

PENTECOST

PENTECOST PEOPLE: CALLED TO BE ADVOCATES

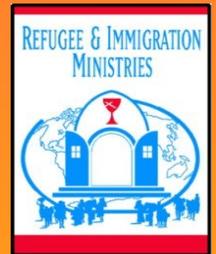
Scripture: John 15:26-27

Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Advocate comes . . . the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.”



Photo: No More Deaths

Reflection: The Christian feast of Pentecost, the 50th day after Easter, has its roots in the Jewish feast of “Weeks” or “Shavuot.” It occurs 50 days after Passover, celebrates the giving of the Law (Torah) on Mount Sinai, and focuses on covenant renewal. For Christians, Pentecost echoes Jewish themes with the descent upon the disciples of the Holy Spirit, the “Advocate,” to form the Christian community. The “Advocate”—in Greek “parakletos”—offered far more than simple comfort. It’s fuller meaning was one “summoned to the side” to serve as an encourager, co-fighter, truth-bearer of hope, ally, and provider of safety and peace.



Today, Christians call upon the Holy Spirit to be renewed by the fire of God’s love and receive the wisdom and courage needed to be advocates with and for the most vulnerable people in our world. Advocates are challenged today, as they were in the early church, to testify to the truth of the gospel of Jesus, no small task in a society that devalues and distorts truth. One truth is that all people, including immigrants, refugees and TPS and DED recipients, have God-given human dignity and human rights. They deserve justice, compassion, and the opportunity to tell their stories without fear of detention and deportation. Those family members, friends, and fellow faith partners who seek to support them as advocates, pray to be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, in order to faithfully share love with them.

Story: While being an advocate is never without risk, lately it has cost a number of advocates their freedom. [No More Deaths](#) (NMD), a humanitarian organization based [in southern Arizona](#) and begun in 2004 as a coalition of community and faith groups, is one of multiple immigrant advocacy groups that has attracted the attention of Border Patrol (BP) and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) in recent years. NMD is dedicated to ending the deaths of migrants in the desert. Volunteers hike desert trails and leave water, food, clothing, and blankets along the way.

In early 2018, nine volunteers with the group were [arrested and charged](#) with federal crimes and misdemeanors. Included were immigrant rights advocates from all over the country simply trying to save the lives of migrants lost in the desert. One example is Dr. Scott Warren (photo at right), an area college instructor. NMD members note that their arrests represented a marked shift from what had been the Border Patrol’s more tolerant approach toward humanitarian efforts in previous years.



Photo: CNN, June 3, 2019

(Resource developed through the Interfaith Immigration Coalition; by Sister Ann Scholz of Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Sister Marie Lucey of Franciscan Action Network, & Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, of Disciples of Christ Refugee & Immigration Ministries.)

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(Continued)



Immigrant Ravi Rigbar, arrested in 2018 in NY.
Photo: Mark Lennihan/AP

The arrests of the No More Deaths volunteers joined more than 20 [Immigrant advocates](#) who were arrested for supporting migrants in the Spring of 2018 from all around the country. Included among those arrested was well known organizer Ravi Rigbar, the Executive Director of the [New Sanctuary Coalition of NY City](#) (center in photo, with Disciples clergy Luis-Alfredo Cartagena Zayas at left), and a Haitian co-founder activist of the organization.

NEXT STEPS: Meanwhile, the sentencing for the No More Deaths volunteers has continued throughout Spring of 2019. Four female volunteers, who were charged with violating federal law by entering Cabeza Prieta (a 860,000-acre refuge) without a permit and leaving water and canned food in the triple-digit heat for migrant crossers, were sentenced on March 1st to \$250 fines and 15 months on probation. Four more volunteers reached agreements to receive civil penalties and pay \$250 in fines in late February.

The trial for Dr. Scott Warren began in early June, and the jury will deliberate in the days ahead. Warren also awaits a ruling on separate misdemeanor charges of leaving food, water and medical supplies in June of 2017 in the Cabeza Prieta Refuge. The [Arizona Daily Star reported on June 7, 2019](#) that Warren testified he met one migrant from El Salvador and another from Honduras in “The Barn,” a desert shelter where he offered them humanitarian aid as they recovered from crossing the desert, but did not harbor them. “The Barn,” is used as a staging area for No More Deaths as it seeks to locate remains in the desert of unidentified border crossers.

ACTIONS: What can we do to help, as the trial soon comes to a close?

***WATCH AND PRAY** with faith leaders (including 7 Disciples!) and Scott Warren, who joined outside the courthouse on June 5th for a “Faith Floods the Courtroom” Vigil. See a video clip from the vigil [HERE](#) and [use this prayer](#) for devotion—adapted from the one written and led on the clip by Rev. Bart Smith, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church in Tucson. (See Disciples clergy Gabriel Lopez, L., Job Cobos and Silvia Tiznado, R. in photo, & Rev. Randy Mayer, UCC, in white.)



***WRITE AND POST A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT for Scott and for the migrants served by No More Deaths.** Go to: <http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/humanitarianaidisneveracrime/>. Take a picture holding your picture, and SHARE it on social media. Use these Hashtags: #scottwarren #waternotwalls #waterislife #aguaesvida #humanitarianaidisneveracrime, and tag No More Deaths, at these addresses: --Twitter: @nomoredeaths, Instagram: @nomoredeaths_nomasmuertes Facebook: @nomoredeaths. Also, use this [FB frame!](#)

PRAYER: *God of Pentecost, send forth your Spirit. Build flames of passion within us to share your power and love. Fill us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Give us strength and courage to work tirelessly for just and compassionate treatment of immigrants. Sustain us by your hope to be fearless advocates for those most in need. Be with all who today travel the paths of migrants, and help them each to follow your way of love in each step. AMEN.*