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Rochester Franciscan Sr. Phyllis Sellner, of Palm Desert, California, hands goody bags to men at the Cobina Posada del Migrante shelter where sisters and their friends celebrated Father’s Day June 6, 2026, in Mexicali, Mexico. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)



by Rhina Guidos

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Mexicali, Mexico — June 18, 2026

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The dad named Boris could hardly believe his luck. Stranded in Mexicali after fleeing persecution in his native El Salvador, he had arrived at night at the Cobina Posada del Migrante shelter, seeking a few hours of sleep before heading to another city to look for work.

But by mid-morning June 6, as he was getting ready to leave, a group of Catholic sisters from various congregations in the U.S. began arriving; soon there were clean clothes, presents, a piñata depicting the Mexican soccer team's World Cup jersey, and mariachis looking to lift the spirits of dads like him in the group.

"If they didn't have this event to go to, they would have nothing. This seems like Christmas," St. Joseph of Carondelet Sr. Suzanne Jabro told Global Sisters Report.



St. Joseph of Carondelet Sr. Suzanne Jabro, in yellow, smiles at a group of women at the Cobina Posada del Migrante shelter during a Father’s Day celebration June 6, 2026. Jabro, who spent decades in prison ministry, is the founder of Border Compassion, which facilitates encounters between migrants, sisters, ecumenical groups and others. (Courtesy of Sr. Teresa Lynch)

Though it wasn't officially Father's Day, the sisters and their friends celebrated the dads in the group a few days ahead of schedule, worried about the rising temperatures in Mexicali, which have been known to climb in recent years up to 120 degrees in July. The visit was on the part of Border Compassion, a nonprofit founded by Jabro under the auspices of Sisters of St. Joseph Ministerial Services and supported by sisters from various congregations, as well as by Catholic and other ecumenical groups.

Related: Sisters support migrants in need through nonprofit Border Compassion

Society of the Sacred Heart Sr. Lisa Buscher, of San Diego, helped fill goody bags for the dads in the group, which included a wallet with $60 as St. Joseph Sr. Teresa Lynch took photos of the celebration and those at work. Volunteers from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, from the Episcopal Church and Catholic parishes in California cheered the dads as they played musical chairs, cooled off during a water balloon toss, and beat a piñata while the mariachis played. They helped them pick out clothes, socks, underwear and hats that would fit them, offered them Irish Spring soap bars and gifted them new Bibles, rosaries and prayer cards.



Men at the Cobina Posada del Migrante shelter play musical chairs during a Father’s Day celebration organized by women religious and their friends June 6, 2026 in Mexicali, Mexico. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)

The men smiled at the sisters and the volunteers, but the sadness of being away from their children lurked underneath.

Boris, who didn't want to give his last name out of fear, said his 4-year-old daughter in El Salvador had been on his mind. He'd fled after being warned by a relative that authorities were after him in his country, a place where men like him have been detained indefinitely in prison without reason or given due process. Though he'd been beaten and robbed in Mexico, he had no choice but to stay in the country and look for a job to support his family from afar, he told GSR.

Rogelio, another dad at the shelter, told his story of being deported after 25 years in the U.S., a result of the Trump administration's crackdown. His three children and his wife remain in the U.S. Another dad in the group, deported from the U.S. during an immigration raid, pulled out his cellphone and showed a photo posing next to his son

in the U.S. as he was receiving an award.

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If there had been a way to obtain legal permission to stay, he would have done so, he said, because it hurt to be away from his family and blamed himself for not trying harder.

Though the sisters could do little to reunite them with their loved ones, the day was about accompaniment, said Franciscan Sr. Phillys Sellner, of Palm Desert, California.

"We pat them on the shoulder so they can feel … they can release something and just be with them," she said, adding that having sisters there seemed to comfort them. "There's something about it that makes it special for them. I think so."



The entrance to the Cobina Posada del Migrante Shelter in Mexicali, Mexico, where the nonprofit Border Compassion provides crucial supplies and additional services to migrants. (Courtesy of Border Compassion)

As the temperature rose to 105 degrees, Fr. Ken Deasy, who had traveled from Hawaii for the event, addressed the men, telling them that no one is perfect, yet God's love is there for all. Then he put on a stole and grabbed a small jar with anointing oil as some of the men lined up to receive a blessing.

Boris, who finished the day with prize money for winning musical chairs and the balloon toss, and now had brand new luggage, clean clothes and soap, also joined the line.

"Of all the places where I have traveled, I have never seen or experienced anything like what is happening here today," he said, with a look of surprise. "This is incredible and I can't tell you what this has done for me."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.