

St. Anne's Circle of Support Family Faces Deportation

Living in Guatemala, Daris Bartolon and her two daughters faced domestic violence from her husband and so, in 2016, they fled to the U.S. seeking political asylum. Adding to their challenges was that one of Daris' daughters, Maddeline, was born with hypophosphatemic rickets which has damaged her bones and kidneys. Once they reached Detroit they began the work of filing for asylum. For the last two years our Circle of Support at St. Anne's (Detroit) has been helping the family as they wait for U.S. immigration system to decide their case. Members of the Circle have also helped the family get to and from Chicago for Maddeline's free surgeries and treatments at Shriners Children's Hospital in Chicago.

Kevin Piecuch, attorney and Executive Director of Southwest Detroit Immigrant and Refugee Center, represented the family with Immigration. He helped them with their asylum request and, when the family was denied asylum, filed their appeal with the Board of Immigration Appeals. When the appeal was denied it was clear U.S. Immigration would soon start deportation proceedings.

And that is what happened. Daris was directed to appear at the Immigration and Customs enforcement (ICE) offices on Wednesday, December 9th with three one-way tickets to Guatemala for herself and her two daughters.

But on that day Daris and her family learned they were not alone in their fight to remain in the U.S. Thirty members of our parish Circles of Support came together to accompany them. Sr. Martha de la Torre, a Sister of Mary Reparatrix and SNL Circle organizer, led a prayer and blessing for the family outside the ICE offices. Immigration lawyer, Kevin Piecuch, presented applications for a "stay of removal" to stop the deportation.

Before the gathering, ICE Regional Field Director, Rebecca Adducci, had received 50 letters of support signed by Catholic Pastors, Cristo Rey High School administration officials, Ave Maria Radio General Manager, a Presbyterian Pastor in Shelby Twp., teachers and others. Circle of Support leaders at the Basilica of St. Anne organized this campaign of mercy. Parish Circle leaders reached out to Rep. Rashida Tlaib, Sen. Gary Peters, Rep. Debby Dingell who all sent support. Rep. Brenda Lawrence actually called Ms. Adducci (see Free Press article).

Speaking to the protesters outside the ICE office on Mt. Elliot Street on Detroit's east side, Piecuch told ICE: "Respond to the prayers of God's people and show some mercy for a family in need of mercy."

We are thankful and happy to report that their application for a "stay of removal" was granted. The family is allowed to remain in the U.S. for the next year so that Maddeline can receive her medical treatment.