

Q&A REGARDING MASS IN WASHINGTON CELEBRATED BY U.S. BISHOPS WHO CELEBRATED BORDER MASS IN ARIZONA

Why are the bishops who traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border to celebrate Mass coming to Washington to celebrate Mass?

The U.S. bishops who celebrated Mass at the border in remembrance of migrants who have died in the desert were moved by the experience and wanted to bring the spirit of that event to elected officials in Washington. Our members of Congress and officials of the Executive Branch should hear first-hand about the human suffering of migrants at the border and in our country. They are the only ones who can change the laws and immigration system that can lead to end human suffering, including the deaths of thousands of migrants in the U.S. desert.

What prompted the bishops to take a trip to the border and now to celebrate this Mass?

The U.S. bishops were inspired by His Holiness Pope Francis, who, in his first trip outside Rome, traveled to the Italian island of Lampedusa to pray for migrants who attempt 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. The Holy Father 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, even at the cost of their lives.

The bishops will now bring this message to Washington, to ask elected officials to not be “indifferent” to these migrants and to pass immigration reform legislation.

What do the bishops hope to achieve with the D.C. Mass?

The bishops would like to bring attention to the human consequences of a broken immigration system and call upon the Congress—particularly the House of Representatives-- to act to fix the system. Not only are people dying in the U.S. desert, they also are suffering 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 have invited all lawmakers to attend the Mass and will meet with several lawmakers in the House of Representatives during the day.

Is there anything special about the Mass the bishops will be celebrating in D.C.?

The Mass is being celebrated on Ascension Thursday, 40 days after Easter and when Catholics celebrate the ascension of Jesus into heaven. It is appropriate to remember immigrants and their families, as well as those who have died, on this holy day. Besides lawmakers, business, labor, faith, and immigrant rights leaders have been invited to the Mass.

What will the day entail?

The bishops will celebrate Mass, hold a media conference, and meet with members of the House of Representatives.