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A woman holds a poster at an Aug. 6 border wall encounter at the U.S.-Mexico border, which was organized by the Save Asylum coalition to protest the dismantling of the asylum process. Kino Border Initiative is one of the coalition's supporting organizations. (Courtesy of the Kino Border Initiative)



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In Mexico, today is called "Viernes de Dolores," or "Painful Friday." The sisters I live with found it odd that in English, we call it "Good Friday."

The more I thought about it, the more I found it strange, too. It's easy to see the good in Good Friday when we've had a preview of what comes on Easter Sunday. But when we look at the story — the unjust verdict, the public execution, the abandonment of close friends, the loss of a mother — we find much more alignment with "painful" than with "good."

These days, as I connect with people who have suffered a long wait in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, to fight their asylum claims in the United States, the conversations I have with them live somewhere in between "painful" and "good." I have received my first messages from migrants waiting under the Migrant Protection Protocols, or the "Remain in Mexico" policy, who after more than a year of uncertainty have finally been paroled into the United States. These text threads are flooded with praying-hand emojis, photos proving they made it, and words of celebration, relief and gratitude. Voice messages from these migrants talk about this all having been in God's time, that "God knew what God was doing."

My reaction: "Wait, God knew that you would suffer hunger, family separation, threats from organized crime and excruciating uncertainty and put you through this anyway? Seriously?"

Then I take my judgment cap off and try to listen a little closer. No, the hope I hear in these celebratory messages is not quite that. It comes from a deeper place, a place that says, "See? I knew hate and division would not have the final word here. And I was right."

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As I consider Jesus' friends the night of his execution, it's hard to imagine there was anything but pain or numbness in them. The promise of liberation they had risked everything to follow seemed destroyed forever. Yet I must believe that somewhere, buried underneath the heaviness of death, there were embers of hope that had not been extinguished. Otherwise, they would never have gathered again in that upper room.

That hope of Good Friday, a hope that bridges pain and love, is so tangible here in people on the move, people who have risked everything for the people who mean everything to them. It looks like this:

Hope is the Honduran woman, eight months pregnant, who ran with her family through the port of entry; who, after agents pushed her and laughed at her, decided she was worthy and would report this abuse in spite of them.

Hope is the 19-year-old who jumped the wrong train, who gripped guardrails in a T-shirt during frigid temperatures, whose will to live was strong enough that although he was found unconscious, numbed by hypothermia, he decided to breathe again after a half-hour of attempts to revive him.

Hope is a Venezuelan woman who in the same breath that she celebrates the news that she will soon be able to cross into the United States expresses her grief that her companions waiting at the border still have no answers.

Hope is the Guatemalan father of three who walked six days through the desert without food to reach a dream for his family. Hope, too, is his drive to return to them after he was unable to achieve that dream.

Hope is the Indigenous woman who stayed home from the soup kitchen in the morning because of threats her family received from the neighborhood gang but who decided it was worth the risk to attend the organizing meeting in the afternoon, to gather with her peers and plan their liberation.

Here we sit, on this day of goodness and pain, each of us carrying our own devastating losses of the past year; each of us holding the embers of resurrection. May we live with the belief that hate and division will not have the last word. And may we be right.



A father and son take part in the Oct. 21 Children Seeking Asylum March at the U.S.-Mexico border, in which children asylum-seekers, their families and immigration advocates protested the dismantling of the asylum system and the consequences on children. The family, which had traveled to the United States from Honduras to seek asylum, was turned away at the U.S.-Mexico border Oct. 22 because of Title 42. (Courtesy of the Kino Border Initiative)

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