

75 Faith Leaders go on “Reverse Caravan” Pilgrimage to Examine Root Causes in Honduras

Delegation will spend a week meeting with communities confronting extractive industries and human rights abuses that are forcing people to flee their homes

Contact: Miriam Noriega, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
mnoriega@im4humanintegrity.org, (510) 948-7899.

Oakland, CA, March 14, 2019– A delegation of nearly 75 faith leaders and immigrant justice advocates, mostly from the United States, and several joining from South America, will travel to Honduras March 18-25 to meet with grassroots and religious partners in order to more deeply understand the root causes of migration that have spurred thousands to flee Honduras.

The international, interfaith delegation will meet with organizations working and advocating for the rights of migrants and explore factors that are forcing migrants to flee, including violence; environmental degradation; and the ongoing effects of the 2009 coup, which opened the door for drug cartels, organized crime, corrupt security forces, and near total impunity for human rights violations. The delegation will meet with victims of the government-sponsored repression following the unconstitutional, fraudulent election of November 2017 (supported by the U.S.) and meet with communities fighting against displacement caused by extractive industries and those impacted by human rights violations.

“The migrant caravan from Central America is a modern-day Exodus. As people of faith, we cannot close the borders of our hearts to God’s people, rather we must walk with them, learn from them, and together address the root causes that force so many to take unimaginable risks for the sake of their families.” said Sister Ann Scholz, Associate Director for Social Mission of the Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR) an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic sisters in the United States representing nearly 39,000 women religious.

“We envision a world where migration is not forced, nor criminalized, but rather understood as a choice for self determination and survival,” said Rev. Deborah Lee, Executive Director of Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, one of the national leaders in the Sanctuary Movement of over 1000 Sanctuary congregations. “It is for us to come face to face with our own country’s complicity in the root causes driving forced migration, such as our U.S. foreign policy in Honduras, combined with environmental devastation by national and multinational corporations.”

The date of the delegation visit will coincide with the 39th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Oscar Romero, who was assassinated for his defense of the poor and speaking out on the repression by government forces in El Salvador on March 24, 1980. The delegation will commemorate the anniversary with a theological forum on how the teachings of the slain Archbishop of San Salvador are being applied in Honduras today.

“We go to Honduras carrying the spirit of Saint Oscar Romero and Berta Caceres on the anniversary of their martyrdoms.. They both called for an end to the repression,” said Jose Artiga, Director of the SHAREe Foundation which has a 40-year history of accompaniment and advocacy in El Salvador. “Saint Romero is with the people of Honduras today who are struggling for a dignified life and an environmentally sustainable future for their country.”

“It is a privilege to participate in a delegation that observes, listens and comes to a deeper understanding of root causes of immigration,” said Sister Kathleen Erickson, RSM, a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the U.S., another co-sponsor of the delegation. “We go to gain more awareness of the connection between U.S. policies and their effects on the lives of people in impoverished countries.”

The interfaith delegation will include Jewish, Buddhist and Christian leaders from the Interfaith Movement For Human Integrity, representatives of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Sisters of Mercy of the U.S. and South America, and a number of other Catholic congregations of sisters, SHARE El Salvador, CARECEN, and others.