

Migrants seen as among worst off from hurricane

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (CNS) — When Hurricane Andrew ravaged south Florida, one of the worst-hit sectors of the population was the area's migrant workers and farm laborers.

"No work," said Arnaldo Carbajal, a nursery laborer who was one of the luckier residents of South Dade Labor Camp. Although it was damaged, at least his house on Lot 41 still stands.

"Yeah, I will stay," he said with a shrug when he was asked what he would do.

An estimated 23,000 migrant men, women and children who cultivate and harvest the tomatoes, lemons, limes, avocados, mangos and ornamental palm trees of south Dade County were left homeless and jobless by the hurricane.

Andrew's 165-mile-an-hour winds destroyed or severely damaged virtually all crops across a 20-mile swath, devastating the whole basis of the agricultural economy.

What the migrants lost in personal possessions would not count for very much in the multibillion-dollar cost estimates of Andrew's ravages, but only because "these people had very little to begin with," said Miami archdiocesan spokeswoman Mary Ross Agosta.

Because many of the migrant workers are illegal aliens and many speak little or no English, "they're petrified of anybody in uniform ... They're afraid of getting deported," she said.

As a result, many — perhaps in the thousands — hid or fled as the soldiers came in to bring aid and set up temporary shelters.

"We (the archdiocese) have been sending down pastoral workers who know the people" and can get them to come out for the assistance they need, Agosta said. She said they found one group that had gone three miles into the everglades to flee the soldiers.

Lidia Menocal of Southeast Pastoral Institute, a Miami-based Hispanic ministry center that covers 28 dioceses in the southeastern states, said the migrants workers would "have to move on to where there are crops" and compete with other migrants for jobs.

"But there's another migrant population that's more settled" and just moving out of the migrant stream into a more stable life, she said.

For many of them a long-awaited chance to settle down and rent a permanent apartment or own a small home has been blown away in Andrew's winds.

"They're back to square one," Agosta said.

"It would be pure luck if any of the grove crops get back even by next year," said Steven Mainster, director of Centro Campesino, who organized a relief camp for workers near Homestead.

Father Thomas Honold, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Homestead, estimated that 98 percent of the 1,900 families in his parish had lost their homes.

His church and the parish school were blown apart, but at least the walls were still standing. But a trailer park next door, which mainly housed senior citizens, was leveled. Not one trailer was left standing.

At the South Dade Labor Camp, where Carbajal and his sons were cleaning up and searching for clean water, children of farmworkers played amid the debris as truck after truck arrived with donated clothing, food and other relief supplies.

A group of volunteers from Miami parishes were giving particular attention to a heap of rubble next to the South Dade Outreach Health Center.



AP/Wide World Photos
Taken Sept. 4 with a super-wide lens, this aerial view shows the devastation Hurricane Andrew created in Florida City, Fla. Relief supplies continue to pour into south Florida, which was gravely damaged by the hurricane.

"This was Christ the King Chapel," explained Sister Ondinda Cortes, broom in hand.

"That little space was granted to the Catholic Church to celebrate Mass" in the migrant labor camp, she said. "We're trying to clear up so we can build some kind of storage space" for relief supplies.

Agosta said Auxiliary Bishop Agustin A. Roman of Miami, archdiocesan vicar for Hispanics, had been down to the Homestead area every day helping organize relief work among the migrants.

The bishop, a Cuban exile, lives in the path the hurricane hit and "suf-

fered three feet of water in his residence," she said. When civil authorities urged everyone in that area to evacuate before the storm hit, she said, he refused to go and leave his people behind.

Patricia Stockton, who is helping coordinate relief work in migrant camps, said immediate food relief was more than adequate, but medical and psychological needs were emerging as critical issues 10 days after the hurricane. The former archdiocesan migrant ministry director, she was pulled from her current post as campus ministry director to help with the relief effort.

Bishop wants alleged events investigated

TRENTON, N.J. (CNS) — Bishop John C. Reiss of Trenton has directed Catholics in his diocese to stay away from the site of reported Marian apparitions until the alleged events are investigated.

The alleged apparitions have been taking place in Joseph Januskiewicz's back yard in Marlboro. On Aug. 2, an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 people were in the yard when Mary allegedly appeared.

Januskiewicz, a 54-year-old draftsman who is a member of St. Gabriel Parish in Marlboro, said Mary started

appearing to him on March 17, 1989, and recently told him she would come regularly on the first Sunday of each month.

He said Mary was accompanied by St. Joseph when she appeared at 9:13 p.m. Eastern Standard Time Aug. 2 and said, "Priests, my son loves you. Love him as much as he loves you. Pray for peace. Pray for your leaders to make the right choices. Many of my children will perish if they don't."

Bishop Reiss wrote a letter to priests in the diocese urging them not to advise, sponsor or encourage people to

visit the shrine in the Januskiewicz yard. He also asked priests to announce from the pulpit and in parish bulletins that the apparition claims have not been verified and have not been approved for worship and devotion of the faithful. He has formed a commission to study the alleged apparitions.

"The concern of the church in incidents like this is to safeguard the faith of the people involved and to be assured that their faith is not being harmed or set at risk," said the bishop in his directive to priests.

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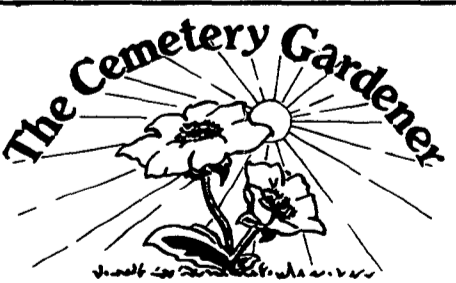
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