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Hate: America's real security threat

by Demetria Martinez

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"This is our most serious public safety issue and a national security threat to America," reads a billboard in Oracle, Arizona.

Surely the message must refer to Osama Bin Laden, still on the loose, I thought, or perhaps to lax safety measures at airports. But no.

According to the *Arizona Daily Star*, the message is accompanied by a photo of a Latino family.

It is surely a sign of the times. It has become socially acceptable in growing sectors of our society to hate Mexican immigrants -- desperate border crossers risking their lives, fleeing poverty and hunger.

The quote is from Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu, the *Star* reported, although he denies having anything to do with the putting up of the billboard.

The newspaper report was read as part of a recent weekly liturgy in downtown Tucson, led by Redemptorist Fr. Ricardo Elford.

The liturgy also included a statistic about migrant deaths: "Remember our sisters and brothers who have died on the border in search of work. Since last Oct 1 [2009], just on the Arizona part of the 2,000 mile border, the bodies of at least 236 migrants have been found; since the year 2000, at least 2,079."

The closing prayer: "Beseech your blessing upon our torn and tortured borderlands. We live in a time of hate, mistrust, fear and violence. Bless us with your Holy Spirit, that we may follow your way and create a world where all may live and work together in peace. Amen"

I strongly urge everyone concerned about this issue to consider attending the conference "A Light to the Nations: Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Church's Global Commitment to the Poor." It will be held in San Antonio, Texas, January 12-14, 2011. The sponsor is *Celebration*, NCR's worship resource.

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