



AP/Wide World Photos  
Undocumented aliens line up for a head count under the watchful eye of a security guard at the INS detention center in Bayview, Texas.

## Agenda

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the meeting into a dialectical situation between two groups is erroneous," he said. The tension that exists is between "the church's message, which is at times countercultural, and industrial, developed societies."

For Vatican and U.S. church leaders, the meeting symbolizes their "awareness of the realities and difficulties and an openness to discuss what should be the pastoral approach of the church," he said.

This view of the tensions between the church and the world is shared by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and one of the speakers at the March meeting.

During a 1988 visit to the United States, the cardinal emphasized that the church's teachings are at odds with a declining moral climate in much of Western civilization.

"In this kind of climate it is important to

remember two things: first, that the moral doctrine of the church is not easy and can create tensions, and second, that in a democratic and egalitarian society the hierarchical structure of the church is something that can be difficult to accept," Cardinal Ratzinger said.

The cardinal's topic for his planned address to the meeting is "The Bishop as Teacher of the Faith."

Another scheduled speaker, Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, cited as a tension-causing issue the growing acceptance of divorce in society.

"A big problem, not only in the States, is that people don't believe in the indissolubility of marriage anymore," Cardinal Gagnon said. "Bishops have to make sure that their priests truly believe and promote the church's teachings in these matters."

In order to do so, he said, the bishop "should listen to people who come to complain and not always feel that those who complain are against them."

## Bishops decry asylum plan

AUSTIN, Texas (NC) — The Catholic bishops of Texas said Feb. 21 that a new plan by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to deal with Central Americans seeking political asylum will create "the largest concentration camp on U.S. soil" since Japanese-Americans were incarcerated during World War II.

The INS plan, which includes detaining those denied asylum in state prisons or possibly a tent city, will only "exacerbate a volatile situation" in the Rio Grande Valley of southern Texas, said the bishops in a statement issued in Austin.

The bishops were in Austin for a meeting of the Texas Conference of Churches, an ecumenical body.

In a call to the U.S. State Department to revise U.S. policy in Central America, the bishops said the INS plan ignores the true reasons Central Americans are fleeing their nations and flooding U.S. borders.

"The INS statement speaks of 'frivolous' applications," the bishops said. "Apparently any applications by people who have suffered dreadfully from civil war are frivolous."

On Feb. 20, immigration commissioner Alan Nelson announced that the estimated 2,000 Central American refugees who cross into southern Texas weekly will be detained and many deported within hours if they do not qualify for asylum.

"We intend to send a strong signal to those people who have the mistaken idea that by merely filing a frivolous asylum claim, they may stay in the United States," Nelson said while announcing the INS plan in Brownsville, Texas. "This willful manipulation of America's generosity must stop."

As part of the plan, about 500 INS employees from around the country have been sent to southern Texas to police the border and handle the cases within 24 hours of receipt of asylum applications.

The INS plan said refugees denied asylum will be detained at prisons around the

state while they appeal their application or await deportation. It also called for creation of a tent city if demand exceeds the 1,300 beds available at the various detention facilities.

"Obviously we are about to witness the creation of the largest concentration camp on U.S. soil since the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II — a shameful page in our history," the bishops said of the detention. "That's all the Valley needs — 5,000 or more penned up young people and their families."

Nelson said such a comprehensive and drastic plan had to be taken because the number of illegal aliens entering the country has had a tremendous impact on all aspects of American life. In 1985, 7,063 asylum requests were filed and in 1988, there were more than 50,000, he said.

"If allowed to continue, this could produce more than 100,000 asylum requests in fiscal year 1989," Nelson added.

In their statement the bishops expressed anger over Nelson's claim the asylum requests are frivolous.

"Civil war in Central America has killed tens of thousands; caused many to be raped, tortured and maimed; forced families from their homes; made feeding, educating and rearing families impossible; caused rampant unemployment; possible fear and dread of police action against entire families; and made hope for the children an impossibility in the hearts of parents," the bishops said.

In a separate statement, issued the same day, the Texas Conference of Churches, an ecumenical body of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches, said it was "appalled" by Nelson's remarks.

The conference said it would be "inhuman and unjust" to send people back to war-torn countries where they may face "persecution for having left ... in the first place."

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