A participant in a symbolic Via Crucis held Saturday in Nogales, Mexico, to honor migrants uses a smartphone (at bottom) to take a picture of the group that includes a man holding a wooden cross next to the border wall with Arizona. The orange sign reads, "We are the body of Christ." (Anita Snow)

by Anita Snow

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Nogales, Mexico — April 11, 2025

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They came from both sides of the border, mostly parishioners from nearby churches or young people preparing for their first Communion or confirmation, all to pay tribute to migrants who suffer and sometimes die on their journeys.

About 80 people showed up April 5 for the Via Crucis, or Way of the Cross, procession that flowed through the city street running parallel to the border wall in Nogales, Mexico, accompanied by local police and an ambulance for 2.5 miles over nearly three hours. A trio of musicians on a platform trailer pulled by a truck provided the soundtrack.

On the north were the towering steel bollards separating Mexico from the U.S. On the south, the procession passed pharmacies, dental clinics, auto repair shops and family groceries.

A Via Crucis procession held Saturday along the border in Nogales, Mexico, passes by a portrait of José Antonio Elena Rodriguez, a teenager who was killed in 2012 by a

U.S. Border Patrol agent who was standing on the American side when he shot through a border fence at a group he said were throwing rocks at him. The agent was later acquitted. (Anita Snow)

Along the way, participants stopped at stations commemorating Christ's suffering, including one by a portrait of José Antonio Elena Rodriguez, a teenager who died in 2012 after being shot through a border fence by a U.S. Border Patrol agent.

Several dozen young people preparing for sacraments from Holy Family Church in Nogales, Mexico, took part in the procession along with catechism teachers and parents. Parishioners from area churches, including the Most Holy Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the border community of Rio Rico, Arizona, were also there.

They were joined by staff members and volunteers of the Kino Border Initiative that organized the event. Sr. Maria Engracia Robles, a Missionary Sister of the Eucharist who has been with the initiative since its founding nearly 18 years ago, took photographs with an iPad. Robles said very few migrants were in the procession.

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Participants assemble April 5 just south of the border with Arizona in Nogales, Mexico, as a Via Crucis procession honoring migrants gets underway. (Anita Snow)

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A woman and her two young children take part in a symbolic Via Crucis organized by the Kino Border Initiative, April 5 in Nogales, Mexico, in honor of migrants. (Anita Snow)

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Northbound traffic heading toward the U.S. border crossing from Nogales, Mexico, on April 5, next to the starting point of a Via Crucis procession honoring migrants. (Anita Snow)

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Pedro De Velasco, director of education and advocacy for the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Mexico, speaks to participants at a symbolic Via Crucis that the center organized April 5 along a length of the border in honor of migrants. (Anita Snow)

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Sr. Maria Engracia Robles has been with the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Mexico, since its founding nearly 18 years ago. She was among those who honored migrants in a symbolic Via Crucis that the center organized April 5 in the border city. (Anita Snow)

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Fr. Claudio Murrieta Ortiz, priest from Lord of Mercy Church (El Señor de la Misercordia) in Nogales, Mexico, explains to participants April 5 the symbolic and religious importance of a Via Crucis. (Anita Snow)

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  Catechist Gaby Romero, in baseball cap, takes roll call of young people preparing for their first Communion and confirmation with Holy Family Church in Nogales, Mexico, before a symbolic Via Crucis. (Anita Snow)

Later, back at the Kino Border Initiative's dining room, migrants said they appreciated having their voices heard.

An adolescent girl from violent Chilpancingo, Mexico, said her family came to Nogales in May after her older brother was kidnapped. They were stranded there after President Donald Trump's administration ended any possibility of U.S. asylum.

"We're not going back," she said.

Participants in a symbolic Via Crucis held Saturday in Nogales, Mexico, pose for photos April 5 before the start of the procession honoring migrants. (Anita Snow)

The first Station of the Cross in a symbolic Via Crucis held on April 5 along the border in Nogales, Mexico, to honor migrants was sponsored by the Most Holy Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ Church in the Arizona border community of Rio Rico. (Anita Snow)

A huge wooden cross is carried on April 5 through the street that runs parallel to the border wall in Nogales, Mexico, during a symbolic Via Crucis acknowledging the indignities suffered by migrants trying to get to the United States. (Anita Snow)

A man stands outside a business in Nogales, Mexico, on April 5 while watching a Via Crucis procession pass through the street facing the border wall. (Anita Snow)

A Via Crucis procession passes by the border wall April 5 in Nogales, Mexico, in a nod to the sufferings of migrants. (Anita Snow)

Pro-migrant messages spray-painted along the border wall that participants passed during a symbolic Via Crucis in Nogales, Mexico, on April 5 (Anita Snow)

A Via Crucis procession passing by the border wall in Nogales, Mexico, on April 5 included a platform trailer carrying musicians who provided both sacred and popular music acknowledging the sufferings of migrants attempting to get to the U.S. (Anita Snow)

Close-up of the seventh station, featuring a table with a crown of thorns set up in Nogales, Mexico, along the border with Arizona for a Via Crucis organized April 5 in honor of migrants by the Kino Border Initiative. (Anita Snow)

Participants in a symbolic Via Crucis that Kino Border Initiative organized April 5 in Nogales, Mexico, passed through the street alongside the border wall of tall steel bollards that often features pro-migrant art, including this one featuring a Border Patrol figure chasing two people. (Anita Snow)

Ariane Trueba, a volunteer with the Kino Border Initiative, distributes bottles of water on April 5 to members of a Via Crucis procession the center organized along the border wall in Nogales, Mexico. (Anita Snow)

The hills of Nogales, Mexico, are seen to the south of a Via Crucis procession that flowed April 5 along the border in Nogales, Mexico. (Anita Snow)

This story appears in the **Lent 2025** feature series. View the full series.