



IN

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WITH

For the entirety of its 118-year existence, **Catholic Extension** has supported the Church’s presence and ministry along the U.S. southern border. It is, in fact, the most densely Catholic region in the entire U.S. today. It is also one of the financially poorest areas of the country with the highest rates of poverty, but the Catholic Church at the southern border has always taken a simple but effective approach. They treat migrants as vulnerable people and give witness to their human dignity amid their atrocious circumstances.

**In partnership with Catholic Extension, this Lenten season Saint Anthony parish community is supporting ministries along the U.S. southern border with Mexico. Your efforts will assist and sustain these ministries so that they can continue their spiritual works of mercy and serve the families in their community.**

**Please choose which border mission area you would like to support:**

- 1) Help asylum seekers in the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas

Catholic Extension has been privileged to work with pastors, parishes, and lay faithful to welcome those fleeing poverty and violence to enter the legal process of asylum in the United States.

The Humanitarian Respite Center in the diocese of Brownsville is run by the luminous Sr. Norma Pimentel and her team. The center began in a parish hall in 2014, and since opening its doors has assisted over 100,000 migrants. Catholic Extension was among the first supporters of this ministry, which was created in response to a surge of Central Americans arriving at our southern border seeking asylum.



Sr. Norma is one of the Catholic Church’s leading moral voices on border issues and migration. The Respite Center is a converted disco that has assisted over 100,000 immigrants created in response to a surge of Central Americans arriving at our southern border seeking asylum. No other non-profit shelter in the country has served as many people. Sometimes there are 50 people, sometimes 10 times that many. Sister says that the immigrants always make space when there isn’t any because they know shared misery. When the immigrants enter the Center’s door, the staff lines up on both sides of the wall, applauding, smiling, cheering, and hugging. Sister asks everyone on her team to look each of the guests

in the eyes, smile and ask how they are, a simple step towards restoring their human dignity. Sister says that the Holy Spirit allows us to meet and connect with each person the way each person most needs.

Catholic Extension also funds operational support for Sister Zita Telkamp of the Sisters of Divine Providence and her team who lead La Posada, a shelter for migrants and asylum-seekers. Since 1989 they have served thousands of asylum-seekers, who come from 85 countries, and are housed here with their families after being released from detention centers. Clients stay for anywhere from a day or two to several months, awaiting an immigration court date. Guests at the emergency shelter La Posada Providencia in San Benito, Texas have endured untold hardships. La Posada was built as an emergency shelter for men, women and families fleeing from political oppression, natural disasters, and poverty and are seeking asylum in the United States. And all of them have been blessed by Sister Zita Telkamp's guidance and mercy. "Welcoming the stranger is a Gospel value that is practiced daily at this haven for those without a home," said Rev. Daniel E. Flores, Bishop of Brownsville. "I am most grateful to the Congregation of Divine Providence and Sister Zita for their commitment to the poor." With the help of our donors and parish partners, Catholic Extension has supported this ministry since 2013.



## 2) Support migrant shelters and religious education centers in the Diocese of El Paso, Texas

Support from organizations like Catholic Extension and local volunteers, allows the Diocese of El Paso to feed and help migrants who Immigration and Customs Enforcement drops off at their doors. When the migrants are released from detention, they stay for one or two days in these church-run shelters. Dr. Veronica Rayas, the Director of Religious Formation for the diocese, runs centers like Centro San Juan Diego in the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, a ministry supported by Extension.

Is the Centro San Juan Diego an after-school center of arts and culture, or is it a temporary migrant shelter? Is it a Religious Education center or a transit center? The answer is "All of the Above." Grace in action will always use every spare inch of real estate. The center provides religious education classes by developing and expanding their knowledge of Mexican American culture and the Catholic faith. Many of the children who attend the religious education center are from low-income families and face personal and academic challenges, but Veronica and the teachers at the center try to be the light to the children. The Centro San Juan Diego is a place where the teachers treat students as children of God, working side-by-side with them so that they might learn that they have gifts and skills to develop. So far, the staff at Centro San Juan Diego have also served about 5,000 refugees. The center is a lifeline for people living through trauma and uncertainty.



Face blurred to protect identity

Martyrs Hall used to be the main offices of the El Paso diocese. Bishop Seitz repurposed it in 2018 when a surge of migrants flooded the border. The Shelter is currently processing about 150 people a week. During past surges, those numbers doubled. These centers provide the warmth and care that refugees have gone without for months on end. They are greeted with smiles and love by the center's staff and volunteers.

Another shelter in the Diocese of El Paso, Texas is at Sacred Heart Parish. The church is located just a few steps from the border. The Catholic leaders reaching out to migrants in El Paso and all along the U.S.-Mexico border who collaborate with Catholic Extension do not look away. Like Jesus, they are grabbing people by the hands, and lifting them up from the depths of despair, helping them find the light in the middle of the dark of night.

