

PRAY POSTED ON NOVEMBER 20, 2018

Pray for Ray Schellinger, Global Consultant for Immigrants and Refugees and for those who are in the Immigrant Caravan now arriving at the U.S. Border.



BOB SANTILLI

In his work as Global Consultant Ray networks with IM colleagues and international partners that serve with refugees and displaced peoples, helping to strengthen their ministries, find needed resources and build capacity. He works to construct bridges between U.S. and P.R. churches and these partners, providing opportunities to serve some of the most vulnerable people in the world. In addition, Ray hosts several teams per year in international cross-cultural settings where they can learn about the struggles of migrants, the realities of global immigration and border policies.

Ray writes – From the Caravan:

We have been told that they are criminals, terrorists in disguise. We have been told to fear them, and to turn them back, to refuse to allow them even to come to our door and ask for asylum.

I came to hear their stories.

I have spent the last several days sitting, walking, playing, and crying with the members of the caravan. I have been struck by their willingness to just hang out with me and talk. They are hopeful, yet full of questions about what the future holds. They are anxious to get moving again, but at the same time, afraid to leave.

As I look out upon the throng of people here, with so many human stories, and so much pain, I thought about Jesus' seeing the multitudes. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

So, I cry with them, and try to be a pastor, shepherd, for the few moments I have here, for the few people I can meet with.

We have talked about their families and friends, their communities and life back home. They have shared with me their hopes about what the future might hold, their unreachable dreams in an impossible future. Most of all they express their desire to just be able to find a home where they can be safe and know that they will receive a fair wage for a good day's work.

As I speak with the young men, they have shared the experiences of working in farms, factories and construction, often for less than four dollars a day. Quite a few said they earned less than half of that for 10-hour days of hard labor in the fields of the rural towns from where they come.

And then they tell me about the gangs who take it all away.

Every shop owner faces extortion and those who refuse to pay have their stores burned to the ground- or are murdered by the gangs which control their neighborhoods. Laborers are robbed of their pay more often than they can keep it. In rural Honduras, it seems that things have reached the point where it makes no sense to even try to work anymore. The people I speak with describe a lawless society where criminals are destroying every aspect of their communities. Every single person I spoke with named several close family members and friends killed by the gangs.

I asked one young man, Miguel, 17, why he was here. He responded, "I had two choices, to become a criminal or to leave. There is no other way to survive." His two friends, standing by his side, shook their heads in agreement as tears formed in their eyes. Carlos continued, "I didn't want to become a criminal, so that is why I am here."

Over and over again, I hear the same story. The young men in this caravan don't want to join the gangs. They don't want to hurt others the way their families and friends have been hurt. They don't ever want to have to take a life. They just want to work hard and earn enough to live a life of dignity.

For all those who have been told otherwise, I need to let you know- the men I have had the privilege of sharing this space with are not here because they are criminals; they are here because they refuse to be.

To my new-found friends from the caravan, sojourners with me along life's journey- thanks for allowing me to walk with you and to hold your stories in my heart. May God grant you the petition of your hearts. And someday soon, may God grant me the opportunity to welcome you into my home as you have so graciously welcomed me into yours.

