



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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Seeking the Whole Picture



Dear Mission Friends:

The daily news has become so polarized and opinionated in this important election season that it is often impossible to detect the truth. If there is anything of value to be learned from the plethora of traded barbs and name-calling, half-truths and blatant lies, demagoguery and gobbledegook contaminating the news, it is that **nothing is black and white**. People are flawed, values are subjective, key issues are multifaceted, promised solutions are unrealistic. One of the United States' most critical issues requiring urgent attention is that of immigration. It is also one of the most convoluted and slanted.

It wasn't always so. Throughout history, migrants "yearning to breathe free"* have made the difficult decision to leave their beloved homelands in search of a better quality of life for themselves and their families. And our country welcomed them from the outset, fulfilling our First President's hope

*From Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus" on the Statue of Liberty's plaque.



The constant caravan across the Rio Grande.

"that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong."

Indeed, there have long existed international laws upholding people's basic human right to migrate. So why is it such a hotbed of contention now?

In researching, I tried my best to hone in on the most objective and reliable facts and statistics, but I can't promise anything. I do know, however, that **the system is broken and fixing it requires an end to playing politics** so that viable policy solutions can be implemented. One quote I think we should all reflect upon is JFK's observation that too often, **"We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."**

St. Martin de Porres Feast Day Triduum

In honor of the November 3rd feast day of St. Martin de Porres, the patron of our missions, Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco on November 1, 2, and 3. We invite you to fill in and return the enclosed list of petitions which will be placed on the altar and remembered each day. And please join us in praying the Triduum in his honor (back page).

All Souls' Day Remembrance

November is the month for us to pray especially for our loved ones who have gone before us. You are invited to list their names on the enclosed slip and send it in to be placed on the altar at St. Dominic's in San Francisco. Your loved ones will be remembered at daily Mass throughout the month.

Certainly many politicians manipulate the truth. Their views on immigration, for example, have less to do with the plight of migrants than ensuring that they are re-elected or someone else is not. Life and death issues, which these days include immigration, require more than knee-jerk reactions based on party affiliations or one's chosen news channel. We deserve truthful, objective reporting so that we can educate ourselves, engage in dialogue, and think long and hard before coming to carefully reasoned—and not inflexible—viewpoints.

While the migrants' road was never perfectly smooth or free of obstacles, today it can be fraught with a continuous loop of false hope and defeat, treacherous mountain twists and turns and river crossings, or dead ends. But people are desperate to uproot or separate their families in spite of such great risk. **The root of it is the terrifying conditions in their home countries from which the migrants are compelled to escape.** In Mexico and Central and South American countries, economic hardship, government corruption, and organized violence have increased exponentially in recent years. Armed criminal gangs regularly extort around 70% from businesses, and youths between the vulnerable ages of 12 and 16 are being forcibly recruited into such gangs at threat of death. And police and security forces are often on the gangs' payroll, so there is no safety net.

Historically, the biggest source of income for the cartels—drug sales—has recently been toppled by money made from migrants—



Squeezing through The Wall

kidnapping, raping, or torturing them and then demanding ransom from relatives or selling them to be trafficked.

But as difficult and dangerous as it is to cross the border illegally, there are still huge numbers who try, whose intolerable living conditions warrant the risk. Indeed, ironically, that increasingly dangerous road is also increasingly crowded. In 2017, the number of family members from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador who were compelled to leave their homes and seek asylum in the U.S. was 294,000, up 58 percent from 2016. They sold their land and everything they had to pay *coyotes* up to \$12,000 per person to smuggle them in. All these figures are frighteningly higher now. In Venezuela, for example, displacement grew from 190,000 in 2018 to 320,000 in 2022. Parents who can't come up with enough money for the whole family send only their children with *coyotes* in spite of the manifest dangers. They are often abused and stranded or sold into trafficking. And again, policemen are frequently linked to these gangs and look the other way.

Missionaries in Action has focused on immigration in several issues over the years as it is a key component in the missions we administer or have supported: Ciudad Juarez and Mexicali in Mexico; Rabinal in Guatemala; Mosul in Iraq; and Ukraine. But just since an issue in April 2019, the number of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. has multiplied geometrically, currently hovering at about 12,000,000. At the end of 2023, it was estimated that 370,000 monthly or 12,000 daily were making their way in; and the court backlog for those seeking asylum was at almost 3,000,000 compared to close to zero in 2000.

The rapid increase in arrivals in recent years reflects ongoing global crises such as growing political persecution and faltering economies in countries such as Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua as well as in China, India, Russia, Turkey, and a number of African countries. Other possible contributors include increasingly sophisticated smuggling networks as well as the perception that current policies present a unique window of opportunity for getting lost in the crowd.

A recent article on immigration reform that seems more balanced than most holds that, *“One of the biggest difficulties in securing reform is that each [party’s] priorities are seen as intolerable... by the opposing side...”* I tried to gather a few arguments on both sides of the immigration “wall,” hoping to provide a fair and balanced platform, but they mostly just illustrate how closed-minded and *intolerable* they are:

Many who espouse open borders are virtue signalers, preening their social justice egos and manipulating immigrants to support them politically.

Many who espouse closed borders pretend to want to bring order to our policies but are actually racist and supremacist.

Open borders, while seeming to be compassionate and humanitarian, has planted the seeds of—and will eventually grow into—the same kind of atmosphere that immigrants are fleeing.

Those against humanitarian border laws are stoking fear against all refugees with dangerous, dehumanizing language.

The last few years of closing our eyes to an untethered flow of unauthorized immigrants, including drug cartels and gangs, have planted fear and caused harm among our citizens as well as creating victims of human trafficking, drugs, and broken families.

Drug lords, smugglers, and human traffickers make up just a small fraction of the unauthorized immigrants. Most immigrants are hard-working and productive, ready and able to solve our labor shortage and contribute positively to our economy.

If we truly want to return to the land of opportunity upon which our country was built, we must repair and secure the border and then, with our allies, address the systemic causes of immigration, including tyranny and government corruption.

Opening our borders shows true compassion for the common good of the most oppressed and suffering. It also helps lessen the guilt we have for our imperialistic past for which we have been deemed the rapists and pillagers of the New World.

Our government must invest more in legal pathways to reshape the asylum, border, and deportation policies; and in infrastructure to facilitate processing.

Finishing the wall will be outlandishly expensive and won’t prevent drugs and guns and the kidnapped from being smuggled in by train, plane, or tunnels.

I set out to provide some food for thought—some statistics and facts, albeit rough and ever-changing, about the needy and the greedy so as to stand apart from the biased news and political speeches. Then I found the following blurb which listed everything that needed to be fixed. But it sounded a little too good, a little too all-encompassing; I realized it didn’t go on to mention **how** it was going to fix all these issues and that it was full of a lot of hot air. Then I saw it was from the Department of Homeland Security...

“U.S. immigration policy should enable our economy to grow and compete, make our borders secure and keep our country and citizens safe, and remain true to the American values of welcoming immigrants and protecting refugees and other vulnerable populations.”

Nothing but unachievable government-speak!

The article on the back page is the clearest articulation I have found for beginning the process of fixing the crisis at the border. It does not offer practicalities—let’s hope whomever we elect and their advisors will—but it does outline thoroughly and objectively what needs to be addressed. In the meantime, we must not fall for hot air. We must listen more attentively, research more broadly, think more critically, and ask harder questions.

In truth,
Lesley Warnshuis

American Immigration Council: Beyond a Border Solution May 2023

For generations, the United States has been a place of safe haven for people seeking freedom and safety. In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act, codifying basic refugee protections into law and enshrining a global commitment to asylum which emerged from the tragedy of the Holocaust. In the decades since then, hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylees have been granted status, strengthening communities around the nation, contributing economically, and enriching the national fabric.

But in the 21st century, a global displacement crisis is affecting nearly every country in the world. Multiple nations across the Western Hemisphere have become destabilized due to a wide variety of factors, including rising authoritarianism, political assassinations, natural disasters, and powerful transnational criminal organizations... The end result is humanitarian migration at levels far above what the [outdated] 20th-century system can handle.

Presidential administrations of both parties have failed to meet this challenge. Instead of an orderly, humane, and consistent approach to humanitarian protection and border management, we have been left with a dysfunctional system that serves the needs of no one: not the government, border communities, or asylum seekers themselves.

Today, the U.S. government faces an enormous challenge. The number of asylum seekers hoping to enter each day is significantly higher than the number the United States can process at official border crossings. The location and manner of crossings varies widely across the border, often changing unpredictably based on misinformation, rumor, or the demands of powerful transnational criminal organizations which maintain control over many of the migration routes with a bloody fist. The system is constantly at risk of bottlenecks and overcrowding, building the perception of chaos at the border. And inside the United States, underfunding, neglect, and deliberate sabotage have left the adjudicatory process in shambles.

The best proven methods of achieving a long term reduction in irregular crossings involve increasing access to legal immigration pathways and addressing the root causes of migration.



St. Martin de Porres Triduum

November 1, 2, and 3

First Day: *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Closing Prayer.)

Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Second Day: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Closing Prayer.)

Third Day: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Closing Prayer.)

Mission Appeal Weekends

Our director, Fr. Jordan Bradshaw, O.P., will be preaching at the following parishes:

CHRIST THE KING, SALINAS OCT. 5-6
ST. SEBASTIAN, SEBASTOPOL NOV. 16-17