

A REFLECTION

CWS Blankets - Mother's Day

In downtown McAllen, Texas, the small city on the border with Mexico, a line of people make the short walk between the bus terminal and what looks to be an ordinary storefront. They are adult men and women, and children. They're not carrying anything except maybe a plastic bag with a few items. Many of them are smiling.

They are recently arrived immigrants, and the storefront they're walking into is the Catholic Charities Hospitality Center. That they were smiling would be surprising if you knew what they'd been through to get here. Many began their journey many hundreds of miles away, in places like Honduras and El Salvador. They fled violence and crippling poverty hoping to start over in a country known for hope and freedom. On the way they faced continued hunger, sleeplessness, and continued threats by people and groups targeting them because of the migrant and refugee situations. Many give up on the journey. For reasons of illness, exhaustion, or fear, many will turn around to face the continued hardships of their home communities, or perhaps to try again in the future.

For those who persist and finally, sometimes after many weeks of traveling by foot, freight train, or bus, they arrive at the closed border of a country that has made a policy of exclusion. If they make it across the border, they are taken into custody and must wait for an official to decide if they will be allowed to stay and make a formal appeal for asylum. Those that finally make it to this point, these are the lucky few who are taken by bus to the downtown McAllen bus station, and who make the shore walk to the hospitality center.

So you can see now why smiling faces might seem like a surprise, after all they've been through to make it this far. And inside the hospitality center they'll have a chance to rest for a bit. To have a healthy meal, to take a hot shower and a clean change of clothes. And everyone who comes in receives a blanket provided by CWS because of your generosity. A clean, new, warm blanket to take with them when they move on in a few hours or days.

The last chapter of Hebrews gives us some of the clearest and simplest exhortations on Christian ethics that we find in scripture: Do good, and share with those in need. These words come soon after another verse that shed even more light: Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

Do good, and share with those in need. By supporting CWS through the blankets program, we are doing just that. Providing a symbol of warmth and home to people who have traveled far from their home in search of a new one. Their journey isn't over yet; they will still have a formal hearing on their asylum claim and nothing is guaranteed, but for now they have the legal right to be in this country and to travel to be with their family and friends, CWS blankets in hand.