



Del Camino
Jesuit Border Ministries

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2024

OVERVIEW

Beginning in July 2021, the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province missioned a small team of Jesuits to serve in the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border. We met with Bishop Daniel Flores who articulated our mission to “read the reality and respond to it.” Since then, we have strived to follow that missionary call.

We formalized our ministry in October 2023 as Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries. This is a trade name of the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province operating in the state of Texas. We take our name from Our Lady of the Way (“Nuestra Señora del Camino” in Spanish). Many of the migrants we accompany turn to the Virgin Mary in prayer, and the devotion to Our Lady of the Way was especially important to the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. We continue to pray for her intercession for all those “on the way” in their migrant journey.

Our ministry is truly far reaching in its impact, as this report will show. Sacramental ministry, pastoral counseling, and humanitarian aid are the foundation of our ministry. We also extend into areas of accompaniment, advocacy, and communications, while also occasionally giving presentations and helping to host immersion groups. We collaborate extensively and remain financially viable. This report attempts to capture all these aspects of Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries.



Mission Statement

The mission of Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries is to offer privileged and preferential religious care to the poor, with a focus on pastoral accompaniment and sacramental ministry with the migrant population on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Our ministry is itinerant and missionary in nature and strives to walk with the excluded, as articulated in the apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus. Our ministry is flexible and constantly discerns the most appropriate ways to meet the needs of the migrant population, maintaining the readiness to move and walk with the migrant church. Our ministry also includes humanitarian aid, collaborating with local actors and other religious working with migrants, raising awareness on the border reality, and advocating for immigration reform.

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1. SACRAMENTAL MINISTRY

Our ministry is primarily sacramental and pastoral. We visit migrant shelters and camps on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border to celebrate Mass. We also serve as parochial vicars at San Felipe de Jesús parish in Brownsville where we regularly celebrate Masses and quinceañeras, hear confessions, and occasionally help with funerals, baptisms, anointings of the sick, and house blessings. Jesuit scholastic Joseph Nolla, SJ, also teaches confirmation classes weekly.



We regularly visit five different migrant shelters and two centers for unaccompanied minors to celebrate for Masses or communion services with migrants.

- Casa del Migrante, Reynosa, MX
- Senda 2, Reynosa, MX
- Humanitarian Respite Center of Catholic Charities, McAllen, TX
- Pumarejo shelter, Matamoros, MX
- Ozanam Center, Brownsville, TX
- Casa Norma Linda of Southwest Key Programs, Los Fresnos, TX
- Casa Río Grande of Southwest Key Programs, San Benito, TX
 - *[Suspended in September for lack of population]*



Baptisms and First Communion for Migrants

Occasionally, we have the opportunity to celebrate additional sacraments in the migrant shelters we visit. In 2024, we baptized eight children at Senda 2 and one child at Casa del Migrante. We also celebrated first communion with nine children at Senda 2.

Diocese of Brownsville: Supply Work and Spiritual Formation

We help with weekend Masses as supply work to support parishes in the Diocese of Brownsville when a pastor is traveling, sick, or requires additional help, as requested through the Bishop's Office.

We also support priests and deacon candidates in the diocese by offering spiritual direction. Fr. Flavio Bravo, SJ, directs retreats for men in the diaconate formation program along with their spouses, and for ordained deacons and their spouses.

Catholic Schools

We are asked to celebrate Masses occasionally at two local Catholic schools. Our Lady of Guadalupe is a Nativity-model middle school and St. Joseph's Academy is a Marist-run high school and middle school.





2. PASTORAL COUNSELING

An important component of our ministry is engaging in pastoral counseling in informal settings with migrants. Here are a few composite stories that capture how these pastoral conversations often unfold (names altered for privacy):

Rolando* is a Dominican migrant whose wife had just given birth to their first child. The newborn daughter was sick with fever and the migrant shelter was not a good place for a newborn baby. Joseph asked Rolando what he was feeling. Rolando said he felt powerless to take care of his kid. Joseph asked if Rolando saw himself as a failure. Rolando said, “Of course I do. What good am I as a father if I can’t even take care of my child?” Joseph responded, “You see a failure, but you know what I see? I see a father trying everything he can. You’re fighting for your daughter. You’re not a bad father. You’re a good father in a bad situation.” Tears began to well up in Rolando’s eyes and he wiped them away.

Yenifer* was standing in the parking area as the Jesuit minivan pulled into the shelter. She pulled Brian aside to speak with him. She began to break down in tears, and shared her story. She suffers from chronic pain and living in the shelter had exacerbated it. Brian offered her some words of comfort and assurance that she is not alone and that God walks with us in our pain. He offered to pray for her and invited her to join for Mass. A couple of weeks later, she joyfully approached Brian to share the good news: “We finally got an appointment to enter the US.!” She asked for a blessing to help her on the next steps of her journey.

Marisol* held tightly to a worn backpack in her arms as the Mass was being prepared in the shelter. After Mass, she began crying inconsolably. She placed the backpack in Flavio’s hands. “These are my daughter’s ashes,” she choked out. “We were on a small fishing boat crossing the ocean to the shore close to Nicaragua, when the boat began to sink. My daughter and others on the boat drowned. I am now hoping to enter the USA with my CBP One appointment. I cannot return to my country. I am taking my daughter with me.” Flavio hugged her and cried with her. He placed the backpack with her daughter’s ashes on the altar, blessed the urn, and said a prayer.

3. HUMANITARIAN AID

Along with our sacramental and pastoral ministry, we bring humanitarian aid to migrant shelters, primarily in northern Mexico.

3a. Local Purchasing

The majority of our aid comes from local purchases at Walmart and Sam’s Club, which is then brought to Senda 2 in Reynosa, MX and the Pumarejo shelter in Matamoros, MX.

In total, we spent **\$17,895.44** on local purchasing for Reynosa and **\$3,135.35** on local purchasing for Matamoros from July 1 – December 31, 2024.

Items purchased locally on a weekly basis:

Food/Kitchen

- Reusable food containers with cover
- Reusable plastic cups
- Reusable plastic spoons
- Transparent gloves for food preparation
- Powdered milk for children
- Cooking utensils

Personal Hygiene

- Shampoo for adults
- Conditioner
- Shampoo for babies
- Baby wipes
- Sanitary pads

Cleaning

- Dish soap
- Bleach
- Laundry Detergent
- Floor cleaner
- Mop heads
- Face masks
- Latex gloves for cleaning
- Trash bags
- Sponges
- Raid insect spray
- Fly traps
- Mouse traps

Miscellaneous

- Ziplock bags
- Stove lighters
- Duct tape





3b. Amazon Wishlist

We received items donated through our Amazon Wishlist, which are brought to the Pumarejo shelter in Matamoros and Senda 2 in Reynosa. Along with hygiene products and cleaning supplies, we receive tents that are used to house migrants in Senda 2 and winter clothing (gloves, socks, and beanies) to help in the colder months.

We have received approximately **\$8,262.37** in support through the Wishlist from July 1 - December 31, 2024.

| Donation Inventory: July-Dec 2024 | | | |
|--|----------|---------|---------------------|
| Item | Price | Ordered | Total Value Ordered |
| Baby Wipes, 80 count, 16 packs of 80 (1280 Wipes) | \$22.25 | 15 | \$333.75 |
| Body Wash- Ginger Lily (1 gallon) | \$21.99 | 13 | \$285.87 |
| Face Masks (40 Boxes, 50pcs/Box) | \$89.98 | 0 | \$0.00 |
| NIDO Fortificada powdered drink mix (56.4 oz) | \$17.07 | 3 | \$51.21 |
| Pads- Always Extra Heavy Overnight (20 Count) | \$6.29 | 18 | \$113.22 |
| Pads- Always, Size 3 Extra Long, (114 Count Total) | \$22.95 | 30 | \$688.50 |
| Pads- Stayfree Overnight (28 count) | \$16.99 | 0 | \$0.00 |
| Rosaries- Our Lady of Guadalupe (48 count) | \$39.99 | 2 | \$79.98 |
| Shampoo- Ginger Lily (1 gallon) | \$21.99 | 9 | \$197.91 |
| Shoelaces- Paracord Planet 1,000 ft spool | \$64.99 | 0 | \$0.00 |
| Tarps GRIZZLY 8x10 (4 pack) | \$29.99 | 11 | \$329.89 |
| Tent PACIFIC PASS 4-person family dome tent | \$35.15 | 7 | \$246.05 |
| Tent LIAMOY 6-persn camping tent | \$119.99 | 12 | \$1,439.88 |
| Toothbrushes- multi color (148/box) | \$41.97 | 16 | \$671.52 |
| Toothpaste- Freshmint (144/box) | \$52.95 | 11 | \$582.45 |
| Trash Bags (40 gallons, 250 count) | \$53.09 | 5 | \$265.45 |
| Winter Gloves (60 pack) | \$90.00 | 13 | \$1,170.00 |
| Winter Socks (48 pairs) | \$64.80 | 16 | \$1,036.80 |
| Winter Hats/Beanies (48 pack) | \$69.99 | 11 | \$769.89 |
| | | 192 | \$8,262.37 |
| | | | TOTAL VALUE |

3c. Shoes

We distribute shoes to migrants without sufficient footwear, prioritizing those who had received a CBP One appointment and would be entering the U.S. through a Port of Entry.

| Quantity of Shoes | Value |
|-------------------|-------|
| 45 pairs | \$900 |

3d. Cell Phones

We distribute cell phones to migrants who have had their cell phone lost, stolen, or damaged. Donated phones are sent to us directly, and additional phones have been purchased locally in Mexico. [Click on this link](#) for photos and stories of cell phone recipients.

| New cell phones | Value |
|-----------------|---------|
| 16 | \$2,000 |

| New cell phones | Used donated phones | Total donated phones |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 16 | 2 | 18 |



3e. Bibles

In August, we were awarded a Social Grant from the Jesuits U.S. Central and Southern Province for the purchase of Bibles. We purchased 100 Catholic Bibles in Spanish and 100 New Testaments in Haitian Creole to give out to migrants at the shelters that we visit.

Total value: **\$1,500**

3f. Funding Projects at Casa del Migrante, Reynosa

The Daughters of Charity staff the shelter Casa del Migrante in Reynosa, MX, and they requested our financial support on a couple of projects this past semester.

Water purification system: In September, we covered the parts and labor for the installation of a new water purification system. The tap water in Reynosa is unsafe to drink, so when their purification system broke, they were having to pay for drinking water for everyone at the shelter. The new water purification system provides expanded capacity to meet the daily needs of between 140-200 migrants staying at the shelter.

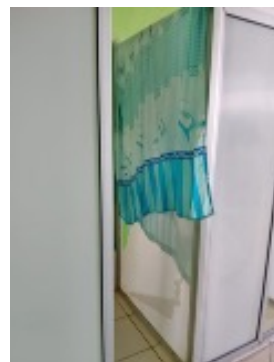
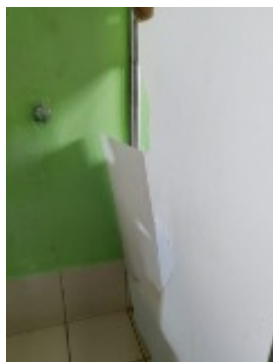


Total cost: **\$2,098.43**

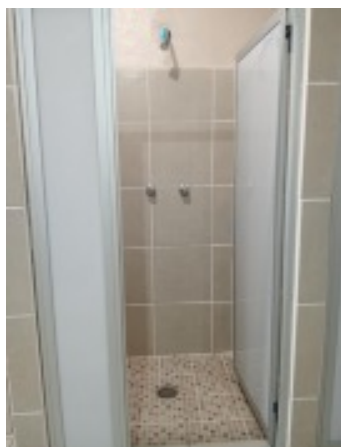
Repairing men's showers: In November, we covered the parts and labor to renovate the men's showers in the upper dormitory. They were in a state of disrepair with flimsy paneling that was cracked and degrading. They were covered with hanging curtains. All of this contributed to significant issues with water leakage. The new showers are tiled with closing doors to help provide for the men's dormitory that can house up to 50 men.

Total cost: **\$1,423.83**

Men's Showers Before:



Men's Showers After:



4. ACCOMPANIMENT

We accompany migrants in our ministry in a variety of ways, mostly informally through our sacramental ministry and pastoral counseling. In some cases, our accompaniment becomes more formal through explicit actions we take to help a migrant advance in their journey.

4a. Vulnerable Cases

In 2024, the primary way for asylum seekers to enter the U.S. from Mexico was with an appointment from the smart phone app CBP One.¹ The wait could take as long as 7-10 months to get an appointment. For vulnerable populations, the extended wait heightened their risk. To aid vulnerable populations (late-term pregnant women, people with missed appointments because of kidnapping, medically vulnerable cases, and people actively pursued by the cartel), we worked through advocacy channels to get them access to relief in the U.S. in a more expedited way by presenting to CBP at a bridge without a CBP One appointment. In FY 23-24, we helped nearly 1,500 people through these efforts.

Unfortunately, on June 4, 2024, President Biden issued an Executive Order that included an Interim Final Rule (IFR) titled “Securing the Border” that went into immediate effect. We were advised that none of our vulnerable cases would be processed at the limit line. This terminated our program for this population. We had over one hundred people in the process. We had to notify them all that we could no longer help them.

4b. Missed Appointments

Since June 2023, we have continued to see the results of large-scale kidnapping of migrants by the local cartel in northern Mexico. Some get taken directly off buses heading to the border, others are apprehended outside the airport or turned over by collaborating taxis. Some local discount hotels are monitored by the cartel, and people have been kidnapped directly from their hotel rooms. Others have been picked up on the streets in the downtown area.

¹ On January 20th, 2025, a notification was sent to all users of CBP One that they app would no longer be used for programming appointment to enter the U.S. and all scheduled appointments had been canceled. This closed off the only form of legal entry offered by the U.S. government to asylum seekers.

Once kidnapped, families of the migrants have to pay a ransom (usually upwards of \$2,000/person, including for every child). They are often robbed of some or all of their belongings. Since early 2024, the reports of violence have increased, including torture, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Some of the migrants were kidnapped as they came to the border for their scheduled appointment with CBP One. When their family could not collect the money for the ransom in time, migrants would miss their CBP One appointment.

When the Executive Order on June 4th put an end to our ability to help this population, we immediately began local advocacy efforts. In late July, after six weeks of stoppage, we were given permission by the port of Hidalgo/Reynosa to begin sending cases of migrants with missed appointments for kidnapping.

We had greater difficulties with the U.S. authorities at the port of Brownsville/Matamoros. After the tragic death of a sick migrant in mid-September, the port agreed to begin taking cases of migrants with missed appointments for kidnapping.

Hidalgo Port of Entry (Reynosa):

| Groups | Total People |
|--------|--------------|
| 27 | 63 |

Brownsville Port of Entry (Matamoros):

| Groups | Total People |
|--------|--------------|
| 33 | 77 |

4c. Restoring Registries and Confirming Appointments

In our work with migrants, we encountered many people who had lost their original registry with the CBP One app. Sometimes they had been kidnapped and their phone was not returned to them, so they could not access the account. Other times, they had mistakenly deleted it, or deleted it to open a newer registry. We began to offer help

recovering older registries for people who had lost access. This helped many migrants to get an appointment with their restored registry.

In some limited cases, we encountered migrants who were unable to confirm their appointment with CBP One. These were usually cases where one or more member of the travel group was no longer present because they had an emergency or passed away. When we encountered people who could not confirm their appointments, we would submit the case to CBP to have the appointment confirmed.

Restoring Registries and Confirming Appointments with CBP One:

| Groups | Total People |
|--------|--------------|
| 54 | 131 |



5. ADVOCACY

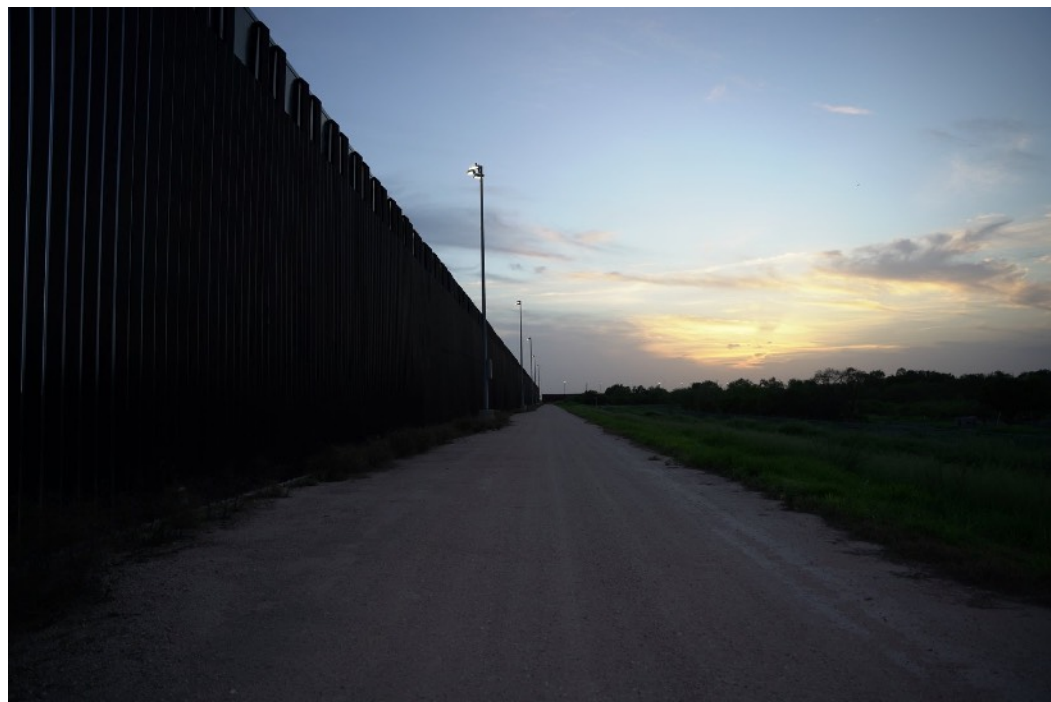
Our advocacy efforts occur at both a local level and a national level.

5a. Local Advocacy

Our local advocacy efforts begin with our collaboration with the **Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Welcoming Committee**, which is comprised of a variety of NGO's active on both sides of the border. We have a weekly call and share regular updates and breaking news. Sometimes this group coordinates advocacy efforts or works together to develop strategies to help the migrant population of the area.

In October, we began having weekly safety meetings held virtually to discuss safety concerns in both Matamoros and Reynosa. These calls led to the commitment to provide a bus for migrants from the airport in Matamoros to local shelters, and a secure escort to accompany migrants with CBP One appointments to the bridge from Senda de Vida, one of the largest shelters in Reynosa. These were targeted efforts to reduce the kidnapping rates in both cities and to provide increased safety to shelter staff.

Along with collaborating with local organizations, our advocacy efforts also include direct communication with government authorities for both Mexico and the United States. We have contacts with local INM officials (*Instituto Nacional de Migración* in Mexico) and with CBP in the U.S. We coordinate with them in a variety of instances, especially for all the cases of people who missed their appointment with CBP One because of a kidnapping.



Here are a few examples of local advocacy efforts in action:



Assisting migrants with missed appointments to present at a Port of Entry:

Carlos and Bella are a married couple who traveled together from Venezuela to the U.S. to seek safety. They waited for their appointment with CBP One in Mexico City and flew up to border a few days before their appointment. When they arrived at the airport in Reynosa, they got in a taxi driven by a young woman. She stopped at a gas station in route, and left the vehicle to go inside. While she was gone, a young man entered the car and told them that they had to come with him. He informed them that they had been kidnapped by the cartel. While their families sought out money to pay the ransom, they missed their CBP One appointment. Once they were released, they went to Casa del Migrante in Reynosa. We sent advanced information to CBP about their case and, once it was confirmed, we notified Mexican immigration authorities that Carlos and Bella would be presenting at the bridge. The next day, they were processed for entry into the U.S.

Referrals to Legal Counsel:

Maria is a single mom from Mexico traveling with her five daughters (ages 3-17). She was fleeing a situation of domestic violence, and waited for a CBP One appointment. After seven months of waiting, they received their appointment and entered the US in May 2024. Since they are fleeing a situation of abuse and abandonment by the father, the five girls could be eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) classification. If SIJ classification is granted, they could qualify for lawful permanent residency in the U.S. This is a complicated, and often costly, legal process. We referred the case of Maria and her daughters to the pro bono legal team at Ropes and Gray LLP. The pro bono team agreed to take on their case and find the resources and partners needed to submit asylum applications for the family and request SIJ classification for the five girls.

ROPES & GRAY



Referrals to Kids In Need of Defense (KIND):

Evelyn is a young woman from Honduras who traveled to the US with her 12-year-old nephew, Isaac. Isaac’s mother is living outside Atlanta, Georgia. They arrived at Casa del Migrante in Reynosa with their CBP One appointment, but were unaware that the US government would treat Isaac as an unaccompanied minor (UC) since he was not traveling with a parent or legal guardian. We sent the case to Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), which provides legal orientations for unaccompanied minors. Their legal team was able to call Evelyn and explain to her what would happen to Isaac when they presented for their CBP One appointment. They also spoke with Isaac’s mom in Georgia to explain the reunification process. From July to December 2024, we referred a total of six cases to KIND for orientations regarding cases involving UCs.

Reactivating registries with CBP One:

Maritza is a single mother from Venezuela traveling with her three children. When she reached northern Mexico, she was kidnapped along with her kids. After paying the ransom, she was released, but her cell phone was not returned to her. When she bought a new phone, she was not able to access her CBP One account. When we met her in November, she had been in Mexico for over seven months, but her new registry was only a couple of months old. It was highly unlikely that she would get an appointment before the change of government on January 20th with this newer registry. We took her information and sent it to a contact with CBP who was able to restore the old registry. With her restored registry, she got her appointment just a few weeks later. She entered the U.S. on January 4th, 2025 with her three kids, just two weeks before the application was shut down and all appointments were canceled.



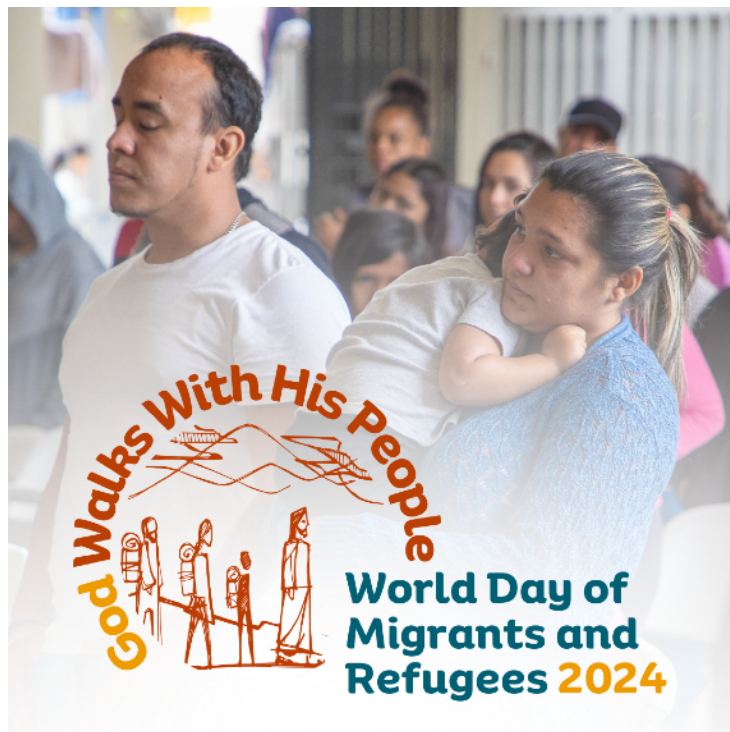
5b. National Advocacy

We occasionally collaborate with other organizations to join in national advocacy efforts for asylum protections and immigration reform.

[God Walks With His People: World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2024](#)

(September 23-29, 2024)

- Joint action in the year of a U.S. election as part of the “Committing to Stand with Migrants” campaign, organized by Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN), the Office of Justice and Ecology for the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S., and Jesuit ministries on the border
- The campaign including six audio reflections of people sharing their stories of migration or working with migrants. It also included prayers and reflection questions for people to join in solidarity and prayer.
- We shared photos from our ministry that were featured on the website. We also shared the contacts for Santos and Noehlia, who recounted their story of fleeing Nicaragua after the government began to attack the Church and the Jesuits, who they had both worked for. Brian also recorded audio to serve as the host of the six-part series.



6. COMMUNICATIONS

We utilize a variety of media forms to promote our ministry, including a podcast, a newsletter, social media, and media interviews for news articles.

6a. The Jesuit Border Podcast

The Jesuit Border Podcast explores the humanitarian response along the U.S.-Mexico border from a Catholic perspective. It aims to humanize the migrant experience by sharing stories from our ministry and highlighting some of the amazing work that people are doing along the border and throughout the country. It is edited and produced by the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the U.S. and hosted by *The Jesuit Post*. We recorded, produced, and released the seventh season from October-December 2024, which was comprised of seven episodes.



Statistical snapshot of the podcast:

- 31,000+ all time plays
 - 4,000+ plays since July 1, 2024
- 48 episodes over seven seasons, plus 9 bonus episodes
- Top five episodes (as of 1/13/24)

| | |
|--|---------------|
| S1E1- Bishop Flores, Diocese of Matamoros | 1,678 listens |
| S4E7- James Martin, SJ, America Magazine | 1,151 listens |
| S1E6- Sr. Norma Pimentel, Catholic Charities RGV | 963 listens |
| S1E2- Nancy Dimas, Project Dignity Legal Team | 893 listens |
| S2E7- Jennifer Harbury, Angry Tías | 810 listens |

6b. Newsletter

We periodically publish a newsletter that gets sent out electronically. The newsletter promotes new episodes of the podcasts, shares stories and photos from our ministry, and asks for donations and financial support.

- 12 newsletters sent from July-December 2024
 - 84 newsletters sent since November 2021

- 774 subscribers as of January 2025
 - 39 new subscribers since July 1, 2024
 - 60% open rate
 - 4-10% click rate

6c. Social Media

In October 2023, we created social media accounts for Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook (Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries)

- 249 followers, 134 likes
 - 81 new followers, 64 new likes since July 1, 2024
- 22 posts from July-December 2024
 - 68 posts all time



Instagram (@delcaminojesuit)

- 395 followers, 47 following
 - 164 new followers, 14 new following since July 1, 2024
- 15 posts from July-December 2024
 - 50 posts all time

6d. Media Interviews

On occasion, we are interviewed by news media about the border, or we are accompanied by people who write articles about their experience with us. This included a lengthy profile in *The New Yorker* that was published in August and written by Jack Herrera, an independent journalist based out of Austin, TX.

Here are the articles beginning with the most recent:

- [“Today was just crushing,” border priest says while fielding questions from concerned migrants](#) (1/20/25) by Polo Sandoval (CNN)
- [Trump promises to deport ‘millions and millions’ of immigrants; dismayed local advocates vow a fight](#) (1/20/25) by Guilia McDonnell Nieto del Rio (*Boston Globe*)

- [‘Open Border’ Myth Couldn’t Be Further From Migrants’ Real Experience](#) (12/13/24) by Juan Wulff (*Newsweek*)
- [A Jesuit border priest on Trump and the plight of migrants](#) (11/21/24) with hosts Zac Davis and Ashley McKinless (*Jesuitical* podcast of *America Media*)
- [La Iglesia Que Migra](#) (11/20/24) with host Cinthya Santos Briones (podcast with Hispanic Theological Initiative)
- [Migrants hope, pray to enter the US ahead of presidential inauguration](#) (11/19/24) by David Agren (*OSV News*)
- [The other border crisis: How Mexico is enforcing migration policies ahead of the U.S. election](#) (10/30/24) by David Agren (*America Media*)
- [Why This Journalist Profiled a Jesuit for The New Yorker with Jack Herrera](#) (8/29/24) with host Michael Jordan Laskey (*AMDG* podcast of the JCCU)
- [Why so many Haitian migrants at the border are still Massachusetts bound, despite the state’s ‘we’re full’ message](#) (8/15/24) by Guilia McDonnell Nieto del Rio (*Boston Globe*)
- [The Betrayal of American Border Policy](#) (8/8/24) by Jack Herrera (*The New Yorker*)



La Iglesia Que Migra

Father Brian Strassburger and Father Flavio Bravo discuss the Jesuits' efforts on behalf of migrants in the Rio Grande Valley with artist and anthropologist Cinthya Santos Briones



7. PRESENTATIONS

We are often invited to give talks and retreats related to our ministry. It is an opportunity to highlight our work and shed light on the border reality. Here are the presentations we gave from July-December 2024.

New Jersey State Bar Association (New Jersey) 8/23/24. Panelist Brian Strassburger, SJ

- “Immigration Along the US/Mexico Border,” panel for Continuing Legal Education
- 20 participants (virtual)

Hispanic Catholic Conference (Victoria, TX) 9/14/24. Presentation by Brian Strassburger, SJ

- “En nuestra pobreza se encuentra la riqueza de la Iglesia” (“In our poverty we encounter the richness of the Church”) presentation
- 300 participants (in person)

Catholic Education Network to Experience Rome and Synodality 10/7/24. Presentation by Brian Strassburger, SJ

- Presentation on immigration and the border reality for students going to Rome during the Synod
- 5 students (virtual)

Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition 10/9/24. Presentation by Brian Strassburger, SJ

- Town Hall presentation on Del Camino
- 40 participants (virtual)

Red Mass and reception for the legal community (Brownsville, TX) 10/24/24.

Presentation by Brian Strassburger, SJ

- “Searching for Hope on the US/Mexico Border,” presentation to the legal community
- 100 people (in person)

Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (Washington, D.C.) 10/27/24. Presentation by Joseph Nolla, SJ

- “Accompanying Survivors of Kidnapping: Lessons for Ministry”

DEL CAMINO JESUIT BORDER MINISTRIES

- 200 participants (in person)

St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church (New York, NY) 11/6 – 11/7/24. Visited by Brian Strassburger, SJ

- Presentation on Del Camino to parishioners, 30 people (in person)
- Caritas Concert to benefit Del Camino, 200 people (in person)

Binational Catholic Leaders School (Brownsville, TX and Matamoros, MX) 11/12/24.

Panelist Brian Strassburger, SJ

- “Mirada del Discípulo Misionero. Diagnóstico de la realidad: Migración en la frontera” (“The Look from a Missionary Disciple. A Diagnostic of the reality: Migration on the border”), panel presentation and discussion
- 50 participants (virtual)

Columbia University (New York, NY) 12/2/24. Panelist Brian Strassburger, SJ

- “What’s happening at the U.S.-Mexico Border?” panel presentation and discussion
- 25 students (hybrid, virtual and in person)

Retreat for Aspiring Deacons (Brownsville, TX) 12/6 – 12/7/24. Given by Flavio Bravo, SJ

- Annual retreat for the men who are preparing for the diaconate, along with their spouses
- 70 participants (in person)

Holy Family Catholic Church (Port St. Lucie, FL) 12/13 – 12/14/24. Given by Flavio Bravo, SJ

- Parish Advent Retreat
- 100 participants (in person)



8. BORDER IMMERSION EXPERIENCES

We are contacted occasionally to help host immersion groups from schools and parishes coming to the border, along with welcoming Jesuits in formation.

8a. School and Parish Groups

St. Joseph's Preparatory School in Philadelphia, PA, was scheduled to bring a group of a dozen students with chaperones for a weeklong immersion trip in from July 7-13. Unfortunately, there were forecasts for Hurricane Beryl to strike the region on July 7th or 8th. The administration decided to postponed the trip until Spring Break 2025. Thankfully for all of us in this region, the storm turned and did not impact the Rio Grande Valley.

Boston College High School in Boston, MA, sent a small group to visit from July 9-17. Rising senior Juan Wulff first visited us on the border with his school in February 2024, and that visit inspired him to apply for the Father John Begley, SJ, Scholarship at BC High. Juan used the funding from the scholarship for a journalistic research project that highlights the humanity and dignity of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico Border. A team of three spent a week with us to take photos and record interviews. The project is titled: [Through Their Eyes](#).



8b. Jesuits in Formation

During the summer, we welcomed four Jesuits in formation to spend a few weeks with us in our ministry: Josh Hinchie, SJ; Joseph Seiter, SJ; Sullivan McCormick, SJ; and Manuel Luna Vega, SJ. We also had extended visits from Fr. Robenson Siquitte, SJ (CAN) and an Augustinian priest, Fr. Dan Madden, OSA.

In the fall semester, we had a Jesuit novice, Tom Laughlin, nSJ, spend six weeks with Del Camino for one of his novitiate experiments.



9. COLLABORATORS

We collaborate extensively in our ministry in the Rio Grande Valley. Here are the details regarding our primary collaborators and the manner in which we collaborate.

Catholic Diocese of Brownsville

Bishop Daniel Flores

The Catholic Diocese of Brownsville serves over a million Catholics living in the Rio Grande Valley, an area that encompasses Brownsville and McAllen, TX. The Diocese has 72 parishes and 44 missions, with 82 diocesan priests.

How we collaborate: Primarily, we serve as parochial vicars at San Felipe de Jesús parish in Brownsville. We also do supply work at local parishes as our schedule allows. We participate in the bi-annual priests' assembly. We also help out with diocesan events, like offering retreats for deacons and the diocesan staff, and we occasionally give talks by request, including formation for lay leadership. Men in the formation process for the diaconate often collaborate with us in our migrant ministry, including joining us at shelters in northern Mexico.

Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley

Executive Director: Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ

Primary Contacts at the Humanitarian Respite Center: Rosa Pallais and Ana Bulnes

Humanitarian Respite Center (HRC): The HRC is a shelter in McAllen offering temporary shelters for migrants processed by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and released into the U.S. Migrants at the HRC are arranging transportation to their final destination in the US. The HRC usually has between 100-300 people/day

How we collaborate: We make visits to the HRC every Tuesday and Thursday to greet people, celebrate Mass, and volunteer at the hygiene counter to distribute hygiene products to migrants.

Diocese of Matamoros Immigration

Bishop Eugenio Andrés Lira Rugarcía

Director for Immigration: Fr. Francisco Gallardo

Casa del Migrante Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Director: Sr. Maria Tello, DC

Casa del Migrante Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe is a shelter in Reynosa, Mexico offering long-term shelter for migrants waiting for a CBP One appointment to enter the US. It is run by the Diocese of Matamoros and staffed by the Daughters of Charity. A community of Redemptorists supports Casa del Migrate as well, and we collaborate regularly with them. The shelter has 140 beds, but usually houses 200+ migrants. The shelter prioritizes women and children, including pregnant women.

How we collaborate: We make visits every Tuesday and Thursday to greet people, celebrate Mass, inform people and respond to questions. We also collaborated with the sisters and Redemptorists to help people who missed their appointments from kidnapping. We are often joined on Tuesdays and Thursdays by a Marist brother and IHM, Mercy, and Franciscan sisters from the U.S.

Pumarejo Shelter

Previous Director: José Luis Elias

Current Director: Betty Dominguez

The Pumarejo shelter in Matamoros offers long-term shelter for migrants waiting for a CBP One appointment to enter the U.S. It is run with the Diocese of Matamoros with a lay director. It has a population of 200-1,000 people living in tents. They receive families and couples but not single adults.

How we collaborate: We make visits every Sunday and Wednesday to greet people, celebrate Mass, inform people and respond to questions. We also distribute donated food and shoes, along with occasional humanitarian aid and cold weather clothing. We are joined every Wednesday by Dominican Sisters of the Presentation from Brownsville.

Senda de Vida and Senda 2

Director: Pastor Hector Silva

Sub-directors of Senda 2: Angela and Miguel

Senda 2 is a shelter in Matamoros offering long-term shelter for migrants waiting for a CBP One appointment to enter the U.S. It is run by the evangelical pastor Hector Silva who oversees both Senda de Vida and Senda 2. Angela and Miguel are the sub-directors of Senda 2. The population of Senda 2 varies from 300-2,000 people, with the majority living in tents.

How we collaborate: We make visits every Tuesday and Thursday to greet people, celebrate Mass, inform people and respond to questions. We also drop off humanitarian aid at the kitchen and bodega to be used there or distributed to migrants in the shelter. We are joined occasionally on Thursdays by IHM, Mercy, and Franciscan sisters from the U.S.

Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Welcoming Committee

Coordinator: Tom Cartwright

Collaborator: Chris Rickerd

The RGV Welcoming Committee is a coalition of local NGO's working with migrants on both sides of the border in the Rio Grande Valley, including legal, medical, and humanitarian organizations. Here are some of the NGO's that participate:

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), Doctors Without Borders, Good Neighbor Settlement House, Team Brownsville, Ayudandoles a Triunfar, Sidewalk School, Solidarity Engineering, La Posada Providencia

How we collaborate: We join for a conference call every Monday morning to offer local updates and coordinate responses, with occasional guest speakers to inform us on particular topics. We also participate in a WhatsApp chat group with regular messages of current events and important updates. We also collaborate extensively with Tom Cartwright and Chris Rickerd on an assortment of daily issues based on our interfacing with migrants.

Ayudándoles a Triunfar

Director: Glady Cañas

Ayudándoles a Triunfar is an NGO in Matamoros providing resources to migrants, educating them about the border reality, and addressing vulnerable cases.

How we collaborate: We coordinate with Glady for updates to migrants and referrals of vulnerable cases. We occasionally join her for protest events, information sessions with migrants, or addressing acute needs like cold weather fronts.

Women religious in the Rio Grande Valley

Dominican Sisters of the Presentation
Sr. Glenda, Sr. Marina, Sr. Gloria, Sr. Claudia

Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters
Sr. Mary Elaine Anderson, Sr. Rose Kuhn, Sr. Carmen

Mercy Sisters
Sr. Terry Saetta, Sr. Patricia Mulderick

Franciscan Sisters
Sr. Mary

Marist Brother
Br. Miguel Garcia

How we collaborate: We join together in ministry in Brownsville, McAllen, Reynosa and Matamoros to form a dynamic apostolic team of men and women religious.

Southwest Key Programs

Volunteer Coordinator for Religious Services: Marcos Ramirez

Southwest Key Programs contracts with the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement to house migrants that are unaccompanied children in the U.S. while their sponsors are vetted and approved.

How we collaborate: We celebrate Mass weekly at two shelters: Casa Rio Grande every Monday, and Casa Norma Linda every Wednesday. The Mass at Casa Rio Grande was suspended starting in September due to a lack of population. We also celebrate Mass every Sunday at 3:30pm at San Felipe in a special Mass offered for migrants from a variety of the local shelters, followed by cake and soda. This ministry at San Felipe is led by the Dominican Sisters of the Presentation and volunteers from the parish. Other volunteers also come to help and interact with the unaccompanied migrants, including students from St. Joseph's Academy (the local Marist Catholic high school) and men who are in the deacon formation program of the Diocese.

Other organizations that we interface with regularly:

Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

CBP Primary Contact: Rodney Harris

How we collaborate: We participate in advocacy calls with DHS and CBP to interface with leadership and to advocate for migrants based on the on-the-ground experience and how policies and procedures impact their lives. We have also interfaced with developers of the CBP One app to discuss common issues and suggest useful changes and updates based on migrant experiences and feedback.

Human Rights First

Director: Eleanor Acer

Primary Contact: Christina Ascencio

How we collaborate: They accompany us on their visits to the border and speak with us to document human rights concerns.

Danish Refugee Council

Primary Contact: Shantal Gamiz

How we collaborate: We are collaborating on offering legal talks in Mexican shelters.

South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR)

Director: Laura Peña

Primary Contact: Luis Homes

How we collaborate: We refer cases in Mexico to ProBAR for legal consultation. We also refer cases in the U.S. of migrants that are detained in local ICE facilities.

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Primary Contacts: Lauren Keenan, Nicholas Stefaniak

How we collaborate: We refer cases of unaccompanied children in Mexico for legal consultation.

Ozanam Center, Inc.

Director: Victor Maldonado

Primary Contact: Myrna Garza

How we collaborate: The Ozanam Center is the primary shelter for migrants entering the U.S. with a CBP One appointment at the Brownsville Port of Entry. We occasionally refer migrants to this center and visit them there.

Jesuit Refugee Services-USA (JRS-USA)

Primary Contact: Clara Sayans

Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN)

Director: Christopher Kerr

Kino Border Initiative (KBI)

Director: Joanna Williams

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in San Diego, CA

Pastor: Scott Santarosa, SJ

Sacred Heart Parish in El Paso, TX

Pastor: Rafael Garcia, SJ

Jesuit Conference of Canada and the US: Office of Justice and Ecology

Director: Chris Kellerman, SJ

Immigration: Harrison Harvey

How we collaborate: We join in conference calls to share experiences, and coordinate joint actions. We participate in the annual Jesuit Migration Network conference.

Red Jesuita para Migrantes: Central America and North America (RJM-CANA)

Director: Lizbeth Gramajo

How we collaborate: We share a WhatsApp group and listserv to share updates across the network. We join in occasional conference calls to learn and share experiences. We participated in the annual RJM-CANA meeting, which was held in Ciudad Juarez from September 29 – October 4, 2024.

Guadalupe Regional Middle School (Nativity-model middle school)

President: Jennifer Rose

Principal: Dr. Virginia Miller

St. Joseph’s Academy (Marist high school)

President: Melissa Valadez

Director of Campus Ministry: Br. Ryan Richter

How we collaborate: We celebrate Mass periodically at these two local Catholic schools. We also help with occasional penance services and retreats. Jesuit novice Tom Laughlin, nSJ, worked part-time at Guadalupe during his experiment with us from October-December. Also, students from St. Joseph’s Academy volunteer at San Felipe de Jesús at the Mass with unaccompanied minors on Sundays.



10. FINANCES

Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries is run out of Casa Miguel Pro in Brownsville, TX, which is a sub-community of the Houston Jesuit Community. Our community income is primarily our salaries from the Diocese of Brownsville, TX, along with occasional stipends or guest per diem. Our community expenses include rent, utilities, food, and auto expenses.

| Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Profit and Loss | |
| | FY24-25 July-Dec |
| | Total - Fiscal YTD |
| Income | |
| Revenue | |
| Monthly Gifts | \$ 6,370.00 |
| One-time Gifts | \$ 35,870.00 |
| Major Gifts | \$ 36,000.00 |
| Stipends | \$ - |
| Total Revenue | \$ 78,240.00 |
| Total Income | \$ 78,240.00 |
| Expenses | |
| Auto Expense | |
| Fuel | \$ 1,705.69 |
| Maintenance | \$ 2,803.40 |
| Border Passes | \$ 1,051.01 |
| Auto Insurance | \$ 866.22 |
| Total Auto Expense | \$ 6,426.32 |
| Support | |
| Reynosa Support | \$ 17,895.44 |
| Matamoros Support | \$ 3,135.35 |
| Cell Phones | \$ 2,000.00 |
| Bibles | \$ 1,254.66 |
| Total Support Expense | \$ 24,285.45 |
| Communications | |
| Newsletter | \$ 194.81 |
| Podcast | \$ 410.98 |
| Total Communications | \$ 605.79 |
| Office | |
| Office Expenses | \$ 879.02 |
| Total Office | \$ 879.02 |
| Conferences & Travel | |
| Conference Fees | \$ - |
| Travel | \$ 1,956.29 |
| Total Conferences & Travel | \$ 1,956.29 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 34,152.87 |
| Net Income | \$ 44,087.13 |
| Opening Balance, July 1, 2024 | \$ 87,783.70 |
| Total Surplus/(Deficit) | \$ 131,870.83 |

The income for Del Camino is primarily comprised of donations. We have regular monthly givers, and receive one-time gifts. In December, we received a \$36,000 gift from St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Centennial, CO from their stewardship committee.

The expenses for Del Camino include our auto expenses, humanitarian aid to shelters, communications expenses for our newsletter and podcast, office expenses, and some costs for conference fees and travel to events like the Ignatian Family Teach-In and meetings of Jesuit migration networks.

On December 31st, 2024, we had a surplus of **\$131,870.83**.



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