

Bishop Tells Why Refugees Fled

Catholic Bishop Mark Hurley said yesterday that Vietnamese refugees encamped near Saigon were fearful of a "slaughter" when communist forces eventually took over the areas they find.

Bishop Hurley, Bishop of Santa Rosa, and Dr. Lawrence Smookler, director of the medical clinic at the San Francisco International Airport, told of their impressions of a 11-day trip to South Vietnam to investigate refugee problems.

"It is not their fear of soldiers, tanks or weapons that drove these refugees southwards. It was the fear of loss of liberty," Bishop Hurley said.

Bishop Hurley, who had been sent to South Vietnam

by the Catholic Relief Service, estimated there were 900,000 refugees in the Saigon area.

Smookler, who made the trip for the U.S. Agency for International Development, said most of the refugees were well-fed, though crowded into makeshift camps.

The doctor said about 200,000 of the refugees were former employees of the U.S. government or American firms and were pleading for evacuation.

Both men urged continued humanitarian aid and urged the U.S. overnment to evacuate as many of the Vietnamese dependents as possible.

"These are loyal democratic members of the middle class who might suffer when the VC take control and they would be a credit to have in this country," Smookler said.