



FAITH: AN IMMIGRANT STORY

Easter Season/Pentecost 2012

This is the first in a series of stories of immigrants from our Catholic communities in Illinois. These stories follow up on the Illinois Bishops' January 2012 statement in support of immigrant families, which can be found at www.ilcatholic.org under "Bishops Statements."

As we continue to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ during this Easter season and prepare for Pentecost, we are called to renew our faith and to trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One immigrant mother of four young children from a small town in the Diocese of Springfield-in-Illinois especially demonstrates this renewal of our shared Catholic faith and trust in God.

"Susan" first came to America from her native country of Mexico thirteen years ago with her husband on a tourist visa to visit her family. In her hometown in Mexico, it was becoming more and more dangerous, especially for young women. "Susan" and her husband decided that they should stay in America because it would be a better and safer place for them to raise their children and find opportunities for work. "Susan" knew that they had to "take the risk [of being undocumented] because [we] have to feed [our] kids." Over the years, she and her family have become a strong part of their community, especially through their parish. She now serves as one of the chief catechists for the parish.

A deportation order was placed on "Susan" in 2005, but the notice was sent to her old address and she had no knowledge of it until last year when the police came to her home in Illinois. She was then detained in two different local jails for five days. While in jail, she worried for her children and husband, not sure when she would be able to see them again. However, even while in jail, "Susan" never lost faith and hope in God. She prayed the rosary with other women who were also being detained and she continually encouraged the others that they "have to believe in God." When she was transferred from the jail to the federal immigration office in Chicago, she initially was scheduled to be deported the next day. However, one of the staff at the immigration office saw that because she had no criminal background, she could be released under supervision so there could be time for her case to be reviewed. At this time, "Susan's" immigration case is still pending and she continues to return to Chicago periodically to have her case reviewed.

Today, she looks back and says that God had her go through this experience so she would see the suffering of those being detained and to pray with and for them. She never asked why this was happening to her and has faith that God is in control. However, "Susan" does worry that if she must return to Mexico it will be very difficult for her kids, who are all U.S. citizens and have never lived in Mexico, to move there. They would have to return to her hometown of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, which is now the most dangerous city outside of a declared war zone in the world. Yet, her faith in God helps her move forward. She continues to pray every day and she reminds herself of what a religious sister at her parish told her: "The will of God will not take you where the grace of God cannot protect you." But still, each time she goes for a review of her immigration case, there is always the uncertainty of whether she will be separated from her children and husband. When she leaves for her case reviews, her son asks, "Are you going to come home?"

The Catholic Church is home to so many immigrants coming here from different countries and cultures, for the Church is universal. **Please pray for "Susan" and all immigrant mothers and fathers who face possible separation from their families. Pray also that they may continue to have faith and trust in God and His will and that there will be an end to the separation of immigrant families through just and compassionate immigration policies.**

For more on "Susan's" story of faith in her own words, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FitJYTBUE74>

For more information on immigration issues, as well as other important legislative issues, go to:

www.ilcatholic.org



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