



April 5, 2024

BORDER MINISTRY - Holy Week with Mexican Province Volunteers

Five young women in their 20's wanted to spend a Holy Week Mission at La Casa de Esperanza in San Diego, in ministry to the migrants while living simply, as the migrants do.



The week before to prepare for the women's' arrival, with alums from our Regina High School in Mexico City and their friend, a graduate from a RSCJ school there, we were busy preparing our 'outside room and kitchen tent' (left) as well as participating in migrant ministry.

Srs. Lisa Buscher, RSCJ (shown handing a cup of coffee through the border wall) and Maryanne Loughry, from the UISG Migrant Committee returned to take part in our border wall ministry a few days prior to our Holy Week Mission. (UISG has been helping the Sisters Collaborative and will continue to do so.)



It was a busy week as ministry, preparation for the Holy Week guests, storms, leaks, and repairs were constant. That same week Sr. Sandra Salazar was a presenter in Mater Dei Catholic High School's Symposium on Human Dignity (story on page 3).

Sr. Celina Segovia, RJM and her friend Ana Paula had visited and seen how the migrants were living at Our Lady of Guadalupe in San Diego and wished to live simply, preparing their own meals, participating in prayer experiences in their own space at Casa de Esperanza...



and so they did, as did the 5 young women when they arrived for the Holy Week Mission. Shown here is the sleeping bag area where they all slept.

It was a Holy Week of walking with the Lord in our daily lives. It was a profound experience of community of 3 RJM's and 5 young women working together, sharing a welcoming pizza meal (right), Holy Thursday meal together, and prayer reflections on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and a Holy Saturday presentation here with Cookie, whom we help in Tijuana, and her friend, Silvia.



A few highlights of our week...

Monday - Wednesday, we served food, drinks, and gave warm dry clothing to migrants at the border wall at 6am, just before they turned themselves in to Border Patrol for asylum and were taken to a center for further processing and release to a shelter or dropped off at a trolley station or the airport.



At 7pm we served the meal to 35 migrants at OLG in San Diego and were able to sit, eat with them and listen to their painful stories of having to leave their homeland, encountering terrible dangers along the way and betrayal by people who could have helped them. Our girls translated for USD (a Catholic University) students who were there.



A few times during the week the girls made PBJ sandwiches - over 450 - that we distributed to migrants waiting at the SD airport or in the desert mountains in Jacumba (left).



On Holy Thursday, the girls shared a meal with us followed by quiet time.

On Good Friday we and 2 RSCJ's, Lisa and Ruth, drove out to Jacumba where migrants cross the Mexican/US border with the help of 'coyotes' and turn themselves in to the Border Patrol for asylum. After this we drove down into the desert for quiet prayer. When we arrived home I gave the girls a bag of small Stations of the Cross from the chapel at Joan of Arc Residence. The girls walked with them on our property, chose a station that spoke of their journey with the Lord and we all shared our reflections that evening.

When Cookie (right) came on Holy Saturday, Silvia (left) shared the story of her US born children, her husband being deported to Tijuana, and she herself being arrested and deported due to the person they were renting a room from in San Diego. She was arrested, not allowed to call her 8 year-old daughter, the child waiting for her mom to pick her up after school... imagine that little girl's fear... the terror, worry in the mother's heart...



Holy Week was a profound experience of deep **listening**, **seeing** through the eyes of Claudine the poor and vulnerable men, especially women and children in our midst, **walking** humbly and simply with the Lord, **acting** on Matthew 25:35... These young women, our shared companions in mission from our Mexican Province all want to return and to continue helping us... to do something where urgent needs exist in their area in Mexico.... and Natalia, Sandra, and I hope they will return as we became ONE. We are deeply grateful to our RJM's in our Mexican Province for joining with us in this mission.



- Sr. Rosie Nicholson, RJM

PEACE AND JUSTICE DAY - Mater Dei High School, San Diego, CA

On March 21, the Mater Dei Symposium on Human Dignity took place at Mater Dei Catholic High School. University professors, members of different ONGs, legal experts, border patrol agents and members of religious congregations were invited to share with students and faculty about the present lived reality of the migrants.

Brother Keith Warner OFM invited me to partner with him in his presentation to talk about Social Catholic Teaching and Pope Francis' invitation to journey with the migrants.

Brother Keith is the Director of the Francisca Renewal Project for the Franciscan School of Theology at the University of San Diego. He is an expert and gives classes about migration. He shared about how being created in the image of God is at the center of our human dignity. He explained the relationship between human dignity and human rights. He also shared about Pope Francis' view on the right to migrate and the right to not have to migrate.

I shared about my ministry at the border and about different hardships that the migrants experienced in their country of origin and during their journey to the United States. I gave examples of events in which the dignity of migrants was violated due to persecution, violence and injustice. I talked about Pope Francis' invitation to be proactive by responding to the reality of migration by "welcoming", "protecting", "integrating" and "promoting".

The students expressed interest in the topic and asked how to get involved in helping. I offered some ideas and provided my contact information to their teacher in case the school was interested in following up with a plan. After the presentation a group of presenters gather at the library for lunch. It was a good opportunity for networking and for learning about other programs that provide services to migrants in Tijuana.

- Sr. Sandra Salazar

Message of Pope Francis for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html

SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH SUDAN

The invitation below comes from Friends in Solidarity with South Sudan, one of the beneficiaries of our Annual Grant Fund. Both Srs. Margaret Perron and Mary Bourdon have served on their Board, and Sr. Yudith Pereira, RJM of Spain, worked with their Rome-based team.



*Join us for "A Conversation with Deacon Francis Chan" on **Tuesday, April 16 at 7 pm** Eastern on Zoom. A native of South Sudan, Francis Nyawello Chan came to the United States as a refugee 15 years ago from Beirut, Lebanon. Deacon Chan worked for the State of Iowa DHS Bureau of Refugee Services as a case manager and refugee specialist for 14 years. He is an ambassador for his home country of South Sudan. His current ministry is refugee ministry coordinator with the Catholic Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa.*

For more information go to: <https://www.solidarityfriends.org>.

To register go to: <https://bit.ly/4cgk22r>.

Care of Creation Committee

A Message from Greenpeace: www.greenpeace.org/usa/

(Below are excerpts from a recent Press Release)

The actions we take as individuals - whether recycling, limiting our disposable plastics usage, biking short distances over driving, limiting waste, or other small acts - are always worthwhile.

But nothing any one of us does alone will be enough to end this crisis. ***Did you know that in 2021, the United States only recycled a mere 5% of plastics produced?*** Since over 99% of plastics come from fossil fuels, they're too toxic to recycle into food packaging and other products. **At this rate, it wouldn't even make a dent in the almost 14 million tons leaked into our oceans each year, let alone the 75-199 million tons already there.**



What's most important is that individual advocates, work in unity to hit Big Polluters where it hurts (*right in the profits*), force world leaders to take real action to curb every stage of the toxic plastics life cycle, and build real, lasting change - a strong global plastics treaty to a ban on new fossil fuel extraction, and even getting critical legislation across the finish line.

- Submitted by Srs. Diane Dube and Doris Bissonnette

CARE FOR CREATION AT BETHANY NEWSLETTER

Attached to *Bridges* is our Care for Creation Newsletter for Spring 2024. Its theme is that everywhere we turn, new life is quietly, powerfully coming forth, reminding us again that the Life God gives will prevail even over destruction. May this Easter Season and the coming of Spring, bring new hope and joy to you and your families.

- The Care for Creation at Bethany Committee



FRANCISCAN ACTION NETWORK

Attached to the *Bridges* is a Franciscan Action Network article, "Living as Community" written by our own Toby Harkleroad.

A WILLING PLACE

A few months ago, I began visiting the Women's Prison in Cranston on Tuesday mornings to have a brief prayer service and bring the inmates communion. It has been a profoundly joyous experience for me. I meet God there every week. The women are very much like the rest of us, but they got involved in something or made a mistake which is costing them months or years of their lives.

Recently, I received an email from Catholic Mobilizing Network, an organization working to end the death penalty and promote restorative justice, which contained the story below, **written by Brittany Holberg**, a prisoner on death row in Texas. May it inspire you too.



For the past few weeks we have been hard at work, preparing a large area for a winter garden and my job has been the soil. Tilling and turning over the earth until it is softened enough for the delicate roots of each plant to grow down deep. When the area was first chosen for this particular garden I cringed.

I knew this was going to be a difficult task. I had tried before to dig in the same area only to find it seemingly impossible. Between the deeply rooted crab grass and the rock hard dirt I had come away with bloody fingers and a deep frustration. Not this time. I decided that this time no matter how hard it was I was not giving up.

Within us our hearts are the central most vital part of who we are. They are where God longs to create his Temple and dwell within us.

As I looked at this hardened piece of earth I heard the Lord speaking to me of the relentless way he himself worked to soften the places within my own heart. The blood he shed for me so that the hardened places of my own sin and past hurts could be softened into a willing place for him to dwell. Each of those places seemed impossible to penetrate and yet he loves us so much he refuses to leave us the way we are.

All he needs is one spot to begin. One willing place to begin this process. So I too looked. I searched for the space before me until I found a place I could begin.

From the first moment I felt the hardened earth beginning to give way I became completely and totally invested. During this process I hit places where the dirt seemed as hard as rock but I refused to give up. I would pick up the hardened clumps and work them until my fingers were bleeding. Slowly the dirt began to give way and soften until I was able to sift it through my fingers like sand.

Although there was nothing easy about this process what I felt as each clump broke apart was pure joy and I realized what God was showing me in such an intimate way. He was revealing to me the process each of our hearts must go through in order for the love he so desperately wants to fill us with to take root and begin to grow deep within us.

He longs to break open the hard places within us with his mercy and sift us with his grace so that his love will take root and grow abundantly within our hearts. All he needs is a willing place to start.

- Sr. Diane Dube

HAPPY EASTER!

Attached to the Bridges are Easter Cards for you from the Vadodara Province and the Angelique Community, to whose wishes we add our own:

Happy Easter!
Bon fet pak! (Haitian Creole)
Joyeuses Pâques! (French)
¡Feliz Pascua! (Spanish)

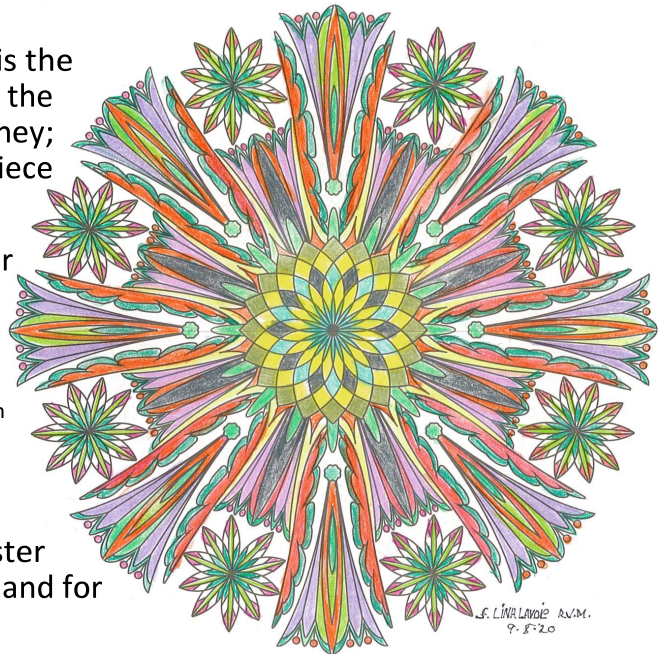


PROVINCE OFFICE

April 19 Next Bridges published (articles due by Wednesday 4/17 at noon)

PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR...

- Sr. Stella Herrera, who is recovering at home after a short hospital stay;
- Corine Greenwald, the sister of Sr. Dina Garcia, who just had a tumor removed from her stomach. The tumor is being biopsied and we pray for the best results and for a good recuperation;
- Continuing Prayers for: Mr. Pat Scanlon who is the father of Mary Scanlon; Colleen Pusateri who is the daughter of Haiti Mission supporter Lorrie Kenney; and Jennifer Morse-Meisenkothen who is the niece of Sr. Teresita Morse;
- The repose of the soul of Elaine Carroll, a former RJM, who died March 16th and for the consolation of her loved ones;
- The repose of the soul of Hilary Kelly, the brother of Sr. Rose Kelly, who died March 16th and for the consolation of his wife, Joan, family and friends;
- The repose of the soul of Marie Hogan, the sister of Sr. Antoinette Jacques, who died March 18th and for the consolation of her loved ones;
- The repose of the soul of Catherine Crowley, a long-term member of the Family of Jesus and Mary and generous donor to the RJMs, who died March 25th and for the consolation of her loved ones;
- Life Care Center of Attleboro (Sr. Jacqueline Jacques), as this week's community for special prayer.



**WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THE NEEDS OF
OUR RJM SISTERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

Praised Forever Be Jesus and Mary