

The story of Pedro

Pedro, a small, thin 15-year old boy, is asking for money to call home. After two hours of asking, he finally gets the coins he needs. He puts the money in the phone and waits for an answer.

“Mama, I’m scared. I just want to come home. There are a lot of scary people here.”

He pauses as he listens to his mother on the other end.

“I know Mama, but I don’t think I’ll make it.

The guy I paid to take me across the border doesn’t seem trustworthy.

He looks at me the same way that guy that beat me up looked at me.”

He listens to his mother again, this time for a longer time.

“I know Mama. I’ll try to do you proud,” he says and slowly hangs up.

Pedro is the oldest in his family of five children. He’s worked different odd jobs around the neighborhood to try to help sustain the family, but it has not been enough. His father hadn’t been able to sell the corn and wheat that he grows as he had been able to in the past. Now there was cheaper corn from the U.S., even if it wasn’t as good as his corn, most people just look at price ... His mother has tried to find work, but nothing is available as most every family in their town is in a similar situation.

As money ran out, they began to sell things – first the little stereo, then the TV. There wasn’t much else that anyone else would want. Then Pedro’s parents began to talk about making the trip North. With his bad leg, his dad would never make it. His mom had to take care of the little kids. That left Pedro.

All the stories he heard about the trip north were terrifying. Thieves were everywhere to attack and rob you. The police, they said, were worse than the criminals. They take everything away from people and laugh like it’s a game. At least, he thought, he wasn’t a girl. They had the added worries of being raped, or worse. Every girl he knew that went north started to take the pill as they just expected to be raped at least once during the trip.

When people talk of immigrants, they rarely think about them as human beings, but more as an abstract social problem. The majority of those that put themselves at risk to cross the border illegally do not choose to do so, but are forced, like Pedro, by their family’s living conditions at home. Most would prefer to stay with their friends and families, but instead are forced into an underworld of crime and violence when they cross the border...

Maryknoll missionaries have accompanied immigrants through heartbreaking circumstances in countries all around the world. Based on this experience they look to elected officials to implement just and compassionate immigration policies that counter punitive and isolationist tendencies, that recognize the importance of global solidarity in an intensely polarized world and that respect the inherent dignity and human rights of all migrants and asylum seekers, documented and undocumented alike.

For more information, see *Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world*, a voter reflection guide prepared for the 2008 U.S. elections.

<http://maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm>