



## Advent Week 2: Praying for Immigrants

By Daniela Rojas Florez and Dania Lisette Cervantes Ayala,  
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### Contemplation

Daniela Rojas Florez, a staff member at College of Saint Mary (CSM), writes: “I remember standing before the immigration officer and thinking, how in the world is this ever going to work? Am I going to be arrested? The fear and uncertainty of being by myself in the most dangerous city in Mexico, plus the panic of not knowing if I would make it to see my family again, were all I could think about during my journey from Juarez to Kansas City to be reunited with my mother and sister.” Once Daniela made it into the United States, she faced other challenges. “I had to dive into an unknown culture, and learn a new language to be able to go through the most basic conversations. I learned to go through the challenges of a new education system and was able to graduate in the top percentage of my class. ... Regardless of how good my grades were, I continued to face rejection and financial struggle because of my lack of legal status. It was through this disheartening and crushing process that I was able to find mercy through CSM’s mission.” Now a staff



*Earthenware ceramic sculpture and acrylic painting by Sister Marianne Hieb*

member at CSM, Daniela feels blessed to “invite other students to join a community full of compassion, love, and support.”

One of those students is Dania Lisette Cervantes Ayala, who is in her third year of study at College of Saint Mary. “I may have been only six years old, but I was old enough to understand the dangers of crossing the border, and I was old enough to fear that my parents could have died for us. But they were so determined that the consequences of crossing the border illegally, and the possibility of asphyxiation when they got smuggled under the floor of a minivan, was worth the life they were willing to give us. ... My parents knew that their sacrifices and their urge to follow the American Dream would be worth the days that our food, shelter and income were scarce. Ever since I was six years old, I have thanked my parents every single day of my life for their decision of endangering their lives, so my brother and I would never have to experience the life they did.” Dania, a DACA recipient, received a scholarship to CSM through an anonymous donor. She thought college would be unattainable, but through the scholarship learned that “mercy has no boundaries ... my donor did not know who I was, yet was willing to grant me the opportunity to receive higher education.”

What do I know of God’s kindness? How am I the kindness of God to the foreigner among us? (Lord, let us see your kindness—Psalm 85)

How is the stranger comforted? Will I journey with them so that they are stranger no longer? (“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God—Isaiah 40:1)

How are we Emmanuel, which means “God with us,” for the immigrant, the refugee, the sojourner—ones who are away from all that is familiar? (“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel”)

In what ways am I sharing the journey with my brothers and sisters this Advent Season?

## Prayer

Emmanuel, the Christmas promise—for all time, for all people, for all creation—let us pray that God’s love, comfort and hope will never waver in surrounding us in unceasing invitation.

Light in each of us the courage to be Your invitation to a suffering world, especially to those who long to be comforted by the promise of Emmanuel. May we walk along with the sojourner and stranger as sister and brother, welcoming, as we too long to be welcomed, as alien no longer but truly family on a shared journey toward Your loving embrace.

We pray this Advent prayer filled with the hope that it burns as enduring light in our world refusing to be extinguished.

## Call to Action

Organize activities to foster solidarity and education on the global migration crisis. Use resources from the Catholic Church’s two-year international campaign, [“Share the Journey,” launched this Fall by Pope Francis.](#)

For those in the U.S., [contact your Members of Congress](#) to urge passage of the Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615/H.R. 3440) to protect young immigrants from being deported. Visit [www.dreamerpledge.org/](http://www.dreamerpledge.org/) to find out if your members of Congress have taken the Dreamer Pledge, and then either thank her/him for being a “Dream Hero” by pledging to protect Dreamers or ask her/him to take the pledge.