



We are called to be the Light of Christ in the World.

Immigration

Parishioner Stories



Parishioner Mike Harley & His Wife Shanaz Padamsee

Share Their Thoughts

Mike Harley and **Shanaz Padamsee** are married. Mike is the Executive Director of the nonprofit Environmental Initiative. Shanaz Padamsee is a Special Needs Teaching Aid at Battle Creek Elementary in St. Paul.

We see ourselves as a family of immigrants.

I, Shanaz, grew up in India and came to this country for the opportunity to attend college, as did each of my three sisters. We left home not to flee hardship, but for a liberal arts education that would not be available in India. I am a naturalized American citizen, and each of us are working to serve the communities in which we live, as teachers, as a business owner and as a scientist.

I, Mike, come from a family with strong roots in Ireland and Italy, with grandparents and great grandparents that immigrated through Ellis Island. I am a citizen of both Ireland and America, and have traveled back to meet my father's cousins. My mother's Italian heritage shows through my cooking and in the holiday traditions we observe. On both sides, my family left Europe to find prosperity in place of poverty.

It is easy for us to identify with stories of immigrants coming to our country today, whether for opportunity or to escape hardship. America always has been made stronger for welcoming the immigrant. It's part of what makes us feel like we are truly at home here, and that's something that we would hope for every other new immigrant who seeks to find a home in our midst.

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Immigration, Thoughts from Martha Skold

Leviticus 19:34 *“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”*

“My mom is an alien,” was one of my favorite quips growing up. I’d have her pull out her green card to prove it to my friends and we would giggle at her very serious face, awkwardly imposed over the explanation of her immigration status.

“We are *all* American citizens,” was the line I found myself repeating over and over again in frustration when I traveled overseas with Hmong American friends in my twenties. *They* were asked to pull out passports and sometimes bribes, to prove it to immigration officials, hotel clerks, and police officers. I never was. This, I found no humor in.

“We all belong here,” was my response last Fall, when my good and kind neighbor tearfully apologized for her undocumented status and handed me the paperwork to help protect her children, should she be deported. Her eyes brimmed with the fear of losing her home, her husband, her children, her life. We cried a lot.

These are just a few of the immigration stories that have informed my views on immigration, but that more importantly, have formed my understanding of who “the alien” is. It is always Christ. On my best days, I remember to love him.



“And who is my neighbor?” by Tim Murphy

I imagine that you are often challenged by the Gospel – much as I am almost every Sunday. I want to share a quick story about immigration and how it impacted me. The story is of a boy of 14 whose mother gave him \$25 and told him to cross the border with his brother to San Diego. Over time – he fell in love with my niece and today they are married with three children.

I always marveled at my nephew and how resourceful he was – he certainly was not prepared to either work legally here nor to become a US Citizen when he arrived. He was in great need of help.

It was my brother-in-law who responded to this need, to get legal representation for my nephew who uprooted his young family to return to Mexico to apply for legal work status. It was costly, it was uncertain and it was scary for everyone involved. In the end, my nephew now legally works here and can care for his family without fear of living outside the law.

Like the parable, we are challenged with what is right in front of us – what we are called to do. The response of the Good Samaritan illustrates an overwhelming generosity and compassion for his neighbor.

My view of immigration is formed in the same way – the example of my brother-in-law, like the Good Samaritan, challenges me to ask the question **how am I called** to respond to one in need.