

# Mercy Border Immersion Experience

April 21-26, 2024, El Paso, TX, US and Juarez, CI, MX

The Sisters of Mercy's **Chapter 2017 Recommitment: Called to New Consciousness** reaffirmed the commitment to "*act in solidarity*" with immigrants and refugees, and to "*continue our transformation toward greater integrity of word and deed.*"

In light of this call, and in response to the suffering caused by restrictions being placed on asylum seekers at the U.S.–Mexico border, as well as the increased anti-immigrant sentiment, violence, and racial hatred directed at immigrants, a delegation to the border is being organized by Mercy's Justice Team in collaboration with the Columban Mission Center in El Paso, Texas, U.S.

## Purpose of trip

The immersion delegation will be educational and include time for reflection. Participants will be expected to **return to their ministries and their communities to help raise awareness about immigration and its root causes, as well as use their experience to engage in advocacy and educate others.** Together we will:

- Deepen understanding of the current situation at the U.S.–Mexico border, including the obstacles to asylum processing, and how church and humanitarian groups are responding.
- Witness conditions in Mexico (Juarez, CI); learn about the desperation and vulnerabilities on the MX side.
- Learn about the root causes of migration, and how U.S. policies have contributed to the spiraling violence and poverty from which people are fleeing.
- Reflect on how to make these realities known more in Mercy and in the U.S. We will strategize on ways to raise consciousness and bring greater depth to the polarizing public discourse on immigration: helping shift the conversation to one of unity and compassion, rather than division, racism, and hatred.

## Logistics

- **COVID-19 protocols:** All participants **MUST** be fully vaccinated and show proof of vaccination. Trip organizers will monitor COVID-19 levels, follow CDC recommendations for masking, and work with local host organizations on testing and safety requirements. All plans are subject to change based on developments with COVID-19.
- **Airport:** El Paso, TX (travel dates: April 21 and 26. Lodging, dorm style, at Columban Mission Center)
- **Cost:** Approximately \$650 to cover the program, food, van, and housing. This is in addition to arranging your own travel to/from El Paso. Interested participants may want to ask your respective Mercy Ministries/Communities to sponsor your participation. Let us know if you need fundraising ideas.
- **Itinerary** (proposed): meetings with border ministries and human rights organizations, border patrol officers, and church and humanitarian groups serving immigrants. We will cross into Juarez, CI, MX for one day to meet with Mercy and church leaders there (passport needed). If you do not currently have a valid passport, please reach out to the logistics coordinator.

**Application** ([go to https://bit.ly/MercyBorder2024](https://bit.ly/MercyBorder2024)) due by **March 15, 2024**

**Delegation leader:** Jean Stokan

**For more information,** contact the Justice Team at [justice@sistersofmercy.org](mailto:justice@sistersofmercy.org)



# Mercy Border Immersion Experience with ARISE

November 3–8, 2024, Rio Grande Valley of South Texas (McAllen, Alamo)

*The Sisters of Mercy's **Chapter 2017 Recommitment: Called to New Consciousness** reaffirmed the commitment to “act in solidarity” with immigrants and refugees, and to “continue our transformation toward greater integrity of word and deed.”*

In light of this call and Mercy's Critical Concern of Immigration, as well as in response to the suffering being caused by restrictions placed on asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border and the increased anti-immigrant sentiment and violence directed at immigrants, a delegation to the US-Mexico border in South Texas is being organized by the Mercy Justice Team and hosted by **ARISE**, a community-based program that works with *colonia* families to strengthen their communities along the borderlands. ARISE is a co-sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy and staffed by Mercy associates. Mercy educational institutions are invited to send a delegate and help with financing.

## Purpose of trip

The immersion delegation will be educational and include time for reflection. Participants will be expected to **return to their ministries and their communities to help raise awareness about immigration and its root causes, as well as use their experience to engage in advocacy and educating others.** Together we will:

- Deepen understanding of the current situation at the US–Mexico border and how church and humanitarian groups are responding.
- Witness conditions on the Mexico side and learn about the desperation driving people to risk the journey.
- Learn about how U.S. policies have contributed to conditions of violence and poverty from which people are fleeing.
- Reflect on how to make these realities known more in Mercy and in the U.S. We will strategize on ways to raise consciousness and bring greater depth to the polarizing public discourse on immigration: helping shift the conversation to one of unity and compassion, rather than division, racism, and hatred.

## Logistics

- **Covid 19 protocols:** All participants **MUST be fully vaccinated** and show proof of vaccination. Trip organizers will monitor covid levels, follow CDC recommendations for masking, and work with local host organizations on testing and safety requirements. All plans are subject to change based on developments with COVID 19.
- **Airport:** McAllen, TX (MFE). Travel dates are Nov. 3 & 8 and each delegate will make their own travel arrangements to McAllen.
- **Cost:** Approximately \$650–750/person to cover hotel, food, van, and ARISE fees. Participants are responsible for covering their costs, including asking Mercy institutions for sponsorship. *Let us know if you need additional ideas for fundraising.*
- **Itinerary** (proposed). Meeting with ARISE staff and visits to their community organizing centers; observing the border wall; meeting with border patrol agents and visiting detention centers; visiting immigrant rights and church-based refugee centers; and walking across the international bridge into Matamoras, Mexico (**passport** is needed to cross).

Application at <https://bit.ly/MercyBorder2024>. Deadline: **October 3, 2024**

Delegation Leader: Angie Howard-McParland

For more information, contact the Justice Team at [justice@sistersofmercy.org](mailto:justice@sistersofmercy.org).

