

## A Look Inside a California Detention Center for Immigration Processing



*Sisters Mary Ann Carla Costello, Sister Gina Marie Blunck and Sister Betty Mae Bienlein were among the delegation.*

On Wednesday, July 25, 2018, about twenty bishops, priests, women religious and lay persons were able to visit ICE (Immigration and Custom Enforcement) Detention Facility in Adelanto, California. During four sessions 357 people joined us for Mass, Reconciliation and fellowship. It was a Spirit-filled day for both those we visited and for those of us on the delegation who were privileged to witness the great faith of the detainees.

Since California is a border state between Mexico and the United States many people cross the board illegally. When caught they are held in these ICE centers. Adelanto houses 2,000 undocumented persons who await their fate: deportation to their country of origin or asylum status in the United States. Adelanto Detention Facility is a private for-profit facility where detainees are treated very much like prisoners. We could only enter the buildings carrying our driver's license which was taken from us in exchange for a badge to wear. Nearby jail buildings were surrounded by many layers of barbed wire and police protection.

The immigrants are from countries all over the world. Their average stay is about six weeks, although, many have been there for years. They are confused and frightened. Each person goes to trial and if they and their family have money, they can afford a lawyer. Sometimes these persons are granted asylum. Those without lawyers are often deported back to their countries where violence, unrest and death reign.

We heard many tearful stories of struggle, separation from family and suffering. We could offer our prayer and concern for all for them.

At the recent board meeting, the directors of the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters discussed the current situation regarding the separation of families who are coming to our borders to seek better lives for themselves, sharing the concern of many Americans for the children who will suffer the effects for years to come. Recognizing that the sisters are serving greater numbers of our brothers and sisters at this time, the fund recently offered over a half million dollars in grants to 16 sisters who work with projects on the Border States of Texas and California and in Mexico.

Learn more at <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-victorville-detainees-20180713-story.html>