

origins

CNS documentary service

Homily at Mass at U.S.-Mexico Border

Cardinal O'Malley

With the backdrop a few feet away of the rusted iron slats of the 30-foot wall along the U.S.-Mexico border in Nogales, Ariz., Boston Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley and a dozen other bishops from three countries prayed April 1 for compassion and for a return to ideals that welcome immigrants. More than 300 people formed the outdoor congregation on the U.S. side of the border and hundreds more participated on the Mexico side, receiving Communion pressed into hands that stretched between the slats. Referring to a visit by Pope Francis last summer to the Italian island of Lampedusa where migrants from the Middle East and Africa try to enter Europe illegally, Cardinal O'Malley in his homily quoted the pope's comments about

"Despite the xenophobic ranting of a segment of the population, our immigrant population contributes mightily to the economy and well-being of the United States."

the "globalization of indifference." The Mass capped a two-day experience of the border region for bishops from as far away as Atlanta and Guatemala. "We come to the desert today because it is the road to Jericho," said Cardinal O'Malley in his homily. "It is traveled by many trying to reach the metropolis of Jerusalem. We come here today to be a neighbor and to find a neighbor in each of the suffering people who risk their lives and at times lose their lives in the desert." He added that the group came also to mourn the loss of "countless immigrants who risk their lives at the hands of the 'coyotes' (smugglers) and the forces of nature to come to the United States." Cardinal O'Malley delivered the homily largely in Spanish; the English version of the homily follows.

for 20 years I worked in Washington, D.C., with immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and from all over Latin America. The vast majority did not have the advantage of legal status. Many came to the States in great part fleeing the violence of the civil wars in Central America.

I often share the story of my first days at the *Centro Católico* when I was visited by a man from El Salvador who sat at my desk and burst into tears as he handed me a letter from his wife back in El Salvador, who remonstrated him for having abandoned her and their six children to penury and starvation.

When the man was able to compose him-
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