Reflection from the U. S. / Mexico Border

A group of 7 parishioners spent a week (October 6-12) on the Border to better understand the realities of migration from Mexico into the United States. Here is a reflection from Trista Rodeen.

Operation Streamline was a challenging afternoon to witness. It is a way to convict numerous migrants at one time in a criminal court, not a migration court.

We entered the courtroom with 40 migrants' backs to us. They were in the same clothes they had been arrested in. One man had a tear in the back of his shirt; it made me sad that he wasn't given a nicer shirt to wear in court. They were individually shackled around their wrists, waists, and down to their ankles. They had headphones, so the judge's words could be interpreted into Spanish. Most of them appeared to be young; from the side, one boy's face seemed like he couldn't even drive yet.

They were called up to the front of the courtroom with 2 of God's children sharing a microphone to seal their fate. Their lawyers were called up in their nice suits to stand behind them, probably only having talked to their clients no more than 20 minutes before the hearing.

They were asked the same 4 questions individually by the judge with each responding in Spanish:
1) Is your name Jesus Romero? Response: Yes.
2) Did you cross the border near Douglas, AZ on Oct. 8th. Response: Yes.
3) How are you pleading today? Response: Guilty.
4) Do you understand you will be charged with a felony? Response: Yes.

They were then charged with however many days the court deemed appropriate to spend in jail, and then they'll be deported. One of the migrants said he had been sick with diarrhea, couldn't eat breakfast or lunch that day, and wanted the court to know. Watching him leave the courtroom very, very slowly - my heart broke! I felt helpless! As each person left, being able to see us now, I did my best to hold back tears, give them a smile, and say a prayer knowing they would never be let into our country again because now they had a felony.

Once the first 40 left the courtroom, the next 40 came in. With the monotony of the questions being asked and the lack of detail given to each person, I found myself zoning out a couple times. It was an assembly line of criminalization. No one is asking them why they are leaving their country...but I know why. And that's another story. Please ask me if you don't know because you CAN make a difference. No human being is illegal.