



North American Promoter for Justice and Peace and Care of Creation

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Delegation aids support for families of largest immigration raid in the United States in over ten years

On August 16th to 18th, Fr. Brendan Curran, Alma Silva and Samuel Villanueva, members of The Resurrection Project organizing team, drove to Mississippi to provide support and gather information on the current situation after the detention of 681 workers in seven poultry plants.



Community immediately sprung to action. Scorpion Graphics volunteered to print 300 backpacks for children of families with the symbol, “Somos Familia/ We are One Family.”

Student workers at Purdue University, St Agnes of Bohemia families and members of a new base community at St Pius V Church committed money for school supplies for each bag.



Upon our arrival we were greeted by Fr. Roberto Mena, a Trinitarian priest (religious order) of St Michael Parish in Forest, MS. Upon our arrival late at night, we encountered family victims of the raid who were seeking support from the parish in Forest, MS. Among them were the husband of a woman who is detained in Louisiana, who has a four-month-old child who had been breastfeeding until the raid. Another man was waiting to talk to the parish priest, his son, sister and brother-in-law were detained. Sr Obdulia and Fr Roberto of the parish of St Michael then arranged for families who opened their homes to share their stories that night.

Samuel stayed with Moises, his wife and his son, all who were working in the poultry plants. He explained to Samuel that they do not have work because the companies are demanding new proof of legal status. They cannot return.



Early Saturday morning, a woman named Maria, in a bracelet, a victim of the raid, came to the parish office for help. Maria shared a horror story of how she was detained.

She was leaving the night shift and was in her car leaving the parking lot at the poultry plant. The immigration agents surrounded her vehicle. They pounded on her window and as she opened the window, an agent pulled out his knife and sliced her seat belt in half. He then opened the door and pulled her from the vehicle and had her kneel down as she was taken into detention.

On Saturday, we attended the pop-up legal clinic by Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA) at Trinity United Methodist Church.



Our group heard numerous stories of families waiting in line for the legal advice. Many describe lack of knowledge of whereabouts of loved ones in detention. According to MIRA volunteers and families, over 300 remain in detention centers now located in Natchez, MS and in unknown locations in Louisiana. Most others are reunited with families with leg bracelets or use of cellphone tracking applications.

In the evening, Fr. Brendan organized a prayer solidarity vigil at St Michael Church.

Picture #6 (picture of vigil, Forest, MS)

Speakers included representatives of MIRA, UFCW, and among those in attendance were members of the Dominican Laity of New Orleans, LA, members of Dominicans missioned in Jackson, MS at St. Dominic's Hospital, and a caravan of Dominican Sisters of Springfield, IL. During the service, families shared powerful testimonies of the affect of the raids on their lives.

That evening our TRP team joined parish leaders in a night prayer service with affected youth and families. We shared in a blessing and distribution of backpacks.

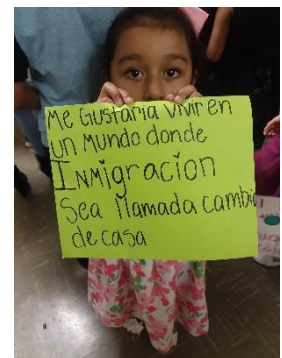
In the morning, Fr. Brendan presided at several services at local parishes in different rural communities where we distributed backpacks..



It was also another opportunity to hear from families. Overall, each and every parishioner at the Spanish masses were directly affected. Members of parish leadership councils, a leader of the choir, coordinators of ministry remain detained or are wearing a bracelet awaiting a court date. We also shared in prayer for a family of ministers who are

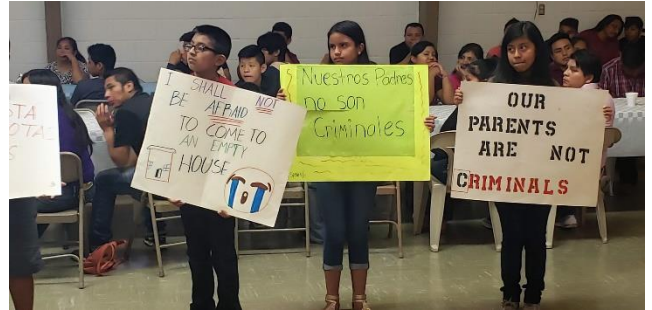
leaving for Alabama to find work. At the moment of extreme crisis an entire community of four towns are now without work. Families are remarkably resilient and full of faith.

Our delegation experienced three types of realities in our visit. We found evidence of extreme abusive detention practices by ICE agents. Despite public reports to the contrary, many children remain separated from their parents in detention. Separation of family. There is widespread ongoing collateral damage with workers dismissals and a loss of work after the raids. In the extreme conditions, support has come slowly, pop-up legal clinics are underway. The networks UFCW and Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance are present. However, families are in urgent need of direct legal support sensitive to cultural needs of the largely indigenous Guatemalan community.



Ways you can help:

- **Send immediate financial and material support to affected families**
 - **Go to webpage of St Michael's Church – Forest, MS**
 - **Follow this link:**
<https://stmichaelms.org/>



- **Recruit attorney volunteers:** If you are a licensed attorney and want to provide assistance, please fill out the following form [HERE](#). This response will go to Amelia McGowan of the Mississippi Center for Justice. Amelia's direct email is amcgowan@mscenterforjustice.org if you have any questions.
- **If you or a group wish to be a non-legal volunteer:** Please use [this link](#) for non legal volunteer registration.