Norma Pimentel is a sister with the Missionaries of Jesus and a licensed professional counselor. As Executive Director of Catholic Charities for the past 10 years, she oversees the charitable arm of the Diocese of Brownsville, providing oversight of the different ministries and programs in the areas of emergency assistance, housing assistance, counseling, and pregnancy care to all four counties in the Rio Grande Valley.

Sister Norma chairs the local Emergency Food and Shelter Program that distributes federal funds to local agencies providing assistance to the area’s poor. She also leads efforts in the community that respond to emergency needs and provide relief in times of disaster and crisis. She was instrumental in organizing community resources to respond to the surge of Central Americans seeking asylum in the United States and setting up Humanitarian Respite Centers in McAllen and Brownsville, Texas in June 2014. These efforts brought Sister Norma recognition as a recipient of the 2015 Martin Luther King, Jr. “Keep the Dream Alive” Award from Catholic Charities USA and a nomination for “Texan of the Year.” In March, 2015, she spoke at the UN Headquarters in New York City at the invitation of the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. During the U.S. Papal visit, Sr. Norma met with Pope Francis in New York City and presented him with one of her original paintings which depicted an immigrant mother and child. She was first introduced to Pope Francis in August 2015 via a “virtual town hall” arranged by ABC news which later aired in a one-hour special edition of “20/20”. In December 2015, Our Sunday Visitor named Sister Norma as one of eight Catholics in the Year, “men and women, religious and lay — who made an indelible mark in 2015.”

Before overseeing Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, Sister Pimentel was one of the leaders who directed Casa Oscar Romero, a refugee shelter in San Benito and later Brownsville for Central Americans fleeing their war torn countries in the 1980s. The shelter provided emergency relief and temporary housing for hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Sister Norma received her Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Arts from Pan American University, a Master’s Degree in Theology from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, and a Master’s Degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola University in Chicago, IL.

Susan Law and Nayelly Barrios – Advocates for Dignity and Justice

Susan and Nayelly are part of the “Angry Tias and Abuelas” group whose mission is to advocate for dignity and justice for individuals released by Border Patrol or from ICE detention and delivered to bus depots or shelters from Brownsville to McAllen. As these migrants embark on their journeys to destinations across the U.S., the Tias’ aim is to assure that their basic health and safety needs are met.