PASTORAL RESPONSES OF THE SCALABRINIAN MISSIONARIES
Let me sum up what we are trying to do in terms of our mission to the Migrants in our Province with four concepts:

- **Encounter**
- **Bridge building**
- **Refounding structures**
- **Networking**
I. ENCOUNTER

Pope Francis has constantly challenged the Church to be a Church of encounter and urging all to go out to those on the margins.

In terms of our Mission with migrants, this is no longer a pastoral option but rather a pastoral obligation. It seems to me that this is a Missionary obligation for the entire Church. However, we need to be more creative in how we go about this pastoral endeavor.
Some ways in which Scalabrinians do this are as follows:

Offering face to face encounters with migrants a reality in the lives of others:

- Casa dinner with the migrants
- Mini immersion experience for students (Weekend - Spring break)
- Student internships (Loyola - University of California at Santa Cruz)
- Volunteer experiences in our different Casas del Migrantes

Real live encounters are essential for the Scalabrinian Ministry with migrants and putting people in touch with this missionary reality is very important.
II. Building Bridges

To borrow yet another idea from Pope Francis who often says *that as true Christians our mission most always be about building bridges rather than constructing walls.*

Currently our brother and sister migrants need to experience bridges on so many levels and in so many places.

In fact, in my ministry at the Casa del Migrante, I have become keenly aware that, at its very best, bridge building isn’t just about helping people cross over but it is also about teaching our fellow migrants to be bridge builders with us in terms of building communities.

In my experience as a Scalabrinian missionary, I have come to believe we are called to do this on many levels. Let me mention just three levels:

- Ministerial Level
- Spiritual Level
- Economical level
We are not only missionaries for the migrants in so many ways and in so many places, but we are also called to share our mission with others.

Therefore about 25 years ago we started up the Scalabrinian Lay Movement which offered the laity in our missions an opportunity to share in our charism and ministry.

We have developed a formation program for all those who wish to share in our mission and eventually to make a public commitment to serve the migrants.

For example - today we have Scalabrinian Laity in several parishes and missions like those of St. Leo Parish in Houston who minister to migrants at the detention centers in the area, as well as at Casa Juan Diego (Catholic Worker House in Houston).
SPIRITUAL LEVEL

I have come to believe in my six years at the Casa del Migrante that is important that we learn to reflect spiritually on our ministry to and with migrants and also to share this reflection with others.

To this end I try to do 3-4 spiritual retreats in Scalabrinian and diocesan parishes about the spirituality of our mission at the Casa del Migrante. Needles to say Pope Francis has been a spiritual companion of mine during these spiritual reflections.

For example, on March 30th, I will journey to Kansas City, Kansas where I will do a one-day retreat on the inspiring words of Pope Francis who recently said:

“ It is a Commandment to Receive the Migrant”
ECONOMIC LEVEL

Yes, there is an economic side to mission to and with migrants and the surprise is when invited to share in the mission many people will respond with a commitment of time, talent and treasure to support the missionary cause of migrants who are in need.

Two examples come to mind:

- Taco sales at Holy Rosary Parish Sun Valley for at least 15 years.

- Kermes in KCK - retreat in the day and Kermes for the casa in the evening.
Many years ago, I was at a meeting of religious with Cardinal George in Chicago when he said:

“One of the major challenges of the Church in Chicago is that we have structures (buildings) to accommodate about 2 million people but we are only serving one million”

In a moment of incredible inspiration, I quickly responded:

“Yes, that is true, but I think there are at least another million Latinos we could be working within the Archdiocese”

I honestly do not remember his response, but I do believe this brief dialogue points out the fact that every once in a while we need to re-evaluate our buildings and structures to see if they are truly serving God's people in the best possible way.
THE MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION REMAINS

“How do we best use what have at our disposal to better serve the migrants?”

As Scalabrinian missionaries for the migrants this is a question we often grapple with and at times it literally pains us to make decisions that involve restructuring our positions to better serve the people on the move.

Let me share three success stories:

1. Casa Esperanza - Ex-Convent in Mount Carmel Parish in Melrose Park, Illinois has been transferred to a one stop service center that serves thousands of migrants every year. It is located on the safe grounds of a large Hispanic Parish and people can receive all sorts of help.
2. Vancouver Canada - Last year we decided to exchange two parishes, giving back to the Archdiocese St. Helens Italo Canadian Parish with a new Church and making an option for a poorer parish in the outskirts of the Archdiocese to be closer to the thousands of Latino Farmworkers working in the Camps with short term visas. Our Scalabrinian Lay Missionaries and priests visit these camps every week.
3. **CESFOM in Tijuana** (Scalabrini Formation Center for Migrants) - The Casa del Migrante in Tijuana has been around serving migrants for almost 32 years but about two years ago we decided that just giving food, clothing and shelter was not enough to make a significant change in people's lives.

In May of 2018 we launched a school for migrants in the Casa del Migrante with computer classes, English and Spanish courses and workshops like Faith Sharing, Parenting Long Distance and the History of Tijuana.

In the first six months we had over 2000 students and so we decided to invest ourselves fully in the project and buy a property that will be the future home of CESFOM.
The days of the solitary missionary doing everything alone are over.

Today it is all about Networking, Networking, and Networking.

As Scalabrinians, we know that this is what Jesus was all about and even our Founder Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini had this in mind over 130 years ago when he founded a community of priests - brothers - sisters and laity working in mission together.
We are still getting accustomed to the concept, but a few examples come to mind of how Scalabrinians are involved in Networking:

- RED CASAS DEL MIGRANTE

- SIMN - Scalabrinian International Migration Network

- CMS - Center of Migration Studies

- Network of Scalabrini Centers and Parishes - our newest networking baby
The idea of collaborating in networks is hard work but surely worth it in terms of the following results:

- It helps us reflect on our common Scalabrini vision.
- It opens us up to receive more resources to serve the migrants.
- It helps the flow of the creative missionary juices.
- It helps us to work as a religious community rather than as individual religious.
- In the end when we network, we are better able to serve so many more of our migrant brothers and sisters.
CONCLUSIONS
In my nearly six years living at the US - Mexican border one thing has become very clear to me - *The border must be considered more than just a geographic place.*

- I often speak of the reality of the Borders of the Heart as the place where we need to tear down some walls.
- In our missionary endeavors to serve God’s people we need to touch people’s hearts and work at penetrating the walls of the heart little by little
- As Scalabrinians, I believe we do this best as missionaries when we are:
  - Actively offering people encounters
  - Striving to be bridge builders
  - Re-founding our missionary structures
  - Networking with others to build a better world