

## Experiencing the Body of Christ at the Border



Last summer, in response to an appeal by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) to religious communities in the United States, Sister Shawn Marie Doyle SND from the California Province served as a volunteer for Annunciation House, a Catholic organization that accompanies migrant, homeless and economically vulnerable peoples at the U.S./Mexican border, providing services, advocacy and education. Many religious, including sisters from our U.S. provinces, responded to this call to the border.

Sister worked eight to ten-hour shifts, sorting clothing, making hygiene packs with small toiletries and wash cloths, cleaning bathrooms, helping in the kitchen preparing sandwiches and snacks for the migrants' long journey ahead, and lots of laundry! She was also asked to assist in transporting individuals to the airport or bus station to be reunited with friends or family. During her many trips she encountered people from all walks of life, each of them holding a story in their heart. Sister Shawn reminisced, "Taking people to the bus stop [or airport] was worth everything. I was a tiny piece of their journey." While she deeply appreciated these opportunities to be of service, she admitted, "my greatest reservation was not knowing enough Spanish."

Currently, Annunciation House helps to relieve overcrowding in the detention centers, serving approximately 3,500 refugees who are released from the centers each week. Each refugee receives a warm welcome, a clean bed, a change of clothes, food and the gift of hope.

During her two-week stay, Sister Shawn Marie learned many things about the border crisis and about herself. When asked what her biggest take away was, she smiled, saying, "My biggest take away is to be kind to each other. It's not an "us and they, it's we. " We are the Body of Christ!