

## IMMIGRANT WOMEN CIRCLES OF SUPPORT UPDATE

Is it possible that Jesus' words in the Gospel of John "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) can be experienced by immigrant women despite their immigration status? It seems that this is possible! As I have previously affirmed, the women's circles of support are spaces where women can share their lived experiences, pray on them, and make some commitments for a change in their lives and in the lives of other immigrants.

Currently, approximately 49 women are participating in seven circles of support. Members of the circles Mujeres Bajo la Protección de Dios, Mujeres Portadoras de Luz, Mujeres de Fe y Esperanza are from Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Detroit, Monroe, Lincoln Park, Pontiac, and recently a woman from Indiana joined one of the circles. A circle of women is being formed from the family of parishes of St. Andre Bessette and Ss. Andrew and Benedict. Recently, three circles of support were formed in Traverse City. Strangers No Longer is expanding!

Women have expressed that they feel new life participating in the circle meetings. Sharing their stories is a way of making others know how God has been present in their lives and how God makes possible for them to face daily life. For women just to feel heard and understood is encouraging for them. They give life to each other through compassionate listening. They all know the feeling of being an immigrant.

Something that has given new life to women is the opportunity to build relationships with other parish-based Anglo circles of support. Immigrant and Anglo circles work together to support immigrant families that are in need. In the process, the members of both circles share their lived experiences. Mujeres Bajo la Protección de Dios circle is in partnership with the circle of St. Michael in Sterling Heights and it has been a valuable experience for both circles. The Mujeres de Fe y Esperanza circle is beginning the process of partnership with the circle of the parishes St. Charles Borromeo and Nativity.

The presence of immigrant women in the SNL monthly meetings has been a sign of new life for them too. Some women have expressed their hope when they see American people looking for ways of support for a betterment of their lives and the lives of all immigrants.

Thus, I can say that Jesus' words "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) is being lived out in Strangers No Longer. Not only have these words been experienced by immigrant women, but the presence of immigrant women in Strangers No Longer has given abundant life to the entire organization.