

# Salvadoran priest returns with hope to his divided nation

By Teresa A. Parsons

When he returns to El Salvador next month, Father Nicolas Menjivar will be going home. But after five years on leave in the United States, life in his war-ravaged country may take some getting used to.

Although he observed that persecution of clergy and church workers in El Salvador seems to have lessened recently, Father Nicolas said that conditions there change almost daily.

"It is very difficult for me to understand because I have been away for a long time," he said. "I believe that there is some hope that the situation can become better, little by little. The people are tired of the civil war. They don't want to be in that terrible situation any more. They just want to live and work in peace."

That is particularly true of the parishioners he will serve at Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Many are rural people who have been displaced from their homes by the civil war.

"The majority are poor people. All their goods have been destroyed by one side or the other," he said. "They have not many material things, but I felt they have a lot of hope and deep faith. There are people who have nothing but faith."

Located in the town of Lourdes, 25 kilometers west of San Salvador, the parish has never before had a resident priest. Already, Father Nicolas said, many parishioners have written to welcome him.

Since 1971, four sisters have comprised the parish staff, serving a population of 80,000. They have organized a small clinic and a prenatal program to combat the area's high infant mortality rate.

"That is an emergency in our country," Father Nicolas explained. "The nutritional sit-



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Friends of Father Nicolas Menjivar, who is returning to pastoral work in El Salvador, will host a farewell party or "Despedida" Friday, June 27, at 7 p.m. in St. Francis Xavier Church.

uation is very bad."

Finding a place to live will be among his first priorities, since his new parish has no rectory. He also hopes to build a parish center so that the sisters no longer have to teach religious education outdoors.

Aside from material needs, Father Nicolas said he will concentrate on visiting members of the community. "I will have to learn to work

with these new people," he explained. "They have different customs and different ways to worship."

Among the customs he hopes to take back to El Salvador is the ordination of permanent deacons. Because there are so few priests in El Salvador, Father Nicolas has received the approval of Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas to begin such a program. "There are many people there already doing the work of deacons," he said. "There is only so much one priest can do. The people need a lot of spiritual support,

and they trust in the Church.

Ordained nearly 12 years ago by slain Archbishop Oscar Romero, Father Nicolas came to the Diocese of Rochester for "a rest." Nevertheless, he worked hard to build a spirit of community among Hispanic people at St. Francis Xavier and Holy Redeemer parishes. For the past two years, he has worked for the diocesan Spanish Apostolate in Geneva and Newark, where he will leave behind many friends and admirers.

He believes that in the Finger Lakes region he was as successful as was possible in such a short time. "To have success in a pastoral plan, you need more than two years — at least four years," he said. "Those communities need a lot of support!"

For that reason, he is disappointed that, because of budget restrictions, the Spanish Apostolate will not appoint a full-time replacement for him. "It would be very nice if a Spanish minister, not necessarily a priest, would come to those places," he said.

During the next two weeks, Father Nicolas will concentrate on taking leave of his friends in the United States. Many will gather Friday, June 27, for a "Despedida," or farewell party at 7 p.m. in St. Francis Xavier Church, 316 Bay St. The event will also serve as a benefit to raise money for his new parish.

"I am grateful for the support I have received from Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark, Father John Mulligan and the people of the Spanish Apostolate. Also the pastors in Geneva and Newark," he said. "I have many friends to see before I go. It will be difficult to come back again soon."

A local support group is also being organized to continue supporting Father Nicolas and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. For more information, contact the Spanish Apostolate, (716) 436-9090.

## Liturgy, religious education lose staff

Budget cuts are responsible for the departure of several familiar faces from the diocesan Pastoral Center.

Because her position has been eliminated, Resource Assistant Pamela Schaeffer will leave the Office of Liturgy effective Monday, June 30. For the past eight years, she has maintained the office's library and has edited the newsletter, "Living Liturgy." Schaeffer also served as the primary contact person for parishes with questions or research requests.

In notifying parish liturgical planners of Schaeffer's departure, Father Thomas Mull wrote: "I want to publicly thank Pam for all her loyalty and hard work. She has been a regular part of all the workings of the Liturgy Office, and her expertise will be missed."

Because her position was cut from full-

part-time, Charlotte Richardson, who served the Division of Education as secretary and audio-visual librarian for nine years, also announced her resignation May 30. She leaves to become director of services for several physicians in private practice.

Unrelated to budget cuts, the Liturgy Office has also announced the resignation of Sister Nancy Burkin, SSJ, who has been associate director for parish worship since 1980. During her tenure in the Diocese of Rochester, she has assisted in planning a variety of parish and diocesan celebrations.

Effective June 30, Sister Nancy will become director of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) for St. Joseph's Parish in Toronto, Canada. She will, however, remain a member of the Rochester Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

## K of C golf touney to benefit childhood cancer associations

The second-annual Mark Dillon Memorial Benefit Golf Tournament, sponsored by Pope Pius XIII Knights of Columbus Council 4691, will be Monday, June 30, at the Brockport Country Club with a tee-off time at 10:30 a.m. Proceeds from the tournament will benefit Camp Good Days and Special Times and the CURE Childhood Cancer Association, Inc., two local groups dedicated to helping children and families affected by cancer.

Donation is \$35 per golfer and covers greens

fees, carts, prizes, dinner/dance and a contribution to the camp and CURE. The tournament is open to all men and women who recognize the need to support these causes. Reservations are required and will be limited to the first 120 golfers.

For reservations and information, call (716) 544-4674 or send checks made payable to K of C Benefit Golf to Robert Greis, 200 Spruce Lane., Rochester, 14622

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