

Lethal pilgrimage

Demetria Martinez | Mar. 30, 2010 NCR Today

Redemptorist Fr. Ricardo Elford, with attorney Isabel Garcia, founded a weekly vigil in Tucson to remember those who die crossing by foot from Mexico into the United States. I was stunned when Ricardo reminded me, in an e-mail, that on March 25 the 512th weekly vigil was held. The liturgy opened with these words:

"Remembering our sisters and brothers who have died on the border in search of work. In the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, bodies of at least 206 migrants were found just on the Arizona part of the 2000-mile border; since Oct. 1, 85 more bodies; since the year 2000, at least 1,928. Since 1994, at least 5,674 migrants have died -- more border deaths than all the years of the Berlin Wall."

So much death! So much grieving on the part of families whose loved ones died out of desperation: the need to go north to find work. As we approach Easter, let us all resurrect the spirits of the dead by remembering them, honoring their courage, and praying for the end to the kinds of international economic policies that all around the world are pushing people off their lands, making refugees out of huge portions of the world's population.

As Christians, we can take comfort this week in knowing that the poorest of the poor were never alone on their lethal pilgrimage: Christ walked with them, suffered with them, died with them and welcomed them into the Kingdom. We take comfort in our faith, yes, but let us also heed Christ's call to speak out for the voiceless, to envision a day -- to work toward a day -- when the wealth of the earth is justly shared, and that our tortured borderlands be healed.

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