



A weekly reflection by members of the Precious Blood Community

May 15, 2024

**Kate Reid, ASC**

**A Pentecost Story**

We were all gathered in one place, the St. Pius V Church parking lot in south St. Louis: approximately 12 Afghan women refugees, their trauma therapist, Jean Abbott, CSJ, and Homa Zafer, their interpreter. At the time, I was a member of the board of the Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma, an agency Jean Abbott had founded and that served some of the clients for whom I was an immigration legal advocate. We had been planning this respite day for the women for a couple of months. We wanted to let the beauty of the ASC property in Ruma, Illinois work its magic to refresh their spirits. The gloriously mild and sunny Saturday in May was exactly what we had hoped for.

A van and a couple of cars were ready to transport the women who had registered for the trip. A few women had brought their daughters, but not so many that we didn't have seats for them. The girls had heard how much their mothers enjoyed an earlier day at Ruma, and they wanted to be included in this one. *However*, just when I thought we were ready to get the caravan on its way, a car full of about seven teenage Afghan girls rolled into the parking lot, horn honking. They, too, wanted in on what, according to their mothers' accounts, promised to be a good time in the country.

I was annoyed. They weren't invited, and the van and two cars were full. I told them the day was for their mothers, and that we didn't have room for them. They caucused and said they would squeeze themselves back into the car and follow us for the hour-long trip to Ruma. Okay. We were off.

Once at the Ruma property and after sharing the food they had brought with them, some of the women strolled through a grove of trees and admired the peonies and irises in bloom. Others sat in the lakeside swing and chatted. The girls entertained themselves by taking selfies as they lounged on the boat dock. Five of them commandeered a golf cart and turned it into something of a carnival ride. Then the girls decided this outing needed more fun. They drove their car up to the lake, popped in a CD of Afghan music, and drew all of us into a circle dance. Afghan dance steps were simple enough for us Americans to follow, but the real challenge was to follow their lead by extending our arms to each other while rolling our shoulders to create a graceful, undulating wave in rhythm to the music. Smiles and laughter all around. The dancing prompted two or three of the women to roll down a nearby grassy slope. After years of living under threats and abuse from the Taliban, they had found a safe place to play. Their giggles provided more music for our ears.

When I was back home that evening, I gave myself time to revisit the day and let recollections of the refugees ease and joy slip into my mind like slides onto a screen. It was then that I realized this Saturday in May was the Vigil of Pentecost. Awe and gratitude welled up within me. I realized that I had witnessed the Holy Spirit rush into the midst of the women and girls. I had seen the Consoler and Protector move among them like a stream of water reviving their resilience as they remembered good times in Afghanistan and realized they once again had a chance to set the scene for new celebrations of life's simple joys.

And I hold on to this life lesson: Don't be too hasty to resist intruders. They may well be agents of the Holy Spirit, She who loves a good party.

*Sr. Kate is a member of the Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ and has concentrated her ministry on being an advocate for Immigrants. She currently serves on the Catholic Immigration Law Project*

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*This weekly reflection is made available to all who are part of our Precious Blood family. Feel free to share it with others. Would you be willing to write a reflection? If so, please contact Vicky Otto at [votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org](mailto:votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org)*