



The Newsletter of Pax Christi Metro New York Spring 2019 Number 120

Dear Reader,

This issue is a little different from most *Kerux* issues. First and foremost, it has just three articles, all first-hand reports from the U.S./Mexico border. You'll notice some overlaps in what is reported, but also distinctions that reflect the experiences and unique voices of each writer.

Another difference in this issue is the layout. Articles are in one column, not two, and they flow one complete report after another. Please feel free to let us know if you find it easier to read, especially online, so we can consider it for future issues.

As always, we appreciate your feedback whether it is about content, layout, or anything else.

- Rosemarie Pace, PCMNY Director

THE SEEDS OF GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE AT THE US – MEXICO BORDER

by Scott Wright and Jean Stokan

The Miracle of Encounter

The drama at the US-Mexico border lends itself to the Advent story. It begins with pregnant mothers, journeying through Mexico and giving birth to children in manger-like conditions of poverty and refuge from violence; government authorities along their route, and especially in the United States, persecuting them and tear-gassing those who approach the border wall; Catholics and Jews, nuns and priests, people of good will travelling near and far to offer gifts of service, hospitality, and solidarity.

That Gospel journey continues even more dramatically in the context of our shared Lenten and Holy Week journey, as migrant families and children experience the stations of the cross and the passion of Christ in their flesh, a crucified people who yearn for Easter, resurrection and new life. The face of those families is forever engraved in the faces of two

Guatemalan children, Jakelin Caal Maquin and Felipe Gomez Alonzo, who died in U.S. detention after their families crossed the border in December and January.



Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso pictured with Jewish and Muslim leaders at an Interfaith Service at the Border Wall.

We recently returned to the US-Mexico border in February, where migrant families continue to flee from violence and terror in Central America, journeying through Mexico on their way to seek protection and asylum in the United States. Every day in El Paso, TX, more than five hundred migrants and children are held in detention for two, four, sometimes more days before being released to a network of churches who welcome them, provide temporary hospitality, assist them in contacting their relatives, and send them on their journey to pursue protection and asylum.

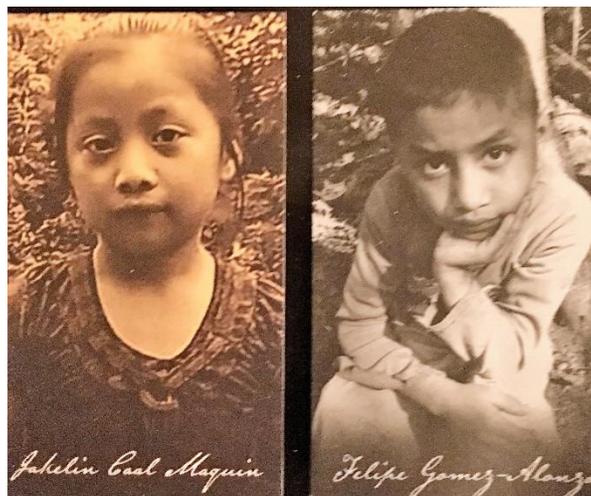
Over the past several months, the Diocese of El Paso, in an unprecedented response to the humanitarian crisis on the border, has opened its seminary and many other church buildings and parishes to provide shelter. There the works of mercy were put into practice: the strangers and recently detained were welcomed, the hungry were fed and given drink, the naked clothed and their wounds healed, and the miracle of encountering Christ in the poor migrant and refugee revealed in acts of hospitality and solidarity.

Preparing the Way for Migrants and Refugees

We remember in a special way those who cross the border from Mexico to the United States and the desperate situations they face in their home countries. We know that migrants throughout the world leave their homes for many reasons, and the root causes lay in decades of US support for military regimes and free trade deals have devastating consequences. The countries of the Northern Triangle in Central America – Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala – are some of the most dangerous places in the hemisphere due to drug cartels and gang violence, police repression, extreme poverty and inequality, and climate disasters. Mexico too is ravaged by violence: in ten years more than 250,000 people have been killed, and 38,000 disappeared.

This is not only a regional phenomenon - it is part of a global exodus of migrants and refugees crossing borders in search of refuge, as many as 68 million each year. Some are migrants, fleeing from situations of desperate poverty and climate change in search of opportunities to provide for their families. Many others are forcibly displaced by violence and war, refugees seeking protection in order to survive. What the news media has characterized as a “caravan” of migrants is in reality more like an “Exodus” of refugees, seeking protection and asylum in a land of promise.

Most of the migrant and refugee families we met in the shelters on the border were either fathers and small children, or mothers and small children. They came because their children have been threatened by gangs if they don't join, and parents have been threatened if they don't provide money for extortion to pay for protection. They came principally from Honduras and Guatemala, but also from El Salvador and Mexico. They come to seek protection and asylum, but also to work and provide for their families, and often to reunite with parents or children.



Jakelin and Felipe, two Guatemalan children who died in US detention at the border in December and January.

The Miracle of Hospitality and Solidarity

In El Paso, we joined many volunteers from the local area and some from across the U.S. who came to assist migrants and children in a network of shelters providing hospitality for these exhausted families, after spending weeks in flight and days in detention, traumatized by their journey but resilient in their hope. What we encountered there was the miracle of hospitality, an entire community opening their doors and their arms in gratitude and compassion to receive these migrant and refugee families.

On the last night we spent in the shelter with the migrant and refugee families, something beautiful happened. A migrant mother of two small children returned from a local hospital with a new-born babe, two days old, to join with her children and the family of migrants and refugees that had just been released from detention that very evening. There we surrounded the mother holding her new-born child, like the manger scene two thousand years ago, admiring the miracle of life in places of poverty and in times of violence. But determined to bring justice and mercy for immigrant families through the power of Gospel nonviolence and solidarity across borders.



Interfaith vigil and protest outside the El Tornillo Detention Camp for Immigrant Children just weeks before it closed.

Before returning from the border, we joined an interfaith vigil and protest outside the Tornillo Detention Camp a thirty-minute drive from El Paso where nearly 3,000 immigrant children were being held in tent facilities. Jewish rabbis and their congregations from Chicago and Michigan, Muslim women, Native American leaders and Franciscans, Sisters of Mercy, Columbans, Pax Christi members and seventy high school students from the Loretto Academy all joined together to raise their voices to protest the shameful practice of separating families and detaining immigrant children.

Weeks later, in Washington DC, we joined many of those same people to celebrate the closing of that detention camp and to welcome the news of a new legislative initiative to prohibit the detention of children in the future.

Sorrow and Mourning Flee Away

Last summer, Bishop Mark Seitz from El Paso issued a moving pastoral letter on migration which he entitled, “Sorrow and Mourning Flee Away.” In it, he spoke clearly of Gospel values of hospitality, and the human dignity of migrants and refugees:

“As a border community, we have a unique vocation to demonstrate the Christian virtue of hospitality.... No one can deny the terrible human impacts of a system that divides families, permits some to detain human beings for profit, and compromises our nation’s historic commitment to the refugee and asylum seeker.... Recently, we have witnessed indefensible, hateful words towards our neighbors in Mexico, the demonization of migrants, and the destructive language about our border.... Our elected leaders have not yet mustered the moral courage to enact permanent, comprehensive immigration reform.... Law should be at the service of human beings and ensure the sanctity of all life.... Building walls, deploying a mass deportation force and militarizing our border are not long-term solutions.”

There is much that we can do to help build “God’s just reign,” beginning by sowing the seeds of Gospel nonviolence: treating migrants and refugees with dignity, welcoming them at this difficult time in their lives, addressing the root causes of poverty and violence in their countries of origin, and working for a just and comprehensive immigration system in our own country.

About the Authors

Scott Wright is director of the [Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach](#). Jean Stokan is Vice-chair of the Pax Christi USA National Council, an active member of Pax Christi Metro DC/Baltimore region, and Director of the Sisters of Mercy of the America Institute Justice Team. Scott and Jean have been married for 29 years.

If you would like to know more, donate or even visit the border yourself, please visit the following websites:

Annunciation House— <https://annunciationhouse.org>

Border Network on Human Rights— <http://www.bnhr.org>

Hope Border Institute— <https://www.hopeborder.org/>

REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY WITH MIGRANTS IN EL PASO, TX

By S. Julie Cutter, DC

El Paso is a Mexican American city that has welcomed migrants for years. During my days of service in December at Nazareth Hall, the former infirmary of the Sisters of Loretto, I again experienced the loving and compassionate embrace offered to people on the move by families bringing clothing, meals, medicine and gifts. Others left their jobs and homes to volunteer full time at the border.

Each day Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) consulted with Ruben Garcia of Annunciation House to determine how many new families could be received at each of the 11 shelters. The families, most from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, had traveled across Mexico for weeks before they crossed at the port of entry in El Paso and requested asylum. A typical family was a parent with one or two children. Because of the court-imposed restrictions on keeping children in detention, the families were detained for about a week before they received documents detailing their court dates and were bussed to shelters. Volunteers welcomed them and assisted them in contacting family to obtain bus or plane tickets. The families chose a change of clothes so they could shower for the first time in weeks and rest in a bed or cot in a safe place. Parishes and organizations took turns bringing hot, delicious meals and brought their own children to witness the reality and serve the migrants.

I was trained to do intake by a retired businessman who described himself as one of “The usual suspects”, a group of retirees who supported migrant farm workers in the area. He and his wife came regularly.

One night stands out in my memory. On December 23, Jesuit Rafael Garcia, his brother who was visiting and a parish staff member and I worked the 2 pm –10 pm shift. At 5 pm, a parish group fed the families who were still in the shelter awaiting their bus/plane departures. The busload of 46 persons released from detention came two hours later than usual, at 6:30 pm. They also received dinner that included tortillas warmed on griddles. By the time the new group had been fed, processed, made calls, clothed, showered and settled, it was 11:30 pm. I reluctantly agreed to stay for the overnight shift, sleeping in the medicine room.

An hour later, a volunteer from Annunciation House awakened me and asked how many pillows and blankets were available. After all the shelters were full, ICE had dumped 185 additional persons at the bus station without water, food, tickets or access to phones. Annunciation House and the city jumped into action. Three more volunteers arrived with blankets and water, and the carpeted play room was transformed into a dormitory where each family received a blanket, pillow and bottled water. The El Paso police arrived with the 65 people in city busses. Each exhausted, terrified family found their spot. Once the children were settled, the parents knelt on their blankets and prayed aloud in gratitude. I wept and repented of my unwillingness to stay the overnight shift. Jesus, Mary and Joseph were in the play room on Christmas Eve.

The Annunciation House volunteers moved on to help settle other families, and Dylan from Hope Border Institute stayed the night. He told me that, during the chaos at the bus station, ICE was attempting to reunite an 8-year-old with her mother. Providentially, the Mom was located on the bus.

About the Author

S. Julie Cutter is a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, currently serving on the leadership team.

EL PASO RECEIVES CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANTS

by Fr. Frank Breen, MM

This article first appeared in the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns New Notes of January 1st, 2019.
It is re-printed here with permission and our gratitude.

The number of migrants/refugees arriving at the southern border town of El Paso, Texas, skyrocketed in December, from 300 to over 2,000 a week, stretching resources for the churches and faiths operating eighteen shelters in El Paso and Las Cruces, NM. The Catholic organization, called Annunciation House, needs immediate assistance of funds and volunteers, and it is crucial that United States immigration policy changes. Maryknoll Father Frank Breen visited El Paso in the week before Christmas, drove to Catholic shelters with Maryknoll Father Bill Donnelly of St. Patrick Parish, Canutillo, TX, and filed this report.

We first visited Tepeyac, the diocesan compound that contains the Chancery, Seminary and Pastoral Center, which has been turned into a shelter able to accommodate up to 125 adults and children per night. We arrived in time for lunch and were warmly received. 120 immigrants had been brought to the shelter the previous evening by U.S. Border Patrol, to have their on-going travel arrangements facilitated by volunteers in the shelter. On that day, over a dozen volunteers from a local parish were doing all the work, cooking three meals and a snack before bed-time, and making phone calls to sponsors, i.e. family, relatives or acquaintances who live elsewhere in the U.S., informing the sponsors to immediately send transport fare. In most cases the migrants – who I will refer to as refugees, a more correct termination – are able to travel on within a day or two, mainly by bus, but some receive airplane tickets.

The scene in the large room after lunch, of teens watching a Spanish program on a huge television, little children playing with toys and putting on warm winter coats, adults preparing for the next stage of their journey, and young men with a soccer ball outside waiting for the game to begin, belied the treacherous journey that these refugees had made to the United States, the majority from Mayan parts of Guatemala. At a subsequent shelter, where the Diocese of El Paso rents rooms in a motel, we learned how drastic, punitive even, their first reception is once entering the U.S.

Fr. Donnelly met a Guatemalan woman from the first town in which he did ministry in that country in the 1960s, who narrated in graphic details what happened when she was apprehended by Border Patrol. “My seven-year-old son and I were put in cells for six days, forced to sleep on the cold floor with only one blanket. After five days they woke us up in the middle of the night to take a four-minute shower, two minutes each. The soap they gave me was terrible; it ruined my hair. I seriously thought of going back to Guatemala.”

All of the migrants/refugees are treated in this fashion. We have to presume that it is the policy of U.S. Immigration Authorities to treat Central American migrants harshly to try to discourage others from coming – but it doesn’t seem to be working. Conditions back in their home countries, primarily Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, are so dangerous, violent and impoverished that they are willing to risk how they will be treated in America. Ruben Garcia, the Director of Annunciation House, was quoted saying that he expected the numbers to rise to perhaps 3,000 a week. This will overwhelm the resources of the dioceses and the shelters.

We were fortunate to meet with Bishop Mark J. Seitz briefly, who acknowledged the recent spike in numbers of immigrants and the toll it was taking on local volunteers. He mentioned other matters of diocesan advocacy:

- Migrants without sponsors in the United States are returned to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. There the asylum process is so slow and cumbersome that church officials are advocating that the process be expedited.
- The draconian conditions in detention cells are a blemish on our national reputation. Church officials are advocating for humane treatment of all migrants in the U.S. and especially children. The harsh conditions in the detention cells may have contributed to the recent deaths of the two Guatemalan children.

Bishop Seitz issued a Pastoral Letter in July, in which he stated: “Building walls, deploying a mass deportation force and militarizing our border are not long-term solutions to the challenges of migration. Only comprehensive immigration reform will bring lasting solutions.”

He went on to list several components of reform, such as sufficient legal avenues for migrants, putting families first, and addressing the unjust structural relationships between the United States and Central America that are drivers of migration.

In the meantime the crisis continues to worsen.

Annunciation House is seeking many more volunteers, for up to a month or more. Ability to speak Spanish helps but is not essential. Financial assistance is also needed. Donations can be sent to:

Annunciation House
815 Myrtle St.
El Paso, TX 79901

About the Author

Fr. Frank Breen, MM works at the New York office as Maryknoll NGO representative at the United Nations where the Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Gifts of Peace

have been given in honor of:

Islay Mary Glauber Ahern * Joe Dirr *
Ignatius John D'Ostilio * Fr. Francis Gargani, CSsR *
Madeline Labriola * Judy Lewis *

and in memory of:

Margarita Alvarez * Thomas E. Clarke, SJ *
Joanna R. Condani * Robert W. Davenport *
Edwin Del Valle * Jennie & Gus DiMaria *
Frank DiSiena, Sr. *
Sr. Louise Dumont * Teresita Duque, SC *
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Brian O'Connor * Nancy Pluta * Jose V. Selaya *
Josephine Shafer * Fr. Fred Tollini * Billy Wendel *
Dianne Weyers *

Please remember them in prayer.

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Spring, 2019

"Kerux" is the Greek word meaning "herald". As the name of our newsletter, it reminds us that we are to be heralds of God's nonviolent love. We welcome letters, articles and reviews.

Kerux

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Announcements

Peacemaker Awards Reception

Our honorees have been chosen and we're very excited to be able to name them: Anthony Donovan and Mary Yelenick, Fr. Ray Roden, and Edith Newman. Join us to celebrate them and our Maloof Family Young Peacebuilders: Daniela Pierro, Loyola School; Lucy Booth, Marymount School of New York; Luis Santiago, Xaverian H.S.; and Noel Vasquez, All Hallows H.S. The Reception will be Sunday afternoon, June 2nd, in Keenan Commons, Xavier High School, 31 West 15th Street, New York, NY. Contact the PCMNY office to register.

40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence

Pax Christi Metro New York joins others around the country in an annual fast for Christian Nonviolence. This fast is an opportunity to remember, repent, and resolve to transform our culture of violence, whether the violence of the street or the violence of war, drones, and nuclear weapons proliferation. It begins July 1st and ends on August 9th, the tragic triple anniversaries of the executions of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Jewish convert to Catholicism and holocaust victim; Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter, martyr for refusing to serve in Hitler's army; and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, the largest Christian community in Japan. PCMNY frames it with prayers made available for you to pray alone or in community. Please sign up to fast with us by contacting the PCMNY office.

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial

We'll be gathering on Sunday afternoon, August 4th, for prayer, presentation, and a public vigil in commemoration of the 74th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Further details to come.

Summer Picnic

PCMNY's annual pot-luck picnic in Central Park, in view of the majestic Metropolitan Museum of Art, has become a refreshing tradition that brings together members and friends in a spirit of invaluable camaraderie. A delicious assortment of foods and great conversation are the order of the day. Relax with us on Saturday, August 24th at 1 PM.

UN International Peace Day

Help us observe UN International Peace Day with a screening of the informative and inspiring film, *The Nuns, the Priests, and the Bomb*, on Sunday afternoon, September 15th, at Fordham University Lincoln Center Campus. Details still in development.

Winter Appeal

If you haven't already done so, please reflect on the many reasons you value PCMNY, especially in the current political climate, and respond as generously as possible to our annual appeal. If you did respond, THANK YOU!

Other Ways to Support Your Pax Christi Region:

Support us by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com (powered by Yahoo) or shopping online with GoodShop.com. Just indicate Pax Christi Metro New York as your charity. You can also turn your online shopping and searching into much-needed donations at: www.iGive.com/PaxChristiMetroNewYork and <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/13-3424349>.

"Gifts of Peace": Donate to PCMNY in honor of those you love, whether they're celebrating a special holiday, a birthday, anniversary, jubilee, or new baby, are in need of encouragement, or mourning a loss. Cards are available from the PCMNY office for a recommended donation of \$5 each.

Pennies for Peace: On your own or with others, collect pennies throughout the year. Convert them to dollars and send them to PCMNY as a year-end gift.

Matching Gifts: Ask your company if it will match your gift to PCMNY.

Bequests: Please remember PCMNY in your will. Our legal name is Pax Christi Metro New York and our tax ID number is 13-3424349.

Upcoming Events

May 13th	Board Meeting, Location TBA, 6:30 PM
June 2nd	Peacemaker Awards Reception, Keenan Commons, Xavier H.S., 3:00-6:00 PM
July 1 st	40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence Begins
Aug. 9th	40-Day Fast for Christian Nonviolence Ends
Aug. 1st	Deadline for Kerux Fall Issue Submissions
Aug. 4th	Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial, Time and Place TBA
Aug. 24th	Picnic, Central Park, 1:00 PM
Sept. 15th	UN Peace Day Event, Fordham University- Lincoln Center Campus, Time TBA
Sept. TBA	Board Meeting, PCMNY office, 6:30 PM

Contact the office for updated information on all events at 212-420-0250, email us at info@nypaxchristi.org or visit our website at <http://www.nypaxchristi.org>.

Also visit us on Facebook and Twitter.

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