

# Strangers No Longer Newsletter

March 2020



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## **YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS INSPIRE**

The highlight of the Youth Leaders' tour in SE Michigan was the high school conference at Cristo Rey High School on Feb. 6. Hosted by Cristo Rey High School in Detroit, 140 students from 10 Catholic high schools met with the two Mexican young women, Maggie and Lena, and Fernando, the 19-year old young man from El Salvador. Presentations and table dialogues filled the day – why do people migrate? What about Climate-Driven Migration? What are young leaders doing in Mexico and Central America – and in our own schools here -- to build their communities?



Thanks to the work of 20 Campus Ministers and teachers in attendance, the busses and vans rolled in to Cristo Rey from Notre Dame HS, Marian, Brother Rice, Mercy, UDJHS, Shrine, De LaSalle, Regina and Catholic Central – and from the Youth Group at Christ the Good Shepherd. Maggie and Leni shared their work building community with people who are deported back to Mexico after 10, 20, 30 years working and living in the US – they are foreigners in their own birth country. And Fernando described the organization that he and his friends have created to provide a gang-alternative in their own neighborhood.

Strangers No Longer organized 37 separate events in 6 days for the 3 YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS, brought to us thanks to our partnership with Alianza Americas, a transnational network of immigrant-led grassroots organizations in 13 states.

Other presentations were organized in 5 parishes, 2 Catholic high schools, 4 universities, the Diocese of Lansing and local Catholic Young Adult Groups hosted at Ss. Peter and Paul (Jesuit) Parish. The Youth Leaders also met with immigrant families in trailer parks and neighborhoods, and had special meetings with Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib and Bishop Don Hanchon. For further info, contact SNL at [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com)



## **FACE TO FACE WITH STATE LEGISLATORS FOR DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR IMMIGRANTS**

Faith in Action: make sure your Circle of Support is setting up a meeting with your state rep and state senator! WHY? At the February 8th Assembly of Circles meeting, we kicked off the campaign in support of the Drive SAFE bills (Senate bills 631, 632 and House bills 5192, 5193.) These bills will allow drivers licenses and state ID cards for all Michigan residents—including undocumented immigrants.

The right to get a driver's license for the undocumented without proof of citizenship or permanent residency was allowed in Michigan until 2008. Since then, immigrants without a form of identification haven't been able to do simple things like buy prescription medicine, enroll their children in programs that require parents' ID, or even get a library card.

The Drive SAFE bills are supported by 32 organizations across the state including the

Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Catholic Conference.

Right now, the bills are stuck in committees with no scheduled debates. The Senate bills are with the Senate Committee on Government Operations, and the House bills are with the House Committee on Transportation.

**At the campaign kickoff, the Circles were tasked with setting up meetings immediately with their Michigan state representative and senator to let them know how important these bills are. Most importantly, to ask them to help get these bills onto the committee agendas for a fair discussion.**



We got a great response!! The following Circles committed to visiting their representatives: St. Francis Ann Arbor, St. Mary's Student Parish, Christ the Good Shepherd Lincoln Park, Gesu Detroit, St. Andre Bissette Ecourse, St. Anne Detroit, Holy Trinity Port Huron, St. Ambrose Grosse Pointe Park, and Our Mother of Perpetual Help Oak Park/Ferndale.

These Circles committed to taking the issue to their next circle meeting: Christ Our Light Troy, St. Regis Bloomfield Hills, St. Charles Borromeo Detroit, St. John Fisher Auburn Hills, Our Lady of Sorrows Farmington.

**If your Circle is not listed, ask your Circle leader to put the question to the next Circle meeting!**

With your Circle, meet face to face with the state Senator and Representative from your district to communicate your support for these bills. Be ready to discuss the benefits of these bills including: improved public safety, agriculture labor benefits, additional revenue for Michigan in license fees, etc.

Ask them to help get these bills onto the committee agendas.

**We have a great information packet regarding the bills and their benefits to help you prepare for the meetings. We can also come to your next Circle meeting to present this topic in more detail. Contact the Drivers License task force at [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com) for any questions or if you need assistance.**



### **OUR CLOSING HOLY HOUR FOR FAMILIES IN FLIGHT ON APRIL 4<sup>TH</sup> AT MOST HOLY TRINITY AT 10 AM**

Since our kick-off Holy Hour on Jan. 11 at Most Holy Trinity, several parish Circles of Support have organized wonderful Holy Hours in their own vicariate, closer to home. Gesu Detroit, St. Michael's Sterling Heights and St. Andre Bessette Ecourse have each held local Holy Hours.

At 10 AM on Saturday, April 4, everyone is invited for a Holy Hour for Families in Flight at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, 9844 Woodward in Detroit. This Holy Hour will conclude our campaign of prayer and fasting, focusing on the Body of Christ suffering today. Fr. Norm Thomas, Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Detroit, will reflect on Race and Immigration. We will gather around the Cross of Suffering and around the Table of Community, praying, "What does Christ ask of me now?"

For further info, contact SNL at [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com)



**PADRE MELO TO BE AT FINAL HOLY HOUR  
ON APRIL 4<sup>TH</sup> AT  
BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHEDRAL**

After the service, all are welcome to meet him at Home Visitors of Mary to hear him speak about the Human Rights situation in Honduras.  
Home Visitors of Mary – 121 E. Boston Blvd., Detroit

**CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF ST. OSCAR**  
Amy Ketner, Hispanic/Lation Ministry Coordinator at St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor, invites us to an event coming up on Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>:

In celebration of the life of St. Óscar Romero, St. Mary Student Parish invites you to join us for an evening of reflection and prayer for immigrants on Friday, March 27. Beginning at 6pm, we will share a Lenten dinner, while a parishioner presents on the life of St. Óscar, who was martyred 40 years ago on March 24. St. Óscar's story will be connected to those of migrants fleeing Central America and Mexico today. Then, at 7pm we will pray the Stations of the Cross through the lens of the journey of migrants and refugees around the world.

The event will be bilingual. It is sponsored by the St. Mary Immigration Team, in collaboration with the St. Mary Student Intern Cohort. All are welcome.

**SCHEDULE OF FAMILIES IN FLIGHT HOLY HOUR SERVICES**

**Blessed Sacrament Cathedral**  
9844 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI  
10am - 11am  
Saturdays on May 2, June 6

**Christ the Good Shepherd**  
1540 Riverbank St, Lincoln Park, MI 48146  
Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

**Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish**  
Our Lady of Fatima Church  
13500 Oak Park Blvd, Oak Park, MI 48237  
Saturday, March 21  
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**Blessed Sacrament Cathedral**  
9844 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI  
Saturday, April 4th  
10am - 11am



**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND IMMIGRATION – FR. DAVID BUERSMEYER**

When I am asked to talk about Catholic Social Teaching and connect it to issues surrounding immigration, I find great inspiration in Pope Francis. He has been a strong, consistent advocate for a Church that stands with immigrants and refugees, speaking out for their needs in the face of so much social and national opposition, and challenging us to look beyond our own fears and worries about our own security. But this is not new. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II did

the same, all of them relying on what has come to be called Catholic Social Teaching or Catholic Social Doctrine.

This teaching has developed over the last 130 years and has guided the Church's response to economic, political, social and cultural issues. Our U.S. Bishops try to bring out some of this teaching through their focus on seven specific themes of Catholic Social Teaching, which are available from the [uscgb.org](http://uscgb.org) website. However, a more systematic overview of what such teaching entails is given in the Vatican's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. It is available online at the [Vatican.va](http://Vatican.va) website.

John Paul II began to call such teaching "social doctrine" to emphasize that it is rooted in universal moral principles. The foundational principle is the intrinsic dignity of every human being. Such dignity is not a matter of status or condition, goodness or badness or any other criteria. Every human being is to be treated as a gift made in the image and likeness of God. No human being is to be treated merely as a means to an end. Any treatment of or protocols in place for immigration lose their validity, if they lead to undermining the dignity of the immigrants or of those charged with overseeing the immigration process.

The second key principle is that of the common good. This moral principle insists that every person has access to a basic level of goods by which they can maintain their human dignity and well-being. A system or policy is evaluated as just or unjust based on whether the least among us has sufficient access to food, shelter, water, hygiene, health care, education, work (or its equivalent) and other such goods in order to maintain their human dignity. It is not enough that most do or that the greater number do. At the same time, it is not unjust if many have much greater access to resources than others, as long as all have sufficient access. The principle of the common good critiques any policy,

for example, that would deny immigrants proper access to food, shelter, water, education and so on.

To help guide such concrete decisions Catholic Social Teaching has additional principles such as the principle of universal access to goods and the principle of the preferential option for the poor; the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of participation in decisions that affect our basic welfare; and the principle of solidarity. I encourage Circles of Support to reflect on such principles and how they might shape how we understand and respond to issues of immigration. As moral principles that form the basis of the Church's social doctrine, even though there is no one right way to implement them, they are not optional or a matter of one's personal political preference. Catholic Social Teaching will always be quite challenging, because it calls into question some of the policies and practices currently in place at the federal and state levels.

Fr. David Buersmeyer  
Pastor, St. Regis Church, Bloomfield Hills



**HONDURAN PRIEST,  
VICTIM OF DEATH  
THREATS, TO BE AT UD  
MERCY THURSDAY  
APRIL 2**

Fr. Ismael Moreno, known back in Honduras as Padre Melo, will speak at the Jesuit Martyrs Dinner to raise funds for "Fr. Dean Brackley, SJ Scholarships" which helps students to attend the Jesuit University in San Salvador. For tickets, contact Prof. Gail Presby, 313-993-1124 or Sr. Erin McDonald, CSJ, at [mcdonaej@udmercy.edu](mailto:mcdonaej@udmercy.edu) or 313-993-1560. Sliding scale: \$10-\$50.

Fr. Melo has been pastor of several parishes and the Director of Apostolic Planning for the Central American Jesuits. He now directs E.R.I.C. (Equipo



de Reflexion, Investigacion y Comunicacion - Team for Reflection, Investigation and Communication) and since 2006 has been the director of Radio Progreso.

He has been threatened with death for his support for peasants and environmentalists in Honduras. Please keep him in your prayers. And get your tickets for the Fundraising Banquet on April 2.

## UPDATE ON CASA SAMARITANO

Our Mother of Perpetual Help Circle has been providing some financial assistance to Casa Samaritano since January of this year. Casa Samaritano is located 60 miles north of Mexico City and provides respite to travelers making their way north from Central America.

Carmen and Mike Kelly recently called Sr. Luisa at Casa Samaritano to get an update on their efforts: Sr. Luisa expressed her gratitude for the contributions they have received from SNL. The Casa Samaritano migrant shelter continues to help immigrants who stop on their way to the USA border. It provides them with a place to rest, meals for the day and an opportunity to shave, have a shower, and change clothes. Clothes often need to be provided to them since many have lost everything. They also receive basic medical attention and some additional food to take on the journey further north.

**Sr. Luisa also told us that the situation in Mexico has gotten worse.** There is a new law in Mexico that only allows immigrants on their way to the US to wait in places close to the borders; either the northern border near the US or the southern border near Guatemala. Central Americans caught by the police or military in any other part of the country are detained.

Since Casa Samaritano is not on either border and is known to help immigrants, the shelter is almost

always surrounded by police trying to apprehend people on their way to the US border. **Another problem is that Central Americans are not able to travel on top of trains anymore, i.e. the infamous “bestia” – the “beast.”** The police are continually inspecting trains and detaining people which is, of course, very intimidating. Sister told us that because of this close attention by the police, the numbers of individuals seeking help at Casa Samaritano is down but the needs of those persons who make it are even more desperate. There is a greater need for medical care and supplies, and clothing since old and tattered clothes attract police attention. Many migrants can quickly be identified by their accents as not being from Mexico and so if they are stopped they are in serious trouble.

**Carmen commented,** *“It was clear to us that many good people are suffering and are at great risk. Speaking to Sister Luisa showed us what we already believed - that the work of Casa Samaritano is much needed. Sister expressed much gratitude for the help Strangers No Longer is able to provide and asks us to keep Casa Samaritano in our hearts and prayers.”*

## HOLY HOUR AT ST. MICHAELS

St. Michael’s of Sterling Heights held a Families’ in Flight Holy Hour on Tuesday, February 25th. About



70 people attended. Julie Watanabe, chairperson of St. Michael’s Strangers No Longer Circle, welcomed us. After that, we listened to the song, “Bring Them Home” from the Les Miserables musical but adapted by Pat Watanabe to reflect the

heartbreak experienced by many immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The service continued with prayer, song and reflection upon how similar

the immigrant experience today is to the Holy Family's journey long ago.

Asylum seeker Luz Ramos told us about her dangerous and exhausting journey from Guatemala with her son and daughter in 2018. Her son Johnny, now eleven years old, was with us as well. She talked about the gang violence and corruption in law enforcement and government that forced her to leave her beloved country and make her way here with her family. Luz showed us her beautiful spirit and compassion in spite of her demeaning experience at the border when she began her talk by blessing us!

We also saw a video called "We Are All Migrants" and listened to writing by Jennifer Brownell, minister of the United Church of Christ in Vancouver, Washington entitled, "The Safety for Which They Long."

Participants were encouraged to contribute money or cleaning products to Freedom House in Detroit which is a temporary home for indigent survivors of persecution from around the world who are seeking asylum in the U.S. and Canada.

At the end of the service, Pat Watanabe remarked that the planning committee tried to incorporate all the senses through drama, music, readings and the video. It was a wonderfully spiritual experience. Thanks to the Circle of Support at St. Michael's! Other wonderful Holy Hours were held at Gesu in Detroit and St. Andre Bessette in Ecorse.

### **VOLUNTEER JOB ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE KINO BORDER INITIATIVE**

We received the following announcement from Joanna Williams, Director of Education and Advocacy for the Kino Border Initiative: Currently, there is an opening for the Kino Border Initiative's volunteer coordinator position. It is full-time and would involve coordinating and accompanying volunteers from both the United

States and Mexico. This person plays a critical role in helping us address key areas of need and in providing a rewarding experience of service. We would appreciate if you could help us distribute this announcement widely. Please reach out to Fr. Sean Carroll ([scarroll@kinoborderinitiative.org](mailto:scarroll@kinoborderinitiative.org)) if you may be interested in the position and if you would like more information.

[Joanna Williams](#)

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### **PRAYER REQUESTS FOR LENT**

Sr. Rebecca Vonderhaac, IHM tells us that the Circle at Christ the Good Shepherd is in the process of forming a tutoring service for the children of undocumented people in their area. Please keep them in your prayers as they embark on his important work.

Interfaith Immigration Coalition and the Home is Here Campaign encourage us to keep the DACA young people in our prayers this Lenten season. The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments for and against the program in November, 2019. An answer from the court is expected in late spring 2020.



## **HELP PEOPLE WHO NEED TRANSPORTATION**

Our Circles sometime need help from outside their Circle driving a family to court, or a doctor's appointment, etc. Let us know if you want to be on our list of contacts to help now and then with driving.

Contact [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com) or call 313-549-0421.



## **GOT SOMETHING TO SHARE?**

We want this newsletter is to capture the vibrant life of Strangers No Longer! We know you are involved in all kinds of things to help

immigrants in our area. We want to know about them—big or small. Also, you might have inspirational readings, good works stories, pictures, articles from different publications—let us know about them!

When your Circle has an event or information to share, please contact us so we can include it on the Facebook page, in our newsletter, on our upcoming webpage, and any other communication methods we come up with!

You can email [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com) or call Kathy Faba at 586-295-3673.