

SALVANET

A Publication of Christians for Peace in El Salvador, CRISPAZ

The Great Migration

An Interview with Jesuit Priest and University Professor Dean Brackley

Salvanet (SN): Dean, you recently returned from a speaking tour on Immigration in the States. Can you enlighten us on the depth and importance of this topic?

Dean Brackley (DB): The situation here



Homes in Mejicanos San Salvador

in El Salvador is unbelievably bad. The majority is migrating out of desperation. They leave to feed their families or

as young people in search of work or educational opportunities, and finally, some people leave because of extortion. Here we have the desperation character; people are leaving Central America at a great cost to themselves and their families.

SN: How many people are leaving?

DB: The US ambassador at this time last year in an interview with a paper in Syracuse New York said that according to the US embassy 740 people were leaving a day. Obviously not all of those people are making it to the US each day, because some people were deported two days later or two weeks later from Mexico or the US and are trying their 3rd or 4th time. The US border patrol two years ago said it was intercepting on the southern border an average of 143

Salvadorans a day, so if they are intercepting 143 a day how many are getting through and how many over stayed their visas? We get some indication of how many it is by deportations from other countries.

The deportations by plane from the US started in 1999. Last year they went up to 55 Salvadorans deported from the US a day by plane. If you include Hondurans and Guatemalans the number jumps to 198 deported a day from the US back to these three sending countries. None the less El Salvador is at the top of the list with 72,409 persons repatriated during 2007.

These numbers tell us that conditions are very poor here. That's really what's fueling this. It's not a matter of upper mobility or trying to get a nest egg. If you were flying over Mexico you have to imagine thousands of people heading north from Central America and if they aren't paying the coyote top dollar they are risking life and limb. There is no wall that will stop them because the depth of the economic crisis and the prospects for remedy in the short or even medium term



(Migration continued page 2)

Winter
2007

Salvadoran Diaspora

Poem: My Country	2
The Truth about Immigration	3
El Salvador's Agricultural Reactivation Policy is Forcing People to Migrate	4
The Path Less Chosen	6
Wisdom from Above	7
Mothers Keep Historical Memory Alive in El Salvador	8

CRISPAZ, Christians for Peace in El Salvador is a faith-based organization dedicated to building bridges of solidarity between the Church of the poor and marginalized communities in El Salvador and communities in the US and other countries through mutual accompaniment, striving together for peace, justice, sustainability, and human liberation.



My Country

Adios My country
I am going to El Norte
A los United

I will feed you My country
I will clothe your children
I will send money so you can develop
I will be the loan you never repay
I will be your well fare system para
mientras

How have you thanked me, My
country?
You have stolen the money I sent for
el pueblo
You have sold everything that was
nuestro
You have privatized our agua
You have let our children starve
You have allowed our people to kill
each other

My country
What don't you understand?
They don't want us here
What will you do now, My country,
When your hijos return?

are non existent for those three countries. They are going to keep going because hunger is stronger than fear. My thesis is that within two generations the majority of Salvadorans will be living in the USA.

SN: In the states there is a lot of debate about the benefits undocumented workers bring to the country by fueling the economy but there are also those who argue they are a tax on the country's social services. In the end many come down to the fact that they are illegal; they have broken the law. How do you respond to this argument?

DB: Well, the first thing you have to acknowledge is that in the English language, illegal modifies behavior and policy, it does not modify people. When we use it that way we should be aware that we're using it as a demeaning label.

Within US culture there is a profound respect for the law and legality, the Anglo-Saxon majority tradition. The law is sacred. I say well, it is and it isn't. I would like to give a few examples.

Those who have most undermined the rule of law in the United States are in fact George Bush, Alberto Gonzalez,



Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Chaney and their friends who have launched an illegal war, an offensive war which was unjustified. And that is the most serious violation of international law that exists. We all know by now the list: holding prisoners without charges, dismissing the Geneva Convention, signing statements of the president which are acts of explicit and public defiance of duly enacted law. We know that Congress, the democrats too, has been willing to give a pass to the government on many of these serious violations of human law. They are the ones who have done the most to

(Migration continued on page 10)

The Truth about Immigrants

Myths and Facts

Myth: IMMIGRANTS SEND ALL THEIR MONEY BACK HOME

FACT: In addition to the consumer spending of immigrant households, immigrants and their businesses contribute \$162 billion in tax revenue to U.S. federal, state, and local governments. While it is true that immigrants remit billions of dollars a year to their home countries, this is one of the most targeted and effective forms of direct foreign investment.

Myth: IMMIGRANTS ARE A DRAIN ON THE ECONOMY

FACT: During the 1990s, half of all new workers were foreign-born, filling gaps left by native-born workers in both the high- and low-skill ends of the spectrum. Immigrants fill jobs in key sectors, start their own businesses, and contribute to a thriving economy. The net benefit of immigration to the U.S. is nearly \$10 billion annually. As Alan Greenspan points out, 70% of immigrants arrive in prime working age. That means we haven't spent a penny on their education, yet they are transplanted into our workforce and will contribute \$500 billion toward our social security system over the next 20 years

(Source: Andrew Sum, Mykhaylo Trubskyy, Ishwar Khatiwada, et al., Immigrant Workers in the New England Labor Market: Implications for Workforce Development Policy, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Prepared for the New England Regional Office, the Employment and Training Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston, Massachusetts, October 2002.)

Myth: TODAY'S IMMIGRANTS ARE DIFFERENT THAN THOSE 100 YEARS AGO

FACT: The percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born now stands at 11.5%; in the early 20th century it was approximately 15%. Similar to accusations about today's immigrants, those of 100 years ago initially often settled in mono-ethnic neighborhoods, spoke their native languages, and built up newspapers and businesses that catered to their fellow migrants. They also experienced the same types of discrimination that today's immigrant's face, and integrated within American

culture at a similar rate. If we view history objectively, we remember that every new wave of immigrants has been met with suspicion and doubt and yet, ultimately, every past wave of immigrants has been vindicated and saluted.

(Source: Census Data: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kprof00-us.pdf>, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf>)

Myth: ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS CAN BE STOPPED BY PUTTING AGENTS ON THE BORDERS.

FACT: From 1986 to 1998, the Border Patrols budget increased six-fold and the number of agents stationed on our southwest border doubled to 8,500. The Border Patrol also toughened its enforcement strategy, heavily fortifying typical urban entry points and pushing migrants into dangerous desert areas, in hopes of deterring crossings. Instead, the undocumented immigrant population doubled in that timeframe, to 8 million despite the legalization of nearly 3 million immigrants after the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. An insufficient legal avenue for immigrants to enter the U.S., compared with the number of jobs in need of workers, has significantly contributed to this current conundrum.

(Source: Immigration and Naturalization website: http://www.ncjrs.org/ondcpepubs/publications/enforce/border/ins_3.html)

Myth: THE WAR ON TERRORISM CAN BE WON WITH IMMIGRANT RESTRICTIONS

FACT: No security expert since September 11th, 2001 has said that restrictive immigration measures would have prevented the terrorist attacks instead; the key is effective use of good intelligence. Most of the 9/11 hijackers were here on legal visas. Since 9/11, the myriad of measures targeting immigrants in the name of national security have netted no terrorism prosecutions. In fact, several of these measures could have the opposite effect and actually make us less safe, as targeted communities of immigrants are afraid to come forward with information.

(Source: Associated Press/Dow Jones Newswires, US Senate Subcommittee Hears Immigration Testimony, Oct. 17, 2001.)

El Salvador's Agricultural Reactivation Policy is Forcing People to Migrate

By Javier Rivera

The Salvadoran government says they are working to diversify the agricultural sector in the country. Their objective is to reduce the nation's dependency on food imports while simultaneously deterring farmers from migrating to Salvadoran cities or to the U.S.

Unfortunately, the policies the government has put into place have accomplished exactly the opposite. The agrarian strategy pushed by the Salvadoran government over the past 18 years has allowed for the implementation of structural adjustment programs and free trade agreements which have led to the elimination of tariff protections and phytosanitary regulations. In applying these policies, the government has left Salvadoran agricultural products and farmers unprotected in a climate that favors large-scale agricultural producers.

These programs have abolished agricultural subsidies and loans, technical training, price regulation and other forms of support for national agriculture. Consequently, El Salvador has become dependent on imports from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico and the United States.

CAFTA

"...I believe that CAFTA-DR can spread opportunity, provide jobs, and help lift people out of poverty." — President of the United States, George W. Bush

In a recent report, the Regional Monitoring Network on the Impact of CAFTA-DR in Central America, maintained that the Central American Region has an unequal economic relationship with the U.S. Evidence of this lies in the national economies of all CAFTA-DR signatory countries, which have been flooded with products from the US. In 2000, El Salvador produced 70 thousand tons of rice, and imported less than 10 thousand. In the first year of CAFTA-DR, El Salvador imported almost 65,000 tons of rice.

A study of the free trade agreement by Network Sinti Techan, predicted that imports of white maize, sorghum and rice would eliminate 92,471 jobs monthly during the first year of implementation. This statistic is expected to increase annually by 1,557 jobs lost per month on average. The same report says that the free trade agreement the governments claimed would create 40 thousand new jobs and attract international investment has caused "serious difficulties in the agricultural sector and other areas, causing many national farmers to go bankrupt and thousands of jobs to be lost, without said international investment".

The US Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, said agricultural trade increased between both nations by 13% in the first year of CAFTA-DR. Trade did increase, and there is now a general trade surplus for the U.S. In fact, in the first semester of 2007, the U.S. had a trade surplus with El Salvador (\$176.8 million), Guatemala (\$398.7 million) and Honduras (\$296.5 million).

According to the US Department of Agriculture, in 2006 the US purchased \$156 million in agricultural goods from El Salvador, which represents a decrease of more than 100 % compared to previous years. If we continue down this road, in a few years Salvadorans will only consume US agricultural goods. Meanwhile Salvadoran rice, white maize, and dairy farmers will be forced to migrate to the city or out of the country.

El Salvador's Answer

The Salvadoran Minister of Agriculture views biofuels as the perfect opportunity to diversify the national farming sector. To do this, it is necessary to activate 450 thousand acres that are lying "idle". Those "idle" acres in fact belong to small farmers who have left the land idle because they have not been able to qualify for loans or access technical support in recent years. The objective in "reactivating" this land is to plant 6 thousand acres of sugar cane for the production of raw material for biofuels. He has similarly announced a pilot project to plant 400 acres of

(Agriculture continued on page 5)



(Agriculture continued from page 4)



castor seed, also for the production of biofuels.

El Salvador's plan to diversify agriculture in the country rests in the passing of a law that promotes the cultivation of sugar cane, castor seed and other monocultures to be used to manufacture biofuels, most of

which will be exported to the US. There is no national plan in place to stimulate an agricultural production that will feed the Salvadoran population.

Lack of Food Sovereignty Fuels Economic Crisis

El Salvador faces a deficit of agricultural production. It does not meet its own food demand, let alone produce an excess to export. The insufficient supply of maize this past year translated to a drastic increase in price, from \$11.50 per 100 pound sack in January to \$20.88 in July of the same year. In August 2007, the government decided to import 180 million pounds of white maize from Mexico and the United States to make up for the scarcity in the local market. Even with CAFTA, the imported maize pushed the price to \$25 per 100 pound sack in September.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) affirms that a "true national food sovereignty plan in El Salvador" does not exist. This is very dangerous when the minimum wage in the agricultural sector is \$2.47 a day and the basic rural bread basket now fluctuates around \$101.7 a month. These factors create a vulnerable situation, in which the nation cannot guarantee food security or jobs to afford to buy imported food sold at higher prices.

By now many are aware of the effects NAFTA has had on small Mexican farmers who could not compete with heavily-subsidized large farms in the US. Many of those former farmers are now a concern for the US as they continue to migrate north in search of work. Behind them they leave fractured families struggling to keep alive the very heart of Mexican culture, maize.

Could this also be the fate of Salvadoran people? As long as El Salvador does not support a real agricultural diversification and reactivation plan, migration from rural areas will continue to increase and food sovereignty will become increasingly problematic. El Salvador needs solutions, solutions based on the needs of Salvadoran people, developed by Salvadorans, in order for the country to flourish. Until then El Salvador will continue to export its people and those left behind will continue to be dependent on the remittances sent back home.

Javier Rivera works with CRISPAZ as the Rural Accompaniment Coordinator. He is also a member of the Citizen's Network against Genetically Modified Organisms in El Salvador and one of the authors of *Los Agrocombustibles y Sus Impactos: Valoraciones iniciales desde El Salvador* (Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña, Red Ciudadana frente a los Transgénicos, Red Sinti Techan 2007)

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- † South-North Solidarity
- † Long Term Volunteer Program

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The Path less Chosen; Living in Solidarity

Reflection from CRISPAZ Jesuit Student Delegation 2/23/2008

By Lynn Panepinto

El Salvador. I think about the people, places, sights, and feelings that I experienced in the tiniest country of Central America. I remember the generosity, faith, and kindness of the Salvadoran people, those whom many would consider impoverished. In the materialistic sense of the word, a great deal of them are indeed impoverished. In culture, however, they are quite rich, which became evident to me when I had the opportunity to see the work of artisans, the murals, the monuments and the simple yet beautiful chapel where Monseñor Romero said his last mass. How could such humble and unassuming people, be so grateful for a visit from a few students from the United States? How could we possibly accept their thanks for hearing their stories- stories for which we should be thanking them? I have begun to understand what it means to listen, truly listen, to another person's story and to let it change your life. I have experienced, for a brief moment, what it feels like to have your heart broken because of someone else's tragedy. I have been completely and utterly frightened, inspired, empowered, and joyful, all in the span of one week.



Sometimes I feel guilty when I realize how much I have. I become upset when I sense that others around me are apathetic. I become angry when I think about what happened to the Jesuit martyrs at the UCA- and the fears I have felt since setting foot in the rose garden where they were killed- because I start to think that the injustices of the world could never be overcome. Then I remember that what I learned during my delegation has affected me not only emotionally but intellectually as well. It has caused me to think about the ways in which the Salvadoran people have what others may lack: they have unshakable ambition and determination to reach their goals, and they also have love and support from strong family units. They know what justice is- a concept that I sometimes fear many of us have forgotten. Although they often struggle to live, they can most assuredly say that they are truly alive.

But can seven days really change anyone's life? It is true that while one is in such a situation as

my group was during our delegation, it is hard not to be moved. It is hard not to be affected in some way. But does that feeling lead to action? And can it last for more than a few days or weeks after one has left a country like El Salvador?

I have often struggled with this idea, because I have participated in various service trips that bring out a great deal of initial enthusiasm but lose their momentum once time goes on and people return to their normal lives. I can say with certainty, however, that El Salvador was a different experience. Because of those seven days, over which we did not perform a service but were educated on aspects of the country, I have been moved to take action in several ways. My group from Saint Joseph's University has undertaken a project to obtain computer donations that we will send to CRISPAZ, with the hope that they will someday reach rural schools like the one we visited in Las Colinas. We have spoken on different panels on our campus to other students and parents about our experience. We have teamed up with faculty members who also went on a delegation to El Salvador, so that we can develop a long-term commitment between our university and the rural community we visited.

As for me personally, I am currently enrolled in an economics course because the delegation stimulated my interest in the economies of developing countries. I take shorter showers, waste less food, and have stopped eating red meat, in order to establish a form of solidarity with those in developing countries. Finally, I have applied to year-long volunteer programs in South America so that I can spend more time interacting with underserved communities, learning about their culture and working in cooperation with them. I do not say this to make myself sound like a good and moral person; rather I say this because I would like to emphasize the impact of this experience.

So how can a week-long delegation truly affect a person? It may not seem like it at first, but just ask anyone on my delegation, and I am sure they would agree that it can turn your world upside down and change your life.

Wisdom from Above

Leviticus 25:35-38

35 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. 37 You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

Ephesians 2:19 (King James Version)

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Genesis 18:2

2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

Ezekiel 22:29

29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”
Brazilian poet-priest Dom Helder Camara



Exodus 12:49

49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.



GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Mothers Keep Historical Memory Alive in El Salvador

By Theodora Simon

This is the story of the struggle to construct a monument in remembrance of the civilian victims of the Salvadoran civil war. It is based on conversations and interviews with CoMadres, the Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared, and specifically interviews with Alicia Garcia, one of the founders of the committee.

The women of CoMadres, the Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared, began their struggle against forced disappearances in 1975, after a horrific massacre of students of the National University. In searching for their missing sons and daughters, the mothers found each other, in military detention centers, prisons and morgues. Throughout the war, CoMadres documented the forced disappearance of thousands of Salvadorans, collecting information about disappeared people and taking pictures of mass graves and dumping sites used by the military and death squads. The women, who began denouncing the government and military because their loved ones had been disappeared, soon

The Monument to Truth and Memory is about remembering ... It is also about confronting the widespread impunity in El Salvador...

faced repression themselves, in death threats, bombings of their office, detention and torture.

The official end to the Salvadoran civil war came in 1992 with the signing of the peace accords. Throughout the peace process CoMadres was present, urging for the inclusion of the disappeared in negotiations. While the peace accords mention reparations for victims as a necessary step in justice, it was the United Nations' Truth Commission report, published in March of 1993 that explicitly called upon the Salvadoran government

to dedicate a monument to the civilian victims of the war.

Immediately after the publication of the Truth Commission's report, President Cristiani passed a sweeping amnesty law, which, Alicia Garcia of CoMadres explains, "has left us without any possibility of justice."

Although the Truth Commission called upon the Salvadoran government to construct the monument, "the government was never interested in building the monument. The less evidence there is, the better for them." It was clear that the government was not going to fulfill its responsibility, and it fell to CoMadres and other human rights organizations to build the monument.

The completion of the monument has been a long struggle, marred with obstacles. The first was the monument itself, a design that would do justice to all of the suffering and all of the victims, from disappeared children to assassinated people. Finally, it was decided that the monument would be a wall etched with the names of the assassinated, the disappeared, and the massacres, accompanied by a mural to depict the history of El Salvador: "The monument isn't simply a wall of names. It is much deeper than that. It is part of rescuing historical memory. When my generation is no longer alive, the monument will remain as a reminder of what happened here, so that it is not forgotten... Behind every name, there is a whole family and so much suffering."

From all their work collecting information and documenting cases of forced disappearances during the war, CoMadres had an extensive base of names to begin with. In 1997, they began a national campaign to inform people of the initiative and ask that they come forward with the names

(Memory continued on page 9)

(Memory continued from page 8)



Monument to Truth and Memory in Parque Cuscatlan, San Salvador of their sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, family members and neighbors who were disappeared or killed during the war. CoMadres traveled all over the country to speak directly with people and collect information: “Many people still had fear, and many people still have fear. They would give us a name, but they’d say: ‘I’m going to give you the name of my child, or my children, but please, don’t mention my name...I’ll give you all the information, but don’t share my name.’ And we respect this.” Many other organizations brought forward names, and a long and difficult process to compile and purge the lists ensued.

Next came the issue of funds: “We had no idea what the dimensions of cost would be. We simply hadn’t thought of it. We just wanted to leave something for history.” With the support of María Julia of Tutela Legal, who traveled the world speaking about human rights issues in El Salvador and simultaneously fundraised for the monument, CoMadres was able to raise the money, little by little, to construct the monument. In addition, they had the financial contributions of some people who offered names for the monument: “There were some people who, when they came to leave the name of their son or daughter, would ask: ‘How much is it to build the monument? What is the cost of one name?’ We told them it was about 35 *colones* per name (USD \$4)—we still had *colones* then—and some people would contribute the amount for their name. These were people without much money, but they wanted to support the effort, because they understood how important it was.”

Then came the construction of the monument itself. Granite, chosen for its strength and durability, was brought from Spain. The machine to engrave the names had to be ordered from the United States, as there was not one in El Salvador. Permission had to be obtained to build the monument in *Parque Cuscatlán*, in downtown San Salvador.

The Monument to Truth and Memory was inaugurated on December 6, 2003. But after the inauguration, people continued to come forward with information. The work was not finished.

Since 2003, CoMadres has received an additional 6,000 names. They also have the names of the 102 massacres carried out in El Salvador during the war. They returned to fundraising to collect enough for nine new granite plaques. This second stage of the monument will be inaugurated on March 15th, 2008, the same day the Truth Commission’s report was presented 15 years ago, and in commemoration of the anniversary of Romero’s martyrdom.

“It has been a long struggle, but we have to do this, because this is a commitment we have, a commitment to the victims and their relatives...We want the memory of all of the victims to be dignified through this effort. And that evidence remains of what happened in this country... to show to humanity and Salvadoran society that what we said during the war, the denunciations we made during the war, were real...”

It is anguish to not know what happened to your family. In the case of the assassinated, when you know someone was killed, at least you know their suffering had an end. But in the case of the disappeared, one never knows to what extent were the atrocities they suffered. We don’t know what happened to them, where they were left. We don’t know anything... forced disappearances is perhaps the most atrocious crime that exists in all humanity.

The monument is a place for mothers and relatives of the disappeared and assassinated to go, people who don’t know where their loved one’s body lies, and they can be there to reflect on the person’s life, mourn them and remember them.”

(Memory continued on page 11)

undermine the rule of law and what they have done is far more serious than crossing a border. Those who speak most loudly against migrants who have crossed the border and have broken the law in that sense are those who are most willing to give a pass to these outrageous violations of much more serious laws.



People could then say Ok, but why should we be responsible for Central America's "problems"? Well, we have to review a little history. We need social transformation in Central American

countries. But the United States during the 20th century dedicated itself systematically to preventing that social transformation and to the defense of our allies who preside over societies that excluded the majority of the population from dignified participation and economic life. Until the 20th century, and much into the 20th century, the safety valve for that historic contradiction was to die before your time or to be killed trying to change it. But there were hopes for reform. The US overthrew the government of Nicaragua and helped to overthrow (the government of) Honduras for the founder of the United Fruit Company a hundred years ago. These were two governments, among others, who were trying to provide a different kind of society for Central America; in fact a capitalist liberal society.

And when social transformation continued to be frustrated, most recently in Guatemala in 1954 when the United States mounted a coup to overthrow the democratic government there, the reformers turned more radical. The US then had to support governments that were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The governments we sponsored practiced state terror and were responsible for scores of thousands of civilian deaths. Its not that the people who read this article are responsible for that but I feel I had to explain the background.

SN: What kind of changes in policy in the United States will there need to be to stop or slow emigration from Central American countries?

DB: The US will have to permit the type of political change that would allow for more people to participate in economic life. That would mean they would have to permit that governments increase social spending, especially on education and health. Would the United States do that? Will governments who want to redistribute tax revenues and increase tax revenues be considered by the US as part of the axis of evil to be crushed and undermined or will they be permitted to operate? Naturally what is also needed is a US sponsored Marshall Plan for Central America, but that's really a pipe dream in the current political climate.

SN: As people of faith how should we approach the immigration issue?

DB: The social mandate that is most repeated in the old testament, in the Hebrew Scriptures, is respect for the foreigner, the sojourner.

In the new testament as well...I think a better translation of what Jesus says at the last judgment, "I was a foreigner and you took me" is also a mandate to all of us not just Christians to receive the stranger, who is vulnerable and without defenses, but to see in the foreigner not a threat but a blessing and an opportunity. In the letter to the Hebrews, Chapter 13, at the end says "be sure to practice hospitality for the stranger because people who have entertained strangers have discovered that they were actually entertaining Angels". Ambassadors of God are what Dorothy Day calls the poor in general. So rather than illegal Aliens it's better to recognize them as God's ambassadors. I think that's the perspective of faith. I will also say this, if the Church does not stand up for the migrants, who will? Some unions will, but only 6% of the labor force is unionized. It's not enough that the Bishops speak out. Communities, parishes, congregations have to invite them to tell their stories and defend them, not permit them to be arrested after sharing. The churches are the place where we can put a human face on this migration issue. My experience is that when you do that, you win hearts and mind. All the abstract arguments about whether they are breaking the law or not, what should we do for them, what do we owe them. Once you put a human face on this it helps people to overcome whatever inner obstacles they have to being hospitable and I think the churches can and should do that.

(Migration continued from page 10)

What about Christians and the law and Christians and migrations? We do take the law seriously and we should respect the law. We shouldn't be running stop lights, stealing from one another or violating the law. On the other hand, Jesus and Paul both point out that when necessary, mercy must take precedence over law. When it's a question of harm, common good or of serious violations of human rights by the law, mercy must take priority over the law. We must remember Jesus was a victim of the law. We have a law and according to that law he must DIE. And Jesus says, for God mercy is much more important. Now, we should respect the law. As the Bishops have been saying, in the US we must realize that our legal system, our immigration law, is broken, and is breaking people, and that application of that law is simplistic and an immoral response to a much more serious problem.

The Catholic tradition on migration is really quite beautiful. Everyone has a right to the goods of the earth and to maintain their families with basic necessities. They have the right to do that in their own country, and when they are denied that right, they have the explicit right to go elsewhere to find the goods God has created for everyone. The receiving countries have to accept them and they have the right to remain united as families. Even though it is very true that governments, countries, have a right and a duty to manage migration flows and control their borders, they must do so in a way that balances this right. And so we have this tension.

It was this tension that the original McCain/Kennedy legislation responded to in a rather responsible way in its earlier version and I think we should go back to that and there is a way to manage this, but it requires comprehensive migration reform.

Father Dean Brackley, an American Jesuit priest and professor at the University of Central America, has lived in El Salvador since 1990 when he accepted one of the teaching positions left vacant by the murder of one of the six Jesuits. He is also the author of *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (Crossroad 2004).

(Memory continued from page 9)

The Monument to Truth and Memory is about remembering and dignifying the civilian victims of the civil war and refusing to forget. It is also about confronting the widespread impunity in El Salvador, an impunity that stems from the amnesty law and continues to have profound effects on Salvadoran society.

“Neither the government nor the judicial system are interested in applying justice, because if they apply justice, they are going to have to apply it to the highest levels of government. They're all involved in crime. Many financed death squads and many others formed part of death squads. Since they all have blood-stained hands, they are not interested in the idea of justice here in El Salvador...those with power in their hands are terrified that it will be taken away. They are afraid that, if new people come to power, all of their corruption and evil deeds will be discovered, and brought to light. It would be like taking the lid off a pressure cooker of corruption...Here, complete impunity exists. They know they are protected and that no one will touch them.”

CoMadres continues their work today against forced disappearances and to hold the Salvadoran government responsible for human rights violations. With an international coalition of human rights organizations, CoMadres helped present the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to the United Nations, which was unanimously approved and, today, has 57 signatory countries. Neither El Salvador nor the United States has signed. CoMadres has also brought the Salvadoran Amnesty Law before the Inter-American Court of the OAS and continues to fight for its repeal in El Salvador. The women of CoMadres continue to denounce disappearances in El Salvador today and share their personal testimonies with delegations from all around the world.

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