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Fear

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were reportedly arrested by authorities at a laundromat less than a block away from the church. At least one of those arrested had gone to Mass earlier in the day, according to Father Ivan Trujillo, a priest of the Buffalo Diocese who occasionally presides at Spanish Mass at Nativity.

Father Trujillo learned this when he spoke to the men who were arrested at the laundromat when he visited the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility in Batavia July 31. The priest visits the facility at least twice a month to minister to Spanish-speaking aliens who have been detained and who may be deported, he said.

According to Mass-goers, the July 29 service drew almost 200 worshipers, but the Aug. 5 liturgy drew a mere 35, at least a third of whom appeared to be non-Hispanic.

"It's never been this low," parishioner Grania Marcus said.

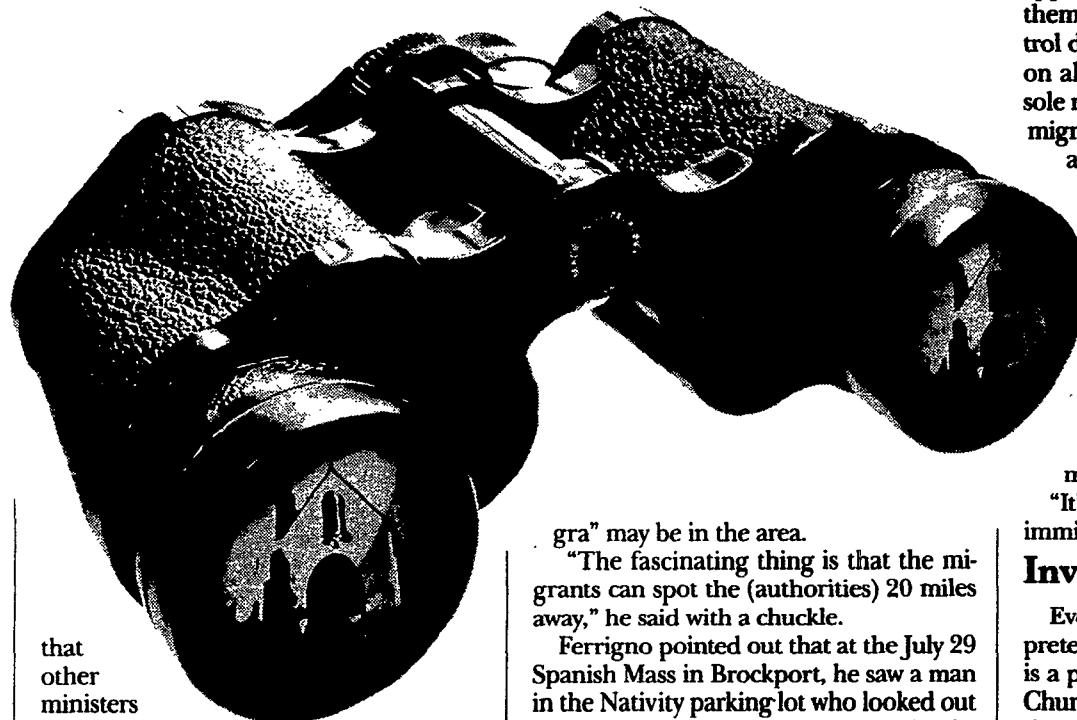
Marcus is a tutor advocate with the Brockport Migrant Education Program at State University College at Brockport. Among her duties is teaching English to migrants in area farm camps. She said she knew of people who were afraid not only to come to Mass but to go shopping or do their laundry as well because of the fear stemming from news of the July 29 arrests.

At the laundromat Aug. 5 where the migrants were reportedly arrested, a 16-year-old Mexican said through an interpreter that he had come to the area three months before to work with his brother. However, he said, his brother had been deported a month ago, and he himself feared being nabbed for working in the United States illegally. He works on an area farm.

A couple blocks away from the laundromat, Myrna Hernandez, an employee of Lorenzo's Mexican Products, said there had been a marked drop-off in customers the weekend of Aug. 4-5. Usually, about 200 customers come on a weekend, but she had seen less than a quarter of that number by late Sunday afternoon. People were even calling the store, she said, to ask if someone could come to the camps to pick up their checks and send them to Mexico, so afraid were they of coming into town to do it themselves.

Laying low

Given that they minister to migrants who may be here illegally, church workers sometimes have had to deal with questions



that other ministers may never confront.

Father P.J. Ryan told a staff member to forego taking Hispanic migrants out for pizza July 27 following a first penance service at the parish where he is pastor, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Hamlin. A large group of Hispanics in a public place could have drawn unwanted attention, the pastor noted.

Deacon Jerry Skerritt, pastoral associate at St. Mary's of the Lake Parish in Ontario, works with migrants in Wayne County. He recalled that three years ago, following a Spanish Sunday Mass at Church of the Epiphany in nearby Sodus, several Hispanic migrants did not want to leave the church because a government vehicle was sitting in a supermarket parking lot across the street.

After a while, Skerritt drove his own car over to the parking lot and parked next to the government vehicle. He noted that he knew there was nothing he could do to make the official leave because the government car was not on church property. Neither he nor the official exchanged words, he said, although they did exchange looks, and eventually the government official drove off without incident.

Every Sunday at 2 p.m., Epiphany offers the Spanish Mass, he said, and the service generally draws about 80 people. He added that attendance has dropped drastically from time to time when the word is out among the farmworkers that "la mi-

gra" may be in the area.

"The fascinating thing is that the migrants can spot the (authorities) 20 miles away," he said with a chuckle.

Ferrigno pointed out that at the July 29 Spanish Mass in Brockport, he saw a man in the Nativity parking lot who looked out of place. He asked the man, whom he described as a tall Caucasian with a wide-brimmed hat, where he was from, and the man responded that he was from Mexico. Fearing that he may somehow be connected with immigration authorities, Ferrigno went home to get his video camera — which had no batteries — and pretended to videotape the man from about 10 feet away. The man at this point was sitting on the rectory steps, he said, and gave Ferrigno an "unpleasant" look. The man eventually left without incident, he said.

The man who was at Nativity was not connected with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, according to Winston Barrus, deputy district director of the INS Buffalo District Office, which oversees all of New York state outside of the metropolitan area of New York City. Greg Mish, assistant chief patrol agent with the U.S. Border Patrol in Tonawanda, said that whoever the man was that Ferrigno saw, he wasn't with the border patrol either, nor was he a border patrol informant. He added that it is against border patrol policy to enter churches or to operate on church property.

Barrus said that budget constraints compel the INS to focus its resources on investigating criminal aliens and those who smuggle people into the United States rather than in tracking down the average farmworker without proper papers. Along those lines, Mish said that while the border patrol can take into account a person's

appearance when stopping and asking them for documentation, the border patrol does not engage in randomly picking on aliens. Appearance should not be the sole reason a border patrol official stops a migrant, he said. Although some migrants and church workers may think that migrants — including some who are U.S. citizens — have been stopped merely for looking Mexican, Mish said the border patrol generally has other reasons, including tips on illegal activity, for stopping a particular individual.

Mish added that the border patrol does not begrudge the fact that Catholic Church workers minister to migrants who are here illegally.

"It's not their job to question a person's immigration status," he said. "It's our job."

Invisible people

Everett Hobart, who served as an interpreter for the *Catholic Courier's* interviews, is a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport. A volunteer with the joint diocesan migrant ministry, Hobart calls the migrant farmworkers "invisible people." He said U.S. citizens living within a half mile of a farmworkers' camp may not even know there are people living just off the road, out of sight.

He had bitter words for the system that makes outlaws of farmworkers who don't have proper documentation to work here.

"It's not like they're doing anything to hurt anyone," he said. "They're just trying to survive in a tough world."

Migrants who work in the dioceses of Buffalo and Rochester without proper documentation are nonetheless children of God who need the Catholic Church's care, according to Sister of St. Joseph Judy Justinger. She just took over the director's reins of the joint diocesan migrant ministry from Macrina Alarcon, director for the last three years.

"It's not our business to figure out how they got here," Sister Justinger said of the migrant workers. "The point is we're helping people, and every person has a right to a decent life."

Alarcon, who also served as an interpreter for this article, is helping Sister Justinger, who hails from the Buffalo Diocese, until the end of August. Like other church workers, she lamented the fact that migrants who are not properly documented must continually fear being deported.

"If there was work in their own countries, they'd never be here in the first place," she said.

Immigrant advocates hopeful about amnesty, other proposals

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic and other immigrant advocates are sounding downright optimistic about the chances for new laws and regulations that they hope will make immigration more legal, orderly and safe, including amnesty for some people in the United States illegally.

Mexican President Vicente Fox has made it clear that he would like the U.S. border with his country to become more open.

President Bush seems to be supporting some of Fox's proposals, and immigrant advocates in church and private organizations are cheering the efforts on.

At a July 18 press conference at the Capitol, a handful of senators and a spokesman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops voiced their support for a legalization program.

"We are heartened by reports that the administration is considering legalization," said Kevin Appleby, director of migration and refugee policy for the bishops' Migration and Refugee Services. He urged that a general legalization be a component of any U.S.-Mexico agreement.

In a speech to the National Council of

La Raza meeting in Milwaukee July 17, Fox described components he would like to see in a migration agreement between the two countries.

He would include: granting legal status to illegal immigrants; expanding the number of family member visas available to Mexicans; expanding the system of work visas so more Mexicans can be employed legally in the United States; allowing Mexicans living in the United States, regardless of legal status, to have driver's licenses and access to in-state college tuition; and boosting economic support to Mexico, so fewer people would feel compelled to emigrate.

Fox's speech came shortly after word that Bush is considering an amnesty program, which could allow about 5 million Mexicans who are living in the United States illegally to legalize their status.

No details of what Bush is proposing were expected until shortly before Fox makes a state visit to Washington in September.

A White House "blueprint" for reforming the immigration system includes a proposal to split the Immigration and Naturalization Service into two, with one part handling law enforcement and the other focusing on immigrant services.

Such proposals have floated around Washington for years, but none have been approved by Congress.

In the meantime, advocates for immigrants are encouraging assorted measures they say are necessary to counteract the harmful effects of a 1996 immigration law, to make U.S. policy more compassionate and allow it to function more smoothly.

At the Capitol press conference, Appleby said the debate "is not between condoning undocumented migrants or deporting them," but "between accepting the labor force status quo — in which a high percentage of workers remain undocumented — and creating a work force which is stable, reliable and which enjoys full and market rights."

He said U.S. leaders "should look to the future and ensure that flows of migrants enter the United States in a fair, generous, legal and orderly manner ... (and) look at the nation's immigration function in a comprehensive way."

Appleby said changes should address current backlogs in processing of visas, which prevent people from entering legally in a timely manner, revamp and reform the INS, restore basic due process rights for immigrants, and increase the

mental assistance for Mexican and other Western Hemisphere nations.

In a telephone press conference the same day, Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum and Cecilia Munoz of the National Council of La Raza, said they are increasingly optimistic about Bush's intentions on immigration.

"Many of us are happy," Sharry said. "There is a chance we can come out with a set of policies that are responsible and actually work."

Munoz said she thinks the political climate is such that there is a "strong opportunity to transition through our immigration policy process — we talk to work."

Last changes in 1996 put the immigration policy on a track "that is being called to work," Munoz said. "The law is out of sync with economic realities."

She said the hostility in Congress toward immigrants that led to the 1996 law has faded and the political climate is ripe for a new work law program and other changes. It is strong, she said, because of the support of immigrant advocates, the AFL-CIO, churches and other community organizations, which she said have been instrumental in the process.