

Delegates see Church growing more responsive to Hispanics

By Julio Barreto Jr.

Washington (NC) — Delegates left the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro with a stronger sense of commitment on the part of the church to address the concerns of Hispanic Catholics.

"They're being more responsive to us when we speak. It's about time they begin to listen to us," said Florence Marquez, 54, of San Jose, Cal. "The church needs to recognize our cultural values and accept us as we are. We have a lot to offer."

Marquez was one 1,200 delegates who attended the encuentro at The Catholic University of America Aug. 15-18. They represented 133 dioceses from 40 states and five Spanish-speaking countries.

The encuentro was held to prepare a pastoral plan to serve the needs of the Hispanic Catholic community. It covered five areas: evangelization, education, social justice, youth and leadership development.

Sylvia Sanchez, from the Institute on Hispanic Liturgy in St. Petersburg, Fla., said the significance of the encuentro was that the bishops were looking for recommendations from the people and not setting policy themselves.

"Not all of the bishops live with the people. They don't understand the reality of the Hispanic community," she said. "The main thing now is that the bishops are asking the delegates to tell them what our reality is."

She said the enthusiasm of the delegates reflected their hope that something constructive would result from the weekend but also hid some of the apprehension they felt.

"People are wondering, 'Will the bishops look at this seriously?'" she said.

Any apprehension some delegates might have had, said Lydia Hernandez of San Jose, was eased by a videotaped message from Pope John Paul II.

"The fact that he took the time to make that tape legitimized the encuentro," she said.

During the taped message the pope said that the delegate's recommendations should further the evangelization process of the church. He received a standing ovation from the delegates when it finished.

Miss Sanchez said that the fact that the official language of the encuentro was Spanish also helped legitimize the church's expressed concern for the community.

"If the liturgy is not related to the reality of the people, they will not respond," she added.

Miss Marquez praised the church for using Spanish because she recalls being scolded as a child for speaking Spanish.

"It's beautiful that now I can fight for that right," she said.

Sister Rita Brereton of St. Paul Parish in Boston said learning the language is not enough.

"Priests and Religious need to be trained in the Hispanic reality. They need to know that Hispanics look up to their priest; they need to understand the significance of a home visit, the significance of an offer of coffee. All these little things add up to so much," said Sister Brereton, a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

"This (the encuentro) gives Hispanics an opportunity to convey that message to the bishops, and the bishops want to hear that," she said.

Francisco Vasquez, 32, of Palacio, Texas, said English liturgies were the main reason why many older Hispanics refused to attend Mass. He said the changes after the Second Vatican Council occurred too quickly for many Hispanics, who believed their faith was being taken away.

"More education by the church is needed," he said.

He also said that the local priest was the key to ensuring that the church meet the parishioners' needs.

"If the priest doesn't understand the people's needs, the people will have no involvement and no voice in the church," said Vasquez, who took his first plane ride to attend the encuentro. He said the encuentro provided Hispanics with the opportunity to express their thoughts and concern to the church in a constructive and productive manner.

For Luis Luna, 22, of San Antonio, Texas, the encuentro was another opportunity to serve God.

"I was sent here by God to serve the people and to act as their voice," he said.

Martin Garza, 19, of Davenport, Iowa, said he felt frustrated that more youths from his diocese did not get involved in the encuentro. He said that the opportunities for them to participate were there but they were more concerned with other activities.

He said the encuentro was a good experience for him but he was upset that more time was not spent on the working document prepared after the regional encuentros.

Some of the female delegates raised concern about the wording of the recommendation regarding the role of women in

the church. They said that a re-wording of the passage would more adequately reflect the church's need to value women in the church, family and society.

Sister Maria de Jesus Ybarra, a Dominican Sister of Perpetual Adoration and a founder

of Hermanas, an organization of Hispanic Religious and lay women, said the issue was not one of substance but of phrasing.

"Women have been actively involved in the encuentro process," she said.

Delegates to Encuentro asked to announce 'hope of salvation'

By Julio Barreto Jr.

Washington (NC) — The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, opening the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro Aug. 15, asked that God inspire delegates "to announce the hope of salvation and freedom for those oppressed by sin and (its) consequences."

Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, made his comments at a Mass celebrated at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception convoking the encuentro.

The encuentro, held at The Catholic University in Washington to prepare a pastoral plan to serve the needs of the Hispanic Catholic community, was to conclude Aug. 18.

"May this historic event create and foster in you a deeper sense not only of belonging to the church but of being the church," Bishop Malone told the delegates.

"May this Tercer (Third) Encuentro be a graced opportunity for you to study and reflect with like-hearted persons upon the Hispanic reality in North America," said Bishop Malone.

Approximately 1,200 delegates from 133 dioceses in 40 states and five Spanish-speaking countries were in attendance at the encuentro. The encuentro was to focus on five areas: evangelization, education, social justice, youth and leadership formation.

Archbishop Roberto Sanchez of Santa Fe, N.M., was principal celebrant of the Mass in Spanish, the official language of the encuentro. The delegates, grouped by region, led a procession into the shrine.

They were followed by 46 bishops including Archbishop James Hickey of

Washington, who welcomed the delegates in Spanish at the opening of the Mass. In greeting the delegates, Archbishop Hickey used a common Spanish phrase, "Mi casa es su casa" (my house is your house), which drew applause from the delegates.

In his homily, Archbishop Sanchez called Archbishop Hickey's comments "beautiful" and said the fact that it was delivered "in our own language" gave them added meaning.

He called the Hispanic community a community that is united and organized and said the beauty of the encuentro was its ability to bring together people from throughout the country working toward a common goal.

"We are a united community of distinct parts," he said. "God is on our side," he said.

His words of praise for Jesus and the Blessed Virgin brought shouts of "Viva!" from the delegates.

"We want a church where our community can feel at home," he said.

The encuentro was called by the U.S. bishops in a 1983 pastoral letter on Hispanic ministry. Preparations involved more than 25,000 people in diocesan and regional encuentros. Previous national encuentros were held in 1972 and 1977.

Hispanics represent 25 to 30 percent of the U.S. Catholic population and are expected to reach more than 50 percent of the Catholic population by the year 2000. There are 17 Hispanic bishops and five regional pastoral institutes to prepare the clergy, Religious and laity to better serve Hispanic Catholics.

According to the bishops' Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, there are in the United States an estimated 250 U.S.-born and 1,500 foreign-born Hispanic priests.

Papal video message urges evangelization for Hispanics

By Laurie Hansen

Washington (NC) — In a videotaped message in Spanish, Pope John Paul II told delegates to the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro Aug. 16 that the recommendations they propose to the U.S. bishops should increase evangelization efforts in their "social, cultural and family surroundings, which are so rich in human and religious values and yet at the same time, are in such need of God."

The encuentro is a national meeting involving more than 1,200 delegates in a meeting at the Catholic University of America Aug. 15-18. The delegates represented the 25,000 Hispanics from 133 dioceses throughout the country who have been involved in small group-discussions to prepare for the encuentro since 1983.

In their 1983 pastoral letter on Hispanic ministry, the U.S. bishops called for the encuentro, asking Hispanic Catholics to prepare a series of recommendations to serve as a plan of action to meet the needs of the Hispanic Catholic community.

"Let your families be small domestic churches that give testimony of an authentic and profound Christian faith," the pontiff told the delegates in his videotaped message which was presented on a large screen in front of the altar in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

"Let them be homes where your children are formed according to the commandments of our Lord, where they are initiated in the faith, where they are taught purity, where they are prepared for life."

He suggested they propose high goals for Hispanic young people. "Educate them to the moral and spiritual values of the Holy Spirit over and above egoistic and materialistic tendencies. Infuse them with confidence."

By choosing to focus on the themes of evangelization, integral education, youth, social justice and leadership, the pope said that encuentro participants have raised key issues requiring a "Gospel response" from the Hispanic people and U.S. clergy that is

"in accordance with your condition as faithful children of the church."

Pope John Paul II said that he is comforted by the growing cooperation between the "sister churches of the New World and the Old Continent." This cooperation, he said, encourages the delegates to strive for the "civilization of love," the aspiration of all men and women of good will.

Before the message was presented, Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic pronuncio to the United States, addressed encuentro participants in Spanish, saying he has a special interest in Hispanic Catholics.

His concern, he said, is "not only because I love them, but also because I feel that I am one of them since I am also Latino and spent more than 10 years living in Latin America." His remarks were vigorously applauded.

Archbishop Laghi said he wanted to assure the encuentro participants that their recommendations would not only be taken under consideration, but accepted as the "flesh and blood" of pastoral ministry to Hispanics.

In a news briefing Aug. 16, Father Vicente Lopez, associate director of the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs of the U.S. Catholic Conference, said that the encuentro has been a process of "person-to-person evangelization" which has already been successful because it has increased the number of bilingual liturgies, encouraged a greater response to the plight of the migrant farmworkers, taught Hispanics how to deal with diocesan agencies, and promoted leadership training among Hispanics.

Father Lopez said that the encuentro has helped Hispanics to sense "our ownership of the church."

He said it is an achievement that Hispanic Catholics can even talk about creating a "national" plan of action — "that it's not just New York or Miami or New Orleans or San Antonio...It's also Yakima, Wash."

Father Lopez said that he expects the U.S. bishops to respond to the encuentro recommendations after their national meeting in November 1986.

South African bishop expects 'bloodbath' unless apartheid ends

By Rich Goul

Los Angeles (NC) — The South African government must end apartheid or escalating violence "will result in the greatest bloodbath the African continent has ever known," said Bishop Michael Rowland of Dundee, South Africa.

Apartheid, South Africa's system of racial separation, is "a morally repugnant policy," Bishop Rowland said in an interview in Los Angeles.

"There is a pull between that right wing that sees apartheid as central to their way of life and revolutionaries, who would like to see a bloody revolution. The danger in that is that I'm afraid the people would be just trading one bad situation for one that could be worse," he said.

Bishop Rowland said his diocese, southeast of Johannesburg, is struggling to provide for the more than 100,000 blacks whom the government has relocated there.

The diocese is trying to develop agricultural cooperatives and small-scale cottage-craft

industries, he said. It also operates an orphanage, clinics, schools and a fledgling well-drilling project.

The bishop said it was "unimportant" that the majority of people relocated were not Catholic.

"Our duty is to provide them with food, clothing and shelter and help them build some means of economic self-sufficiency," he said.

Divestment of U.S. industry in South Africa "would result in the closure of factories and industries that offer jobs with decent wages and living conditions," Bishop Rowland said.

"The best conditions blacks have are as employees of U.S. companies," he said.

Although no priests have been ousted from his diocese for anti-apartheid efforts, he said, "the government offers no cooperation and makes it difficult for us to get sites in resettlement for churches. Quite a few priests have had their permits revoked or are not guaranteed permanent residency."

New York Archdiocese embarks on plan for care of AIDS victims

By Tracy Early

New York (NC) — The Archdiocese of New York announced Aug. 20 that it would embark on a "comprehensive plan for the study and care of AIDS patients," with assistance to be provided by sisters of Mother Teresa's order, the Missionaries of Charity.

For study of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), a disease most often found among male homosexuals, the archdiocese is joining with New York Medical College to establish a center, the announcement said. The center will be located at the Medical College in Valhalla, a town in Westchester County, just above New York City.

St. Clare's is an archdiocesan hospital in Manhattan. As part of the plan, the archdiocese will establish a special unit at the hospital to treat AIDS patients. The hospital will also establish an AIDS clinic and offer home care for follow-up work with AIDS patients, the archdiocese said. Already, it said, archdiocesan hospitals treat 10-20 percent of all AIDS patients in New York

City.

News that the archdiocese was planning an AIDS program first came from Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York. Speaking with a reporter Aug. 17 in Wilton, Conn., where he was attending a benefit auction, he said the archdiocese was "very seriously considering" opening a shelter to care for AIDS patients.

Cardinal O'Connor's announcement of plans for the care of AIDS patients held special interest for New Yorkers because he has been at odds with much of the homosexual community, particularly over the issue of employing practicing homosexuals in archdiocesan institutions and more generally over his insistence that homosexual behavior is morally wrong.

"This new comprehensive program for AIDS research and treatment does not represent a change in the policy of the archdiocese," the announcement concluded. "It is felt that a coordinated effort to study the problem of AIDS will be more successful than many different approaches."