



Where Justice and Truth Meet

February 2018

“Vulnerable ourselves, we choose to stand with the poor, accompany those on the margins, and to work toward systems that promote life.” Together Birthing Anew, Chapter 2014

Called to “Stand With” Quite Literally

We as Springfield Dominicans named the prophetic call stated above in our commitment coming out of our last General Chapter. It was not a new calling, but rather a renewed commitment to the [call that brought us to Illinois](#) more than 140 years ago to stand with marginalized immigrant families in Jacksonville and work toward systems that promote life in the face of discrimination.

Last month, that call to stand with and accompany the poor came to us in the form of an invitation to participate in an emergency delegation of religious to Honduras, timed to coincide with the re-inauguration of President Juan Orlando Hernandez after a much-disputed and fraudulent election process. **Sister Kathlyn Mulcahy, a member of our leadership team with years of experience on mission in Peru,** responded to the call from Honduran religious and human rights defenders whose lives are threatened for accompanying those who are most vulnerable.

The delegation, in Honduras from January 24-30, took the call to “stand with” the vulnerable Honduran people crying out for justice quite literally. Carrying a banner which proclaimed in both English and Spanish, the text from Ruth 1:16, “*Your people will be my people,*” we [stood with the people](#) standing along the highway holding signs, flanked on both sides by national and military police with tear gas and automatic weapons; we listened and wept with families and victims of violent repression and ongoing persecution; we heard and shared the pain of families who missed their loved ones who were forced to migrate to escape violence and threats to their lives.

As the [Honduran election](#) campaign began more than a year ago, when members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal resisted President



Juan Orlando Hernández’s unconstitutional plan to run for reelection, they were dismissed and replaced with persons who would amend the Constitution and support his plan. The election on November 26 was marked by so many irregularities that the Organization of American States (OAS), as election monitors, issued a call for new elections. The day after the election, challenger Salvador Nasralla held a 5%-point lead with 60% of the vote counted. An electoral tribunal magistrate told Reuters, “The technical experts here say that it’s irreversible.” Over the following days the election tallies were repeatedly silenced for days or hours at a time, before it was finally announced that Hernández had won by approximately 50,000 votes. Professor Irfan Nooruddin for the OAS concluded that the “differences are too large to be generated by chance and are not easily explicable, raising doubts as to the veracity of the overall result.”

Human rights advocates have documented at least 34 deaths attributed to police or military repression of persons protesting the election results, in addition to persons wounded or arrested in peaceful protests. Delegation members with a long history of involvement in Central America drew many [comparisons with El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980’s.](#)



At the first protest witnessed by delegation members, a blocked road was met by live ammunition and tear gas. A delegation member picking up an empty tear gas canister discovered it was made in Homer City, PA, only an hour and a half from her home.



Peace prevailed at a second protest the next day. But protesters feared police would be “waiting to ambush” them along the 2-mile walk back to their village. So, the delegation accompanied them on the journey.



The delegation met with representatives of religious in San Pedro Sula, family members of persons forced to migrate to flee violence, and families and victims of violent repression.



On the final days of their visit, delegates traveled to Tegucigalpa to meet with officials at the U.S. Embassy.



Participants in the [Way of the Cross](#) stop before a police station to light candles in memory of persons killed by police in violent repression since the November election.



A [candlelight vigil](#) was held in front of the U.S. Embassy the night before to pray for openness and understanding.

Delegates met with U.S. officials at the Embassy, asking them to call for an end to U.S. military aid to Honduras, to intercede for freedom for political prisoners, and safety for Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno (“[Padre Melo](#)”) and other human rights advocates who have received death threats. We ask your prayers as well for the people of Honduras and all involved in their struggle for human dignity.

