

FAMILIES BELONG TOGETHER

Saint Mark's responds to unjust deportation

“We will welcome the stranger, as our Scriptures instruct.
We will advocate for immigrants and their families.”

—from “Renewing Our Covenant: the Saint Mark’s Cathedral
Statement of Commitment and Action,”
adopted December 2016.

“My son is six years old, and about a month ago he has his first Kindergarten performance. Watching him on the stage... he just bring me so much joy—but by the end of the performance I could end up crying, because I can see how he was looking for me and my wife around the crowd, and I cannot imagine how he will feel when he is looking for me around and he is not able to find me.”
—Jaime Rubio Sulicio

ON MARCH 29, more than 100 people gathered in the nave of Saint Mark’s Cathedral for a press conference to learn that Jaime Rubio Sulicio has taken Sanctuary here. This husband of an American citizen, father of a six-year-old son, community volunteer, business owner, loyal friend, human being has been targeted for deportation to Mexico. Our government’s separation of families continues as a malignancy on our soul as a nation, an affront to our faith as followers of Jesus Christ, and an outrage to our fundamental understanding of being one human family.

Jaime comes into Sanctuary as a last resort. The decision to be separated from his home, his livelihood, and his normal life is not easy. This very private man is now hoping for a solution in the glare of a public spotlight. Jaime is trusting in the goodness that should be at our core as a people to overcome the blind hatred that has made a mockery of American values. He faces the difficulty of an arbitrary and untenable legal tangle and the restriction to liberty it entails. Jaime is not alone; thousands of people like him face a deportation that does nothing but diminish us as a community and persecute people who are an integral part of our society. These are our friends, our family.

Jaime Rubio Sulicio is a business owner of a construction company and a stalwart volunteer for Rebuilding Together Seattle. He’s also a beloved dance instructor and performer at cultural events and fundraisers, with a whole community of friends and supporters behind him because of who he is and all that he brings. He and his wife Keiko, an ardent community leader with local immigrant rights organizations, have worked tirelessly to further his case to no avail.



“Prayer Vigil & Procession for Families at the Border,”
jointly organized by Saint Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral and Saint James
Roman Catholic Cathedral, June 21, 2018. (photo by Liz Bartenstein)



Press Conference at Saint Mark’s Cathedral, March 29, 2019.
L to R: Dean Steve Thomason; Michael Ramos, Executive Director of
the Church Council of Grater Seattle; Jaime Rubio Sulicio
and his wife Keiko

Jaime will remain in Sanctuary at Saint Mark’s Cathedral while a remedy is sought that allows him to be reunited with his family. And this community embraces him. The Dean of the Cathedral, The Very Rev. Steven Thomason, said, “The covenant into which we believe God calls us, and into which our tradition has called us across the centuries, reminds us relentlessly that there is no one, absolutely no one, who is not beloved of God—and we stake our moral claim on that prevailing truth: all people are worthy of our love here... We understand this time of Sanctuary to be a time of healing and hope, that we might provide a safe space for Jaime and his family to be offered dignity and respect—and to hope with them for a day soon when they may be reunited fully, through legal remedy, without peril of tragic, unnecessary separation.”

The tradition of Sanctuary has deep biblical and historical roots as offering places of welcome, hospitality, and moral protection in sacred space for people who fear harm or violence toward them. There are nearly 50 immigrants at risk of deportation who have taken Sanctuary in congregations in the United States since 2016. Saint Mark’s Cathedral is part of the Church Council of Greater Seattle’s “For Such a Time as This” network of congregations, 150-strong, joined together to protect family unity

and proclaim in word and deed that what is required of us is “to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8).

Michael Ramos, Executive Director of the Church Council, said, “Sanctuary gives a human face to these hard-working, community-building, and family-filled immigrants who belong here and ought to stay together in peace and security with their families. It is a unique expression of faith communities to respond to people at risk and faced with divisive and xenophobic policies and practices, who say that these systems that oppress must be dismantled and that there is a different story that is being written.”

Jaime and Keiko and their son, with the community of Saint Mark’s Cathedral and the extended support of congregations and organizations throughout the Seattle region, are committed to writing that different story together. Jaime speaks for all of us when he says, “I truly believe that families belong together.” ♦