intended to give the United States a new capability to strike Soviet targets quickly and accurately from Western Europe. The point of these weapons is that they be used first, either against a Warsaw Pact conventional attack, or in a pre-emptive strike against the Soviet's nuclear

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Keep Her Safe

At his summer residence in Castelgandolfo, Italy, Pope John Paul II prays with visitors for the safety of kidnapped 15-year-old Emanuela Orlandi. He complied with demands of the presumed kidnapers who said he must proclaim his attempted assassin Mehmet Ali Agca "a human being." (NC Photo)