

## *From the desk of Fr. Jesus Flores*



The migrant communities together with the Church of Rochester New York walk together as pilgrims: Itinerants on the move harvesting crops in various venues. They are personas and families that have decided to establish themselves in a place where they faithfully work for an owner, and there they grow and their children attend schools.

The number of migrant workers has increased, especially those with H2-A visas. They are generally men from Mexico who are contracted seasonally for only one owner.

The migrant and contracted farmworkers are a workforce that vitalizes the agricultural economy of the rural counties. The work venues include fruit, especially apples, vegetables and vineyards that produce wine.

Agricultural workers who are residents work seasonally in fields and need to find other employment in winter. Some work in dairy farms and others in construction.

It takes a pastoral missionary who has the capacity and the freedom to accompany the migrant population. The accompaniment requires the desire and ability to find the invisible workers and begin a relationship of trust with them. It requires understanding their reality and the capacity to evangelize via solidarity measures, friendship, information and faith gatherings: liturgies, retreats and popular religious practices.

Then as relations develop especially among the permanent residents of the region, the task is to build community. Little by little the mission begins to promote leadership formation and making links among the dispersed communities. These immigrant communities are a seed for all rural communities.

We have formed an accompanying and collaborative missionary team. We encourage each other. We have more than ten years of organization and adapting services that are supported by the Diocese.

Personally, I have seen the increase of migrants at the US - Mexican border. I was born in Nogales Sonora and ordained for the Diocese of Hermosillo. There we came to know migrants coming from Central America. I now have lived twenty years in Up State New York.

During the most recent years which include the pandemic, our missionary commitment has brought us close to the farmworkers in the fields, orchards, vineyards and dairies. We've helped establish five communities made up of families and individual migrants who get together with the Anglo community to share their culture, their common catholic identity and to socialize. Each of the communities is coordinated by a local leader.

**These are our many faces, from:  
Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico,  
Venezuela, Ecuador, and Haiti...**

