



On February 10-11, 2023, Br. Joe Kotula and I went on a short trip to the Southern US/ Northern Mexican border that was sponsored by our Franciscan Province to learn more about the large-scale migration and situation there.

We see images in the news and hear various opinions of what is happening, but we wanted to see for ourselves. We met migrants from Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, Haiti, China and Albania and

were told there are also Africans, Ukrainians and Russians trying to cross the border.

I had understood the fact that people do not undertake such a dangerous, difficult and humiliating trip because things are going well at home.

The reality of what we saw and the suffering and hope of the people only confirmed what I already knew. As I watched the people in transit, any one of them would not look out of place walking in any of our cities.

What I can't understand is why these people were being detained when all they want is the chance to work- in jobs Americans don't want to take. I also remembered that my own grandparents were immigrants who were not necessarily welcomed by "real" Americans who were born here. I think I, as their grandson, turned out pretty well. So why not give these people the same chance?



Some friars who staffed a parish on the border a few years ago told us that they found themselves offering hospitality to migrants who made their way across but who were tired, dirty, lost, confused, frightened, and hungry. For three years, a respite center operated at the parish and literally thousands came through their doors. The friars said that after the people who came in had received a shower, clean clothes, a hot meal and good information on what to do next, that they were then able to relax and smile and feel safe and human again. Only a few parishioners grumbled about all of this commotion

but the friars said:

**“You know, I once heard: When I was hungry, you gave me food. When I was thirsty you gave me a drink, when I was naked, you gave me some clothes.”**

I believe that by doing these kind of simple actions, that we are helping to make the kingdom of God tangible.

~ Br. Kevin Kriso, ofm

