

BORDER IMMERSION PROGRAM

***Sponsored by USD Center for Christian Spirituality
July 5-8, 2006***

The mission of the Center for Christian Spirituality at the University of San Diego is to educate to and foster spirituality within the campus community and in the San Diego community at large in four areas: personal enrichment, academic life, professional life and social justice. The Border Immersion Program provides an opportunity to fulfill this mission in the area of social justice. It is made possible through the generous grant of \$2000 awarded by USD's Trans-Border Institute. A description of the program follows.

PARTICIPANTS

The program is open to all members of the USD community – faculty, students and staff – and to anyone outside the USD community. This year the participants included a USD undergraduate student, a USD graduate student in the Practical Theology program, a retired attorney from the San Diego region, a USD alum, and an attorney from Washington D.C. Four others registered but needed to cancel for various reasons. Two members of the Religious of the Sacred Heart facilitated the program: Elisabeth Brinkmann and Barbara Quinn. The program is limited to 12 persons at a time.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the program is to learn about and experience to some extent life on both sides of the San Diego-Tijuana border. Special emphasis is given to addressing immigration issues pertinent to the Mexico-US border. We challenge the participants to reconcile the diversity of views that are presented with the hope that they will continue to learn about this quite complex phenomenon. Our educational method includes reflection on one's personal history of being a "stranger," prayer that roots the exploration in Scriptural values and Catholic Social teaching, field trips that offer exposure to life on both sides, input from people with particular expertise on the topic, dialogue, and commitment to concrete action that might ensue from participation in the program. The specific components of the program are outlined below.

PREPARATION FOR THE PARTICIPATION

- Prior to the program, each participant is encouraged to prepare in the following ways:
1. Read and reflect on *Strangers No Longer: A Journey of Hope*, a pastoral letter on migration written by the US and Mexican bishops.
 2. Engage in some activity in which the participant feels like a stranger, e.g. going to a place where one cannot speak the language, so as to better understand the experience of a migrant.

COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

Wednesday Evening:

- Welcome, introductions, and overview of week
- Explanation of the theological reflection component
- Sharing of hopes for the program
- Prayer: reflection on “Strangers No Longer,” sharing experiences of feeling like a stranger, identifying one’s ethnic roots
- Video: “New World Border” – Peek Media

Thursday

- Morning prayer
- Trip to Las Playas, Tijuana and explanation of the history of the border by Gilberto Martinez
- Visit to Centro Comunitario Teresa, Tijuana – a colonia next to the Tijuana dump
- Visit to the home of Hermana Teresa, a Medical Mission sister responsible for leadership development among the women at the colonia
- Tour of the fence near the Tijuana airport where crosses and mock coffins identify some of the more than 3000 people who have died attempting to cross the border
- Lecture and dinner at Casa del Migrante, a shelter for men who are attempting to cross undocumented or who have been deported

Friday

- Morning prayer
- Lecture by the Border Patrol agent about their work and tour of the fence on the US side, Chula Vista office
- Panel discussion on various aspects of immigration: personal testimony from the son of an undocumented migrant; history of migration; the role of development in migration; current federal legislation.
- Theological reflection on the experience of the days thus far
- Movie – “The Gatekeeper” featuring USD grad, Juan Carlos Frey

Saturday

- Service trip with Border Angels and Enrique Morones to the canyons near Carlsbad to deliver water and to visit with some of the migrants
- Quiet reflection on the impact of the days
- Sharing of reflections and naming the commitments each one made to responding to the issues raised by the program

COST: \$125 – commuters; \$350 – single room; \$325 per person – double room