

REPORT on Fr. Bill Rimmel's involvement in Justice and Peace Ministry - Tucson, AZ – June 2016

Believing that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, and because we are, God has a Divine claim on our attitudes, behaviors and actions to one another and to all of our brothers and sisters. And, in the Last Judgment scene, found in Matthew 25, we are given concrete and specific guidance in how we are to join Jesus in his mission to rid the world of all that enslaves, demeans and marginalizes even one of our brothers and sisters.

Urged on by both the Scriptures, the tradition of the Church and the Spirit of our Founders, I believe our call as Salvatorians is to be a prophetic voice, manifesting to the world the goodness and kindness of God to all people in whatever situation we find ourselves.

In 2001, I was assigned to Tucson, Arizona as pastor of Most Holy Trinity Parish. From the beginning it was clear that immigration, human trafficking and the many issues surrounding both of them were of primary concern. We put on or hosted plays that dealt with the border, Sr. Dorothy Stang, and Dorothy Day.

The first step I chose was education both in Catholic Social Teaching and in the issues facing Arizona. I took advantage of Programs like Just faith, and I organized conferences on Human Trafficking, and Immigration. Along with Leo Guardado, I initiated a program called "Theology Uncorked," bringing in local and national speakers on Justice issues. I helped form a Pax Christi group that met weekly to pray for peace, and in 2010 I organized Pilgrimage Retreats to the places of the Martyrs in El Salvador. We spend several months preparing for the trip by reading books and articles and viewing documentaries so that participants would be informed about the saints, especially Oscar Romero, their civil war, and our country's involvement in that war. We spent eleven days in El Salvador listening and asking questions trying to understand not only the war years, but what is happening today. Our immigration issues began with their Civil war. I consider it one of my most important ministries.

Believing we can't just pray, I involve myself and as many others as I can in demonstrations and public protests. I'm always ready to host groups and introduce them to the border and what is happening here.

I am an active part of an interfaith group of faith leaders working for immigration reform. I opened Most Holy Trinity Parish for Sanctuary, to an immigrant who was scheduled for deportation, but ICE called off the order of deportation. When Rosa Robles took sanctuary at Southside Presbyterian Church, I led prayer services, attended rallies and supported her as best I could.

Because I believe people don't understand what is happening on our border, I have arranged border immersion experiences for several groups, including CMSM/LCWR, Connecticut College and others, and I encourage them to take the message back to their communities.

Recently I began volunteering at the state prison, offering Mass weekly, and I am active in the Kolbe Society, a group formed to help prisoners re-enter society.

Several Lay Salvatorians have participated in these activities and have become active in or leaders in many of these or other justice oriented efforts in Tucson.

My latest effort is to develop a Salvatorian Family quick action response to issues surrounding immigration and human trafficking. Here's a broad outline of my proposal:

- Form a committee of Salvatorians to develop a quick response method for issues in the areas of Human Trafficking and Immigration that would be open to Salvatorians and others who care about these issues and, who for a variety of reasons, aren't always able to create their own message but want to give input on specific issues.
- The overall group would develop a process to write and distribute a possible response to a specific issue and, within 24 hours, get it to those who choose to participate. The participant could simply forward the message or add their own comments to it. I hope we will begin our work in the next two or three weeks.
- Develop a logo and stationery for those who choose to use it.
- The committee would have two focus committees: one dealing with Human Trafficking, one dealing with Immigration.
- We would rely on sites like CMSM, JFI, Network, USCCB and others.

So far 10 of us; priests, sisters and lay are committed to talking about, planning and making this a reality. There are so many issues, many that I haven't mentioned: private prisons, operation streamline, etc., but as Mother Theresa responded to a reporter, I'm not here to be successful. I'm here to be faithful.

This is only a smattering of the work being done in Tucson. Salvatorians are involved with Poverello House, a rest stop for the homeless; Matthew 25, a food program for the homeless, etc.

Charity and justice are both important. We are great at charity. Individuals are great at working or Justice. Our goal is to increase that effort.



Set-up for November 1 prayer service at Potters Field in Tucson, for Migrants who died crossing our desert.



Pax Christ Prayer Service at Most Holy Trinity.



Supporting Rosa: A lady in sanctuary at Southside Presbyterian Church for more than a year. Prayer services were held every night that people were present 24/7. The signs we are holding were just a few of the thousands that were posted all over Tucson. The group is from Connecticut College. Rosa is in the first row center.



Praying at Romero's tomb in the Cathedral, San Salvador.



Line in the Sand: A drama depicting the various points of view regarding immigration issues.



Picture painted by an MHT parishioner as a going away gift. Shows me blessing a lady way back in the hills, in a chapel she built near Pertain, El Salvador.