

Mission for Migrants
April 1, 2014
Questions and Answers Regarding Trip to Border by the U.S. Bishops

Why are the bishops traveling to the U.S.-Mexico border to celebrate Mass and lay a wreath at the border wall?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration plans to travel to the U.S.-Mexican border March 30-April 1st to tour the border, celebrate Mass, and lay a wreath at the border wall. The purpose of the trip is to pray for and remember those who have died attempting to cross the border and to call attention to the human suffering caused by a broken immigration system. Led by Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, the bishops also intend to lay a wreath at the border wall to remember those who have died.

What prompted the bishops to take a trip to the border?

The U.S. bishops were inspired by Pope Francis, who, in his first trip outside Rome, traveled to the Italian island of Lampedusa to pray for migrants who died as they attempted to reach the island (and Europe) from Africa by sea. During his visit, Pope Francis threw a wreath in the Mediterranean Sea to remember those who had drowned. He also prayed for the victims and decried the "globalization of indifference" to persons on the move and the "throwaway culture" that fails to protect their lives and basic human dignity. The U.S.-Mexico border is akin to the island of Lampedusa, as millions of migrants have attempted to cross the border into the United States, many at the cost of their lives.

What do the bishops hope to achieve? Will they call upon Catholics to act?

The U.S. bishops would like to bring attention to the human consequences of a broken immigration system and call upon the U.S. Congress to act to fix the system. Not only are people dying in the American desert, they also suffer under an inhumane deportation and detention system. Immigration reform is ultimately about human beings, our brothers and sisters. As a moral matter, we can no longer wait to fix our broken immigration system.

The bishops also will call upon Catholics and others of good will to either fast or pray a rosary that day and also call their representatives in the House in favor of comprehensive reform.

Why are the bishops going to Arizona instead of other points along the border?

Arizona has been a flashpoint in the immigration debate and a corridor for migration since Operation Streamline in San Diego and Operation Hold the Line in El Paso began driving migrants toward Arizona in the early 1990s. It is also where Operation Streamline, a program which imposes criminal penalties on border crossers, began. Bishops from other points of the border will join the USCCB Committee on Migration for the event.

What will the event entail?

The bishops will celebrate Mass, lay a wreath at the border, and hold a press conference. On the day before, they will walk in the desert, tour the border, and visit migrant programs on the Mexican side of the border.