Opinion

News



The bollard steel border fence that splits Nogales, Arizona, from Nogales, Mexico, is seen in 2017. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)



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It is two days before Thanksgiving and I am just home from protesting at Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico, in a demonstration against U.S. weapons transfer and military training in Latin America and the existence of the wall. The School of the Americas Watch leads the demonstration and the date has always been set close to the 1989 murders in El Salvador of the six Jesuits and their housekeeper and her daughter. Some of the killers had been trained at the School of the Americas.

The demonstration ends with a sung litany of the dead. The people's response is "*Presente*," meaning both that the person is present with us and that we stand in place of that person. This year, persons who died crossing the border whose names are unknown were remembered, as well as persons killed by the Border Patrol.

The Border Patrol were stinkers. They covered the fence with mesh wire so we couldn't see to the other side, set a 12-foot perimeter so we couldn't stand near the fence, denied permits to build a stage and sound system, and left us on the U.S. side standing in a dirt road. The Army also strung concertina wire on our side of the fence, as if to prevent us from climbing over it. On the Mexican side, SOA Watch erected a stage and a very good sound system and set up folding chairs.

When we left for home, people said, "Have a good Thanksgiving." It was a jarring farewell that left me mindful of all the sorrows — personal, political, environmental, social — that we carry into feasts and fiestas.

We are blessed with life, family, friends, and we have lost some family and friends and perhaps quality of life as well. Some have lost much more than others. And perhaps all of us have behaved badly, been stinkers like the Border Patrol, in one way or another, large or small. We carry a lot with us into Thanksgiving.

I want to say that our sorrows make Thanksgiving all the richer, and that is true for many of us. Others grieve, unconsoled. And still others are absent from our feast. For them we say, "*Presente*."

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