

PROFILES

Name: Manuel Eduardo Santos

Age: 57

Family life: Married with 1 daughter.

Country of origin: Lisbon, Portugal.

Work: I managed a china factory in Portugal. I've been working in a sandwich shop ever since I arrived in the UK.

Parish: Holy Redeemer, Oval.

Date of arrival: 1987.

I came to England looking for a better life for my wife and family. I was 36 when I first arrived. Initially I thought I would stay for three or four years; I've been here for 21 years now.

Biggest surprise

Learning the language and getting to know the city. London is a beautiful city. I love Westminster Cathedral.

Miss the most

My family - I miss my sisters and brother, my nephews and nieces. I like to get back to Portugal two or three times a year.

Likes the most about Britain

I like the life here; it is very different to Portugal.

Likes the least/hardest

Sometimes the job is difficult. In Portugal, I would work eight hours a day. Here, I work between 10 and 12 hours a day, previous to that I was working 14 hours a day. I didn't have time to do anything else. I had more free time in Portugal. Here the day begins at 4.30am and work doesn't finish until around 7.30pm.

Faith journey in England

My religion is very important. God has been very faithful. When I need something, I ask for his help and sometimes the help comes, but not always! When I first arrived in the UK, there was a very small Portuguese community. Those I met told me about the Portuguese Mass in Stockwell and I started to go there. It was a tough time not being able to speak English and not having a support network.

I moved to the Holy Redeemer a couple of years ago. I help out at the church on a Saturday and Sunday. I help the priests and am involved with the running of the catechist courses. There are six catechesis courses running for six to 18 year-olds. The priest is the principal catechist. The community is quite young. Initially there were four people who went to the Portuguese Mass, which included my wife and I, now there are 200. With the enlargement of the European Union, more young Portuguese people have come to the UK. The Portuguese community is becoming larger.



We say the rosary everyday in May to celebrate Mary's month. We have also started rosary processions and in the middle of May we process with a statue of Our Lady of Fatima around the local community. A lot of people come to pray and to sing. Last year, a coach load came from York to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima.

The Church in England and Wales

The Church in England and Wales hasn't given us anything. We have had no real experience of the English Church.