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Clockwise
from top
center: Carlos
Martínez; Jeannette
Martínez; Brother Luis
Ruberte, H.Ch.; and
Carmen Guinones

Hispanic 'pioneers' mark 50 years' progress in U.S.

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — Noting a half-century since the U.S. Catholic Church first established an office for Hispanic ministry, 450 people celebrated progress, honored pioneers and charted out a commitment for the future at Hispanic Convocation '95.

"Fifty years ago I was a cotton picker," San Antonio Archbishop Patrick F. Flores said in opening the convocation held this summer at Incarnate Word College. "I couldn't enter many institutions in Texas because of the color of my skin — even Catholic institutions."

Through the leadership of one of his predecessors in San Antonio, the late Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, the U.S. bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking was formed in 1945 and a national office was established in San Antonio. Later it became the Committee on Hispanic Affairs, and the national office was moved to Washington in 1970, becoming the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic

Bishops.

"In 1945, the Spanish-speaking population was relatively small, even though many were native born," said the convocation's program. "Educational and economic levels were generally low and many families were not part of parish life due to language and other social realities of the time."

The end of World War II, the civil rights movement, improved economic standards, a shift from rural to urban population, increased mobility and migration have dramatically changed the needs in Hispanic ministry, various speakers in presentations on how the Hispanic presence fits in and is affected by the "new evangelization" Pope John Paul II is seeking for the church.

The "new evangelization" of the Americas has been a recurring church theme in the Western Hemisphere since 1992, when Pope John Paul II spoke of the need for re-evangelizing the hemisphere.

Like members of other U.S. groups, Hispanics have experienced a cultural revolution, said one of two

Continued on page 14

Hispanics within diocese answer call to service

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The time is now.

As two deacons-in-training see it, the present offers more than simply an opportunity for Hispanic Americans to minister within the Rochester diocese.

With a continually declining number of available priests and women religious, the church also has an urgent need for lay people to take a more active role in church life by joining the diaconate and other programs.

"I know the (Hispanic) community needs help, and the priests do, too," said Jorge Malave.

"It's a feeling I get. I need to help my people, and I can help them more as a deacon," added Salvador Otero.

Malave and Otero are parishioners in the Community of Hope cluster located on Rochester's northeast side. They graduated in 1994 from *El Instituto*, the diocesan school for training Hispanic ministerial and spiritual leaders. Both men are now studying in the diocesan diaconate program.

Brother Luis Ruberte, H.Ch., said Malave and Otero are part of a growing number of Hispanics striving toward church leadership roles.

"The diocese has become more open for the Hispanic community. There are more people working in positions in the Pastoral Center and parishes," said Brother Ruberte, in his 14th year as director of the diocesan Office of the Spanish Apostolate.

Many of these workers have received their formation through the Instituto. Begun in the late 1980s, the school operates out of Rochester's St. Bernard's Institute and is designed for Hispanic adults who wish to become involved in ministry. The three-year program combines ministerial and spiritual preparation, as well as special workshops on enhancing skills in the areas of youth, liturgy and education.

Two other Community of Hope parishioners, Carlos Martínez and his wife Jeannette, are 1995 graduates of the Instituto. They currently teach religious education to parish youths in grades 3-4.

"In order to teach them our faith, it was important for us to be more understanding in it," Carlos remarked. "Now that the church is counting more on lay people to do the work of the church, we need to be more knowledgeable."

Deacon Carlos Vargas stressed that Hispanics with specialized ministerial training such as Malave, Otero and the Martínezes share an initial obligation to their own culture.

"We need people who want to be part of the community and come back to the community," said Deacon Vargas, who serves in the St. Peter and Paul/St. Francis of Assisi cluster in northwest Rochester.

Deacon Vargas, a member of the first diocesan class of ordained deacons in 1982, said he "wouldn't feel whole" if he were working in a suburban parish with only English-speaking members.

Yet despite this priority on meeting its own needs, one diocesan youth minister observed that the Hispanic population should not close itself off

Continued on page 14