



May 9, 2007 Wednesday

SHOW: FOX SPECIAL REPORT WITH BRIT HUME

HUME: Jennifer, thank you.

It appears there's going to be another immigrant rights rally in Los Angeles. Activists today announced plans to march again June 24 to renew the demands for a path to citizenship. Organizers say they hope to have more than the estimated 25,000 people who participated in that rally on May 1.

Los Angeles police broke up that demonstration with batons and rubber bullets after being hit from objects thrown from the crowd.

Under American law there really is no such thing as sanctuary in a church to avoid being arrested. Nevertheless, many authorities are reluctant to violate, unnecessarily, at least, the haven of a church. And it is that reluctance that churches across the country may be counting on as they step into the controversy over illegal immigrants. Correspondent Anita Vogel reports.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ANITA VOGEL, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Churches across the nation are now opening their doors to illegal immigrants to keep them from being deported. It's called the "New Sanctuary Movement" at churches like La Placita in downtown Los Angeles are providing housing for illegals on church property, effectively shielding them from immigration enforcement agents.

KIM BOBO, NEW SANCTUARY MOVEMENT: We want Congress to fix this broken system. We know they're concerned, but they need to fix it in a way that unifies families, gives a path to citizenship for people and that protects workers in the society.

VOGEL: Forty-four-year-old Jose, who's currently facing deportation, is the first to be housed at this church. This morning he spoke by telephone to Elvira Arillano, a woman who's been given sanctuary in a Chicago church for the last nine months.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We know it's difficult. You have our support.

VOGEL: Jose will work as a handyman at the church, and live in this modest room, still under construction.

IRA MEHLMAN, FED FOR AMER IMMIG REFORM: What they are doing is openly harboring illegal immigrants and that is against the law. And if the government so chooses they can exercise to enforce the law against the leaders of the Sanctuary Movement.

BOBO: For ICE to cross the threshold of a congregation would be a terrible thing and a precedent that I think very few people of faith in this country would feel uncomfortable with. So, again, I don't think our nation's leaders will make a choose to do that.

VOGEL: Immigration agents have yet to make any arrests on church premises but they have the authority to do so. In fact, during a similar movement to protect Central Americans from deportation in the '80s, some who harbored refugees were themselves arrested. Father Richard Estrada says that's a risk he is willing to take.

(on camera): Are you willing to risk going to jail for this?

FATHER RICHARD ESTRADA, LA PLACITA CHURCH: Well personally, I am. And I think we've been -- all of us are.

VOGEL: Roger Cardinal Mahony of the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles who said Monday night in Philadelphia the government unfairly scapegoats illegals and that illegal aliens should be treated no differently than legal immigrants, have given his blessing to individual parishes which participate in the Sanctuary Movement.

In Los Angeles, Anita Vogel, FOX NEWS.

(END VIDEOTAPE)