



“Sweet Peace”: Migrants rebuilding their lives together

Eight years ago, Sister of Holy Cross Jacqueline Verville accepted the challenge of welcoming the Nepalese refugees being resettled in Manchester, New Hampshire (USA), by establishing the Holy Cross Family Learning Center (HCFLC). Other volunteer sisters, lay men and women joined in “welcoming the stranger” to provide a place of safety and educational opportunities. Soon the center expanded to over a hundred new immigrants and refugees each year from around the world. Their work continues the way of Jesus with respect, love, non-discrimination and advocacy on the part of their disadvantaged brothers and sisters, as reflected in the [Family of Holy Cross Statement on Nonviolence and Just Peace](#).

Sister of Holy Cross Pauline Maurier has been teaching English as a Secondary Language (ESL) to refugees/immigrants at HCFLC since its foundation in 2010. In addition, she provides some with transportation, money management, needed household items and attends some of their weddings, engagement parties, and other cultural events. In the following interview, Sister Pauline speaks with Amanda (name changed) about her experience as a refugee from South Sudan.



Sister Pauline Maurier, CSC, engages with ESL students.

Sister Pauline: *Amanda, would you please share about what brought you to the United States?*

Amanda: Well my story begins when the Liberation Army Soldiers from the Northern part of Sudan came to my town of Aweil in the Southern part of Sudan in 1987. Soon grenades came flying where we lived and our houses were set on fire. My mother and six siblings ran toward the forest with all our neighbors. I was 19 and away at school when the war broke out. When we students heard about the soldiers’ arrival, we headed for the forest also.

Sister Pauline: *Where did you go from there?*

Amanda: My family walked North for a month toward the capital of Khartoum. I did the same

and was reunited with them. We lived there six years. I married and had a son while in Khartoum. But soon our lives were at risk. There were many threats and disappearances so we all took a train up toward Egypt. After crossing the border we took a boat up the Nile and stayed at a refugee camp with all the others from S. Sudan.



Sister Pauline:
How long did you stay in Egypt?

Amanda: I lived there for about 10 years. I left my first husband who was alcoholic and I remarried. Then the United Nations arranged

for me, my son and second husband to immigrate to Manchester, N.H. My husband's mother and sister came with us. Soon after we arrived, I separated from this second husband because of his drinking, too. Finding work and being on my own was very hard. Another fellow I met told me there were more jobs in another state so I went there with him. At first it was fine, but then he started to beat me repeatedly. This went on for four years before neighbors called the police who took me to a shelter. The police kept badgering me to press charges but I was so afraid of him that I wouldn't do it. While at the shelter, I became depressed and landed in the psychiatric unit of the neighboring hospital.

Sister Pauline: *Oh, my, Amanda! How did you survive all this?*

Amanda: As soon as I was better, I took a bus back to Manchester, NH and my sister-in-law took me in until I could find a factory job and an apartment.

Sister Pauline: *Now that you are here, how is life for you?*

Amanda: Not easy but better. I work the third shift and come to Holy Cross Family Learning Center in the morning so that I can improve my English. But at HCFLC I get more than English.



Sister Anne Hoffer, CSC, provides computer education to HCFLC students.

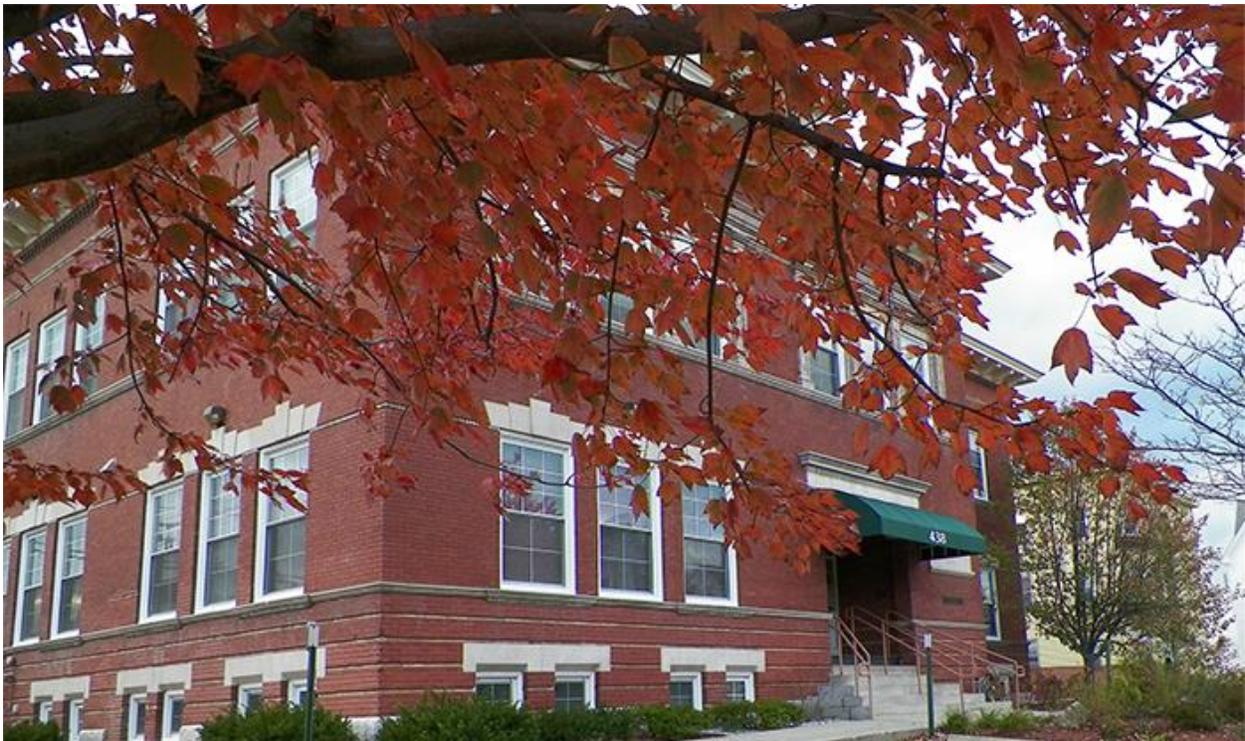
Sister Pauline: *What do you mean by that?*

Amanda: I get to learn computer skills, and attend workshops on health and money management, too. And now I have friends that are white, brown and black and we get along fine. We are Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Orthodox who enjoy peace together. Sweet peace. I would love to be here all day.

Sister Pauline: *Do you have a dream?*

Amanda: I would like to see my mother who is very sick in Egypt. I

send her money each month. I have not seen any family in fifteen years... neither my brother in Kansas, nor my sister in England nor anyone else. My best dream would be for my family to come live with me in peace.



For more information about the center, please visit their website: www.hclearningcenter.org.



Mary Turgi, CSC – Director
Telephone: (574) 284-5500

403 Bertrand Annex, Saint Mary's
E-mail: hcijoperspectives@gmail.com

Notre Dame, IN 46556
www.holycrossjustice.org