

Third Encuentro renews local delegates' commitment

By Teresa A. Parsons

Local delegates returned from the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro with the message that Hispanics are no longer viewed as a pastoral problem, but as a challenge and a blessing for the Church.

Ten delegates from the Diocese of Rochester attended the encuentro in Washington, August 15-18. In addition to Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Father John Mulligan, diocesan director of urban ministry, Brother Luis Ruberte, director of the Hispanic Apostolate, Angel Rivera, assistant director of the Apostolate, Carmen Rosa, Sister Edith Lugo, Mario Escalante, Deacon Carlos Vargas, Margarita Rivera and Evelyn DeJesus spent the weekend working on recommendations for a national pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry.

Most of the delegates agreed that the encuentro was characterized by a unified commitment from all levels of the Church. Father Mulligan noted that in past gatherings there's been a tendency to make the dioceses back home "the whipping boys," compiling lists of "what we want our diocese to do."

At this encuentro, he saw an emerging recognition that individuals are called to make their own dreams happen.

"We want a mutual call to leadership," Father Mulligan said. "The grassroots may be ready to make that commitment."

"Some dioceses were slower and some were more advanced, more conscious," Sister Edith said. "But we were all looking to the future in the same way, looking for a better community."

"They came back dreaming," Angel Rivera said of the delegates, "but they are also saying that if we are going to do something we've got to pull together."

An illustration of that mutual commitment, according to Sister Edith, was the way delegates, from bishops to store clerks, dealt with each other as equals whether at meals or in work sessions. "There was no protocol. We were all like brothers and sisters," she said. "It was a beautiful experience of Church."

Father Mulligan credited the encuentro process with retaining its grassroots nature. He shared a room with a hotel clerk from New York City who had to call in sick every day to be there. "I was pleased to be able to go to a national meeting where it's not all doctors or professionals," Father Mulligan said. Sister Edith added that she was encouraged to see the large number of lay people active in their parishes and towns.

Aside from the lack of protocol, the presence of the Church's hierarchy, from Bishop Clark to a videotaped message from Pope John Paul II, was a strong affirmation to local delegates.

"I think that he (Bishop Clark) made a



Mario Escalante (left) and Angel Rivera were two of the 10-member delegation from the Diocese of Rochester. Escalante was representing the concerns of migrant workers in the diocese. Rivera is associate director of the Hispanic Apostolate.

good contribution," said Brother Ruberte. "All the delegates felt good that our Bishop was there."

"I loved that the Bishop came," said Evelyn DeJesus. "It made me feel like we weren't alone, especially when I heard how many others get negative stuff from their bishops. I got really excited hearing how much the bishop wants to work with the youth."

Reaching the estimated one-half of the Hispanic population under 25 years of age was a top priority at the encuentro. Although young people are often referred to as the future of the Church, Sister Edith said that they are really the Church now and want to participate now.

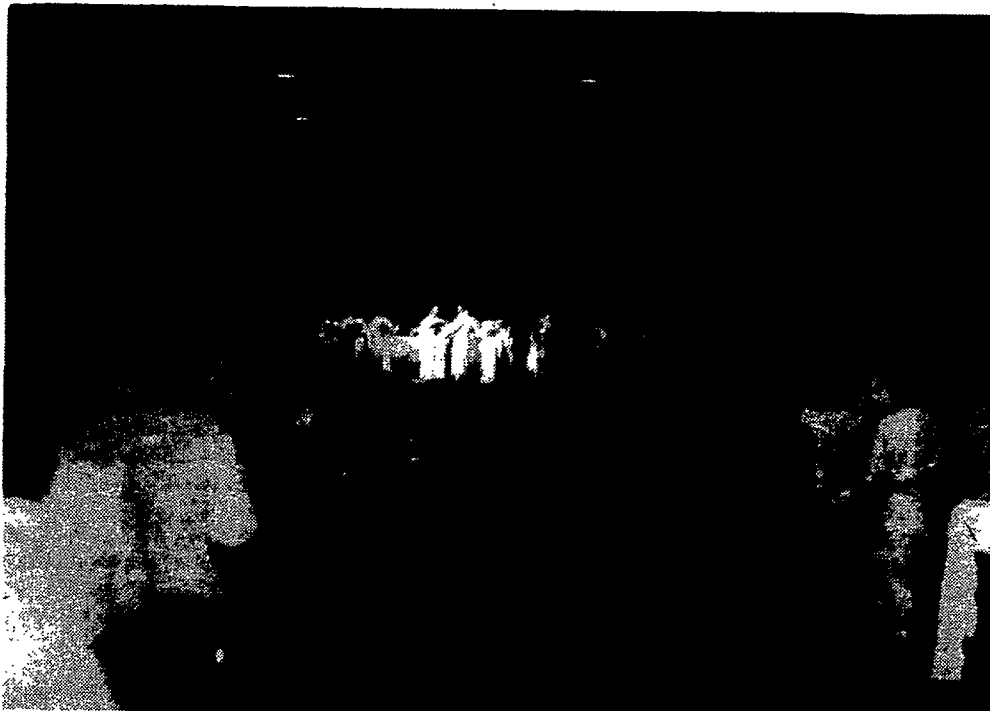
Father Mulligan was struck by the maturity of the commitment and response from youth at the encuentro. He described a 17-year-old who stood up in front of hundreds of people from all over the country to cry into the microphone "if you want to do something for youth, do it now."

The diocesan youth delegates, Margarita Rivera and Evelyn DeJesus, were most proud of a recommendation that diocesan offices for Hispanic youth be included in the pastoral plan. "That was one of the original suggestions from St. Francis (of Assisi parish)," Rivera said. Although a number of other delegates brought the same suggestion, they agreed that it was the most important part of the encuentro's statements on youth. "It says that the Church will stand behind youth in every aspect," Rivera added. "We want to see youth live what the Bible teaches from the heart."

Brother Luis Ruberte, director of the Hispanic Apostolate, has already begun to ensure that the process of encuentro continues locally. He has scheduled a meeting of



Deacon Carlos Vargas (far right) is discussing integral education with delegates from other parts of the country.



Closing ceremonies were held at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, August 18.

delegates to discuss the encuentro and plan ways to share their experience with the people of the diocese.

First he intends to meet with everyone who attended the diocesan encuentro last March. Then he envisions a series of workshops at parishes that serve large Hispanic communities and also "anglo" parishes to explain what encuentro is all about.

Nationally, the next step will be the presentation of commitment statements from the third encuentro to the U.S. Bishops' Conference in November. The following year, a committee from the Bishops' Confer-

ence will prepare a pastoral plan to serve the needs of the Catholic Hispanic community. The plan is expected to be complete in November 1986.

Although the encuentro's purpose was to deal with national issues facing Hispanics in the Church, Angel Rivera returned with a very personal message. In his day-to-day work, he said he encounters so many physical needs among the poor that he had lost sight of his mission to be a Church presence in the Hispanic community. "You give them what food and money you can, but it's not enough," he said.

Reaching youth top priority, Encuentro delegates declare

By Laurie Hansen

Washington (NC) — Reaching Hispanic young people must be a No. 1 priority for Hispanic Catholics, delegates at the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro emphasized.

The conference was the first encuentro at which each participating diocesan delegation included at least one young person.

The Third National Pastoral Hispanic Encuentro was a nationwide process of consultation involving more than 1,200 delegates representing 25,000 Hispanics from 133 dioceses. The national meeting was held at The Catholic University of America Aug. 15-18.

While the number of Hispanic young people continues to rise, the majority are estranged from the church, according to the third encuentro's "working document," written using information gathered in small-group meetings throughout the country.

Over one-half of the Hispanic population is younger than 25, the document said.

At the encuentro national meeting, delegates pledged to minister to youth by:

- Creating a national office for Hispanic Youth Pastoral ministry.

- Implementing a pastoral plan for youth ministry for use at the parish, diocesan, regional and national levels.

- Striving to change the educational systems so that Hispanic youth receive education that takes into account their culture in order to be integrated into U.S. society.

- Creating leadership training programs for youth.

- Seeking funds for scholarships and youth programs.

- Encouraging young people to fight injustices by setting an example of "practical Christianity."

The youth delegates also committed themselves to act as missionaries to other young people and to value the importance of bilingual and bicultural guidance from adults.

The delegates made commitments in the areas of evangelization, integral education, social justice, youth and leadership that were chosen prior to the national meeting through an evaluation of the concerns expressed by small-group participants nationwide.

The delegates pledged to create "small ecclesial communities" to develop awareness among Hispanics and to attract those alienated from the church. They suggested creating pastoral centers for leadership formation, building the power of Hispanic apostolate offices, and analyzing mass communications that are "controlled for materialistic purposes and without a Christian value system."

Regarding integral education, delegates said they wish to promote education that includes spiritual, socio-economic, political and multicultural formation, raise the consciousness of their pastoral leaders, become involved in mass media in order to inform and educate, and involve themselves in Catholic and public educational systems by joining parent-teacher associations and participating on school boards.

The delegates pledged to denounce social injustices and fight for human rights, including the rights of migrants and undocumented aliens. They agreed to support the statements of the U.S. bishops on immigration policy and denounce, through the media, all violence and injustice aimed at the family, youth, undocumented aliens, migrants, refugees, farmworkers, factory employees and prisoners.

The delegates committed themselves to form a social justice plan of action to increase their awareness of injustices suf-

fered by Hispanics, to provide for legal defense, to promote literacy training, and to provide political know-how and medical assistance. They advocated "renewal of the traditional parish in order that it be open and effectively multicultural."

As far as leadership, the delegates promised to foster leaders who "come from the people, know the people, and live with the people." They took as their responsibility the promotion of vocations to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, religious life and lay ministry to the Hispanic people. They said they plan to raise the consciousness of civic leaders through popular organizations in order to encourage leadership within the Hispanic community.

In addition to their commitment statements, the delegates voted to support a series of nine "prophetic pastoral lines." They said Hispanics choose the family "in all its

expressions" as the core of pastoral ministry, make a "preferential option" for the poor and the young, want a pastoral plan that responds to the daily concerns of the Hispanic people, wish to act as an evangelizing church, promote leadership, support integral education that is sensitive to cultural identity, promote and exemplify justice and value women, "recognizing their equality, dignity and role in the family, church and society."

The commitment statements and "prophetic pastoral lines" will be combined with the results of the nationwide consultation process to form a pastoral plan for Hispanics.

The guidelines that surfaced as a result of the third encuentro process will be presented to the U.S. bishops at their November meeting. A response from the bishops is expected in November 1986.

Encuentro profile shows diversity

Washington (NC) — Archbishop Roberto Sanchez of Santa Fe, N.M., said the beauty of the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro was its ability to bring together people from throughout the country working toward a common goal. A look at the statistics shows the diversity.

The largest delegations came from Texas (117), California (116), New York (88), Florida (74), New Jersey (60), Illinois (59) and Michigan (57). There were also participants from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Spain and Venezuela.

The Northeast region had the highest number of participants (299). It was followed by the Midwest (224), the Southeast (146), the Southwest (126) and the Far West (121).

Persons of Mexican-American origin (319) were the largest ethnic group represented, followed by native Mexicans (195), native Puerto Ricans (136), native South Americans (72) and native Cubans (71).

More than 80 percent were bilingual, and a slight majority of the delegates were male. They ranged in age from 18 to 59. The 40-49 age group was the largest (365) in attendance.