

# News from the Border

February 11, 2009

Volume 2 No. 1



**OUR PUROSE:** To give you BRIEF, UP TO DATE, NEWS from one who LIVES on the border and is INVOLVED in many happenings here. Then I will try to give you references where you can pursue a topic if you wish so you are not OVERWHELMED with material you don't want.

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Fr. Joe Nelson, OFM

## BORDER REALITY IN TUCSON, ARIZON

Wed. Feb. 11, 09. I just returned from a two day trip to Tucson where I visited various groups working for immigrants on the border. Yesterday I went with three members of a group called "Samaritans". They go out into the desert around Tucson looking for migrants who are in need. They take socks, food packets, medical supplies, children's supplies, water. The night before we went the temperature was down in the low 30's, there was a strong breeze growing and snow in the mountains. At first we didn't see any tracks or migrants. It had rained, so the ground was wet.



Shivering migrants outside bus. I'm tallest with back to camera.

Then we came upon a Border Patrol Bus and several vehicles and pulled up. Sandra of our group asked one of the border patrol whether any of the migrants need food, socks, etc. He told us that, no, they don't need anything, they are fine. Then Sandra talked to a woman officer, Susan Bullock. She said she would check and said four needed socks. THEN!, 13 came off the bus, 6 young women and 7 men. The youngest woman 17 years old, and one 2 and 1/2 months pregnant. They were in t-shirts and shivering (I was shivering with a heavy coat on.) They had taken their coats and put them under the bus, not allowing them to have them on the bus. They were all very hungry and all had no socks or wet socks.

They were not allowed to eat on the bus so they had to eat out in the cold. We helped them put on socks, many had blisters. They took their shoe strings away, probably so they couldn't run away. They couldn't take blankets on the bus, but they allowed us to put blankets around them while they ate and changed socks.

Except for the woman officer, they would not have let us help them. We talked to her a bit and she even took 4 bags of food in case she found someone. She had tried to stop one of the Samaritan patrols the day before to help some migrants but couldn't get their attention. She has been on the border patrol for 20 years. She said, "They have been through so much already we shouldn't put them through more." All three Samaritan members said that she was very rare among the Border patrol. This was shown when on our return we saw another bus with migrants and they told us they were all fine and would not let us help them at all.



Officer Susan talking to Sandra



A "shrine" at No More Deaths camp made up of articles found in desert and crosses representing the dead in the dessert.

We visited a camp where "No More Deaths" have people during spring break and all summer to minister to migrants coming through and two homes nearby who also help migrants when they come through. I could say much more but that would get too long. This should give you a sampling of the reality

### Another story

At a meeting of the "Samaritans" last night someone told how several women migrants, ages 30-50) at the Jesuit hospitality house on the border (Nogales) related how their guide ("Coyote") left them stranded and then bandits raped them at gun point and then forced them to carry loads of drugs in the desert.

## DEATH AND VIOLENCE IN JUAREZ

Reports of death and violence in Juarez are in the El Paso Times almost daily. Some examples. Feb 6 a story "The Mexican army and heavily armed federal police ... raided a drug warehouse Thursday morning in Juarez. [They] seized nearly 2 tons of marijuana." The number of assassinations are way up from last year. The paper reported the following:

January 2008 37 deaths.	February 2009 (as of Feb. 6) 54	TOTAL HOMICIDES in Juarez
January 2009 153 deaths.	All of February 2008 37	2008 1,—609
		2009 as of Feb. 5 —207

Feb. 7 story "The U.S. Consulate in Juarez is warning U.S. citizens to avoid the Valley of Juarez . . . due to rising drug-related violence. [examples] "... execution-style shootings of 5 men Thursday and grisly beheadings in recent weeks." The valley of Juarez is right across from the colonias where I have been working.

Tues. Feb. 10 "Nearly 7.3 tons of marijuana and [more] than 9,800 rounds of ammunition were seized early Monday ... across the Rio Grande from Fabens." (That is part of the Valley of Juarez.)

The Tucson Arizona paper on Sunday, Feb. 8 had an article about how the violence is spreading across the border into Arizona.