

Behind the Front Page

# COURIER-JOURNAL

## Hispanic Catholics: Encuentro Involves Hundreds of Thousands

By Moises Sandoval

More than 600,000 persons have taken part in the two-year process leading up to the Third Encuentro, which will be held in Washington, D.C., August 15-18, according to Pablo Sedillo, director of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs.

It has been the most extensive consultation of Hispanics ever. There were scores of local, regional and national meetings and tens of thousands of visits to families.

Convoked by the U.S. Bishops with their 1983 pastoral letter on Hispanics, the encounter consultation has stirred many expectations. But for some of those who have taken part, it has already achieved a lot.

"The biggest gain of the encuentro has been the leadership it has developed for our people, for the hispanics particularly," said Auxiliary Bishop Paul Waldschmidt of Portland, Ore. One of those new leaders, he said, is Jose Roman Mendez, a permanent deacon who became the archdiocesan encounter coordinator. "He is one of the pillars of the Church," Bishop Waldschmidt said.

"The encuentro is a way for Hispanics to discover their values and their needs as persons and as families," said Mavi Torres, who with her husband is president of Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, the Spanish counterpart of the Christian Family Movement. It has a membership of 5,000 families, she said.

A process that consults people whose evangelization is suspect also has detractors. Maryknoll Father Albert Nevins, retired editor of the national Catholic newspaper "Our Sunday Visitor" said a few years ago, "I know of no other group that seems to have so many meetings (encuentros, they are called) and which get so few results." Father Nevins saw Hispanics as "no more than cultural Catholics, baptized but with little knowledge and with an untutored faith that does not stand up well when it is attacked." He and those who share those views feel that

Hispanics need to be catechized, not consulted.

Perceptions that Hispanics were marginal Catholics led to the beginning of special apostolates 40 years ago — an approach the Church has taken with no other ethnic group. At a meeting in Oklahoma City in 1945, 14 bishops established the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish-speaking.

Records show that the committee sought to alleviate bad housing, malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality and delinquency.

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### Encuentro Delegates

Delegates to the Third Hispanic Encuentro are, from left to right: Deacon Carlos Vargas, Sister Edith Lugo, Carmen Rosa, Brother Luis Ruberte, director of the Hispanic Apostolate, Margarita Rivera, Angel Rivera, and Mario Escalante. Missing from the picture, but attending the gathering in Washington this week, are Evelyn DeJesus, Father John Mulligan, and Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

## Catolicos Hispanos: El Encuentro Involucra A Cientos De Miles

Por Moises Sandoval

Mas de 600,000 personas han tomado parte en el proceso, de dos años de duracion, que culminará en el Tercer Encuentro, a realizarse en Washington, D.C. Entre el 15 al 18 de agosto, según dijo Pablo Sedillo, director del secretariado de asuntos hispanos de la conferencia episcopal de los estados unidos.

Ha sido la mayor consulta hispana habida hasta el momento, se han realizado reuniones a nivel local, regional y nacional, y decenas de miles de visitas

familiares.

Convocado por los obispos de estados unidos con su carta pastoral sobre los hispanos de 1983, el encuentro ha levantado muchas expectativas, pero para algunos de quienes estan participando, ha hecho ya grandes logros.

"El logro mayor del encuentro ha sido el desarrollo de liderzgo para nuestra gente, especialmente para los hispanos," dijo el Obispo de Portland, Ore., Paul Waldschmidt. Uno de estos nuevos dirigentes dijo, es José Ramón Mendez, un diácono permanente que ha sido el coordinador diocesano del encuentro. "Es uno de los pilares de la iglesia," dijo el Obispo Waldschmidt.

"El encuentro es una forma para que los hispanos descubran sus valores y sus necesidades como personas y como familias," dijo Mavi Torres, quien junto a su esposo, presiden el movimiento familiar cristiano, que tiene agrupadas a 5,000 familias.

Un proceso de consulta a personas de quienes se sospecha sobre su grado de evangelización, tiene sus detractores, el sacerdote de Maryknoll Albert Nevins, editor retirado del periódico Católico Nacional El Visitante Dominical, dijo hace algunos años: "no conozco otro grupo que tenga tantas reuniones (encuentros como los llaman) y que logren tan pocos resultados." El Padre Nevins ve a los hispanos "nadas más que como católicos culturales, bautizados pero con muy poco conocimiento y con una fe no desarrollada, y que no se mantiene firme cuando es atacada." El y quienes comparten estos puntos de vista, creen que los hispanos deben ser catequizados, no consultados.

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## Peace Demonstrators Tie 'Ribbon' To Remind Nation of Nuclear War

By Stephanie Overman

Washington (NC) — Peace demonstrators wrapped 15 miles of ribbon around Washington landmarks August 4, "like tying a string around your finger," to remind the country of the danger of nuclear war.

According to police estimates, 15,000 people attended the gathering, held to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the world's first wartime detonation of an atomic bomb.

The theme for the ribbon project and its more than 25,000 handmade panels, "what I can't bear to think of as lost forever in a nuclear war," was set by Justine Merritt, the project's originator.

The last panels were joined together around the Pentagon, the Lincoln Memorial, the Ellipse and the Capitol at 2:05 p.m. Strung together were panels featuring children, pets, nature, musical notes, bits of poetry. One whimsical ribbon segment was made of socks that "embrace our feet." Some were quilted, others embroidered, a few were covered with buttons.

"Laughter, music, poetry and art are undoubtedly going to save the world," Ms. Merritt, a former teacher from Colorado, said at a press conference before the ribbon was unfurled. She said she thinks the ribbon movement is made up mainly of women because "women's fingers have been used to sewing for the last millenium."

The ribbon is "like tying a string around your finger to remember something, and the message of the ribbon is, 'It's a lovely world, don't blow it up,'" she said.

The idea came to Ms. Merritt, a Catholic, three years ago while she was at a religious retreat. She said she wanted to create "a gentle reminder to the people in power that we love the Earth and we love the people."

Her original goal was to encircle the Pentagon but as the idea — and the ribbon — grew, the Ellipse behind the White House, the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial were included. After the Washington peace rally segments of the ribbons will be displayed at

the United Nations next year, Ms. Merritt said, and she hopes that ribbon segments will be taken back and displayed in communities around the country. Panels will be on exhibit at the Peace Museum in Chicago.

Felician Sister Mary Virginette Reczek of Mother of Good Counsel, Chicago, and Felician Sister Mary Michaelaen Pardowsky, of St. Felix Convent, Milwaukee, worked tying together segments of the banner.

Sister Reczek said schools and parishes in her neighborhood contributed ribbons as a way of "emphasizing social awareness."

When the ribbon was finally unfurled, Aniello Scotto, of Jersey City, N.J., said, "It's something. I can't believe this is happening. Everybody's here working for peace."

"You don't have to kill anybody for peace. God gave it to everybody. We just have to work for it," Scotto said. "When you fight, you want to get something. In a nuclear war, you get nothing."

Dominican Sister Jane Selinske lives in Blairstown, N.J., and worked closely with fellow Dominican Sister Marie Varley, state coordinator for the ribbon project. She said that perhaps the biggest moment in her two years of work came when Ms. Merritt came to Blairstown to discuss it with the nuns.

"She came here looking for a place and a person to coordinate it in New Jersey," Sister Selinske said. "There were 20 people meeting there that night, 20 people who you didn't think could all be touched, but were."

She said the strength of the ribbon project came because "we're able to see that one person has an effect. That one person was able to start all this."

"It was able to touch the young and the old. The people who participated in it were downhome folks. It's really an innovative way of expressing what's important."

Sister Gail DeMaria, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, from Little Ferry, N.J., said part of the reason she came to Washington was "just to be with the people."

"I can see ordinary people having something to do in their lives," she said.

Among the people carrying ribbons was Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo. "Many people will try to put it down as soft, a woman's thing," she said. "Yet in three years the idea of this woman from Colorado (Ms. Merritt) has bloomed so that now they can encircle 15 miles around this city. It says

to the power structure...that everyone isn't just interested in being Rambo. Many believe that nuclear arms are going to wipe us all out. If this network and these links stay together, you could see a lot of political repercussions."

Rambo is the title character from a movie about a veteran who singlehandedly and violently rescues missing-in-action comrades from Vietnam.

## Priest, Two Nuns in Group Held, Thought Freed by 'Contra' Rebels

By J.J. Smith  
NC News Service

A priest and two nuns, all of New York state, were among 29 American peace activists reportedly held for more than a day by Nicaraguan "contra" rebels in Costa Rica.

Father Thomas Fenlon, 49, of St. Patrick Parish in Newburgh, Sister Catherine Kruegler, 34, of Syracuse, and Sister Anita Von Wellsheim, 66, of Albany, were members of a "Peace Flotilla" delegation sponsored by the interfaith organization "Witness for Peace."

The group, along with 15 to 20 journalists, was traveling in a boat on the San Juan River, which divides Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as part of a "prayerful gesture for peace," said Yvonne Dilling, a Witness for Peace spokeswoman. She said they were captured Aug. 7 and released the next day.

Father Fenlon, a New York archdiocesan priest, is involved in ministry to the Spanish-speaking community. Another priest at his parish, Father Samuel Taylor, said he went to Nicaragua because "he felt it had to be done."

"He wants to see peace come to these people, that's his ministry," Father Taylor said.

Sister Kruegler, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, is director of religious education at St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Syracuse.

According to Sister Alethea Connolly, director of the Urban Ministry Board of Syracuse, Sister Kruegler has been involved with social justice issues for several years and has a background in missionary work.

Sister Von Wellsheim, of the Religious of the Sacred Heart order, is director of the Refugee Resettlement Program for the Albany Diocese.

"She said she was doing this (going to Nicaragua) out of a strong religious motivation," Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany said.

Witness for Peace describes itself as an interfaith organization which seeks to end hostilities in Nicaragua by keeping a continued presence of American church activists in the country.

The group has sent about 1,300 clerics and lay people to remote villages of Nicaragua over the last year-and-a-half. Many of the villages have been in areas contested by the rebels who are seeking to overthrow the Sandinistas.