



## Update from the OSP-IHM Collaborative Border Ministry

### WHAT ARE WE SEEING? ... WHAT DOES IT MEAN? ... WHAT NOW?

By Mary Elaine Anderson, IHM  
Carmen Armenta Lara, IHM  
Rose Patrice Kuhn, IHM

Since January 20<sup>th</sup>, we have received emails, texts, and phone calls from many asking us, “What are you *seeing* at the border?” Here in McAllen, Texas, we are seeing fewer migrants at the Humanitarian Respite Center (HRC). During the year 2024, sometimes there were 50-120 migrants in HRC on any given day (a sharp decrease from the 800 persons that were assisted daily by Catholic Charities in Fall 2023). In the past week, each day that we visited HRC there were about 10-15 migrants.

There are probably some who would see the decrease in numbers as a victory ... a halting of “illegal” migrants ... a sign that the government is keeping “criminals” from entering the US at our southern border. However, those of us who live at the border and volunteer at the Humanitarian Respite Center understand the decrease in numbers and its implications for migrants in a very different way.

The migrant decrease at HRC is largely due to the executive order that terminated the CBP-One App. Since January 2023, the App functioned as the *legal way* for migrants to submit advance information and schedule appointments at eight southern border points of entry. The process often involved a long wait (9-12 months), but it allowed migrants to enter the US legally and to apply for a work permit as well as asylum (*protection from violence, poverty, or persecution*). ***The executive order on January 20<sup>th</sup>, which terminated the CBP One App and canceled existing appointments at the border, has left migrants with no legal way to enter the US.***

When we visited the Casa del Migrante in Reynosa, Mexico, on Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, we found migrants, especially those who had appointments and were scheduled to cross the border that day or week, in shock, confused about their options, and unsure of their future. Many of those remaining in Mexico cannot return to their countries of origin because of the threats and the violence that they and/or their families suffered. They are asking themselves, one another, and us: “What now?” That day, we did what we usually do on any other Thursday in the Casa del Migrante. We listened to heartbreaking stories and allowed our own hearts to break open. We celebrated the Eucharist ... the breaking of bread among families from many different countries ... united by their faith in God. After communion, several Haitian women stood up and sang with a full heart and



one voice “How Great Thou Art.” (pictured left) Their strength in the face of so many adversities, past and present, will stay with us as we too navigate the current situation at the border.

As the days pass, we are beginning to explore what direction our ministry at the border will take. Will we be spending more time in Reynosa, Mexico, where migrants, with no legal option for entering the US, need accompaniment? Will the Casa del Migrante, where we have been spending every Thursday, become a sanctuary for deportees to Mexico instead of the safe space it was for migrants waiting to receive an interview with Immigration to enter the US? Will the decreased numbers at HRC allow us to meet the needs of migrants in a more personal way?

What is God’s invitation to us now? Just like our migrant brothers and sisters, we will wait, discern our next steps, and move forward with faith in God’s unconditional love for all, especially the most vulnerable and the marginalized. We ask you, sisters, associates, and friends of the OSP and IHM congregations to pray with and for us as we respond to God’s call at the US-Mexico border.