

PROFILES

Name: José de Jesús Vasquez

Country of origin: Honduras, Central America.

Marital status: Married. Father of three daughters, aged 10 – 25. The eldest live in Honduras and Madrid. The youngest lives with Jose and his wife in England.

Date of arrival in Britain: December 2005

Profession: Carpenter, decorator, electrician.

Parish: St Anne's, Vauxhall.

Reason for coming to the UK: After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, crime and juvenile delinquency increased dramatically in Honduras. Poverty increased and it became very difficult to make a living. I had a sister who lived here. I came on holiday and had the opportunity to remain.

Experience of Church in England: I am Catholic and I believed in God, but through my difficulties here, I have begun truly to know God. Needing someone to support me in my difficulties I walked one day into a Catholic church in Clapham, where I met the members of a prayer group who led me to know God's word. He has performed many miracles for me in this country. God sent me here and he knows how long I will be here. Through the grace of God, many people have helped me in my daily life here. Here I've learned what is written in the Bible, whereas before I had always been afraid to read the Bible because I had heard the verse which says: "It would have been better had you never known me," and now I know what I was missing out on. Now that I now what it really means to read the Bible, I try to share it with others. I now realise that the Bible is a treasure that helps you to survive, that it contains advice to help you deal with every possible sadness or difficulty.

There are many ways to live out God's word but the greatest of all is to serve him without expecting anything in return because God has done marvels for us. What I always say – this is like a mantra for me – is that God loved us when we were children in our mothers' womb.

My daughter is proud that now she has a father who can really give her good advice now, thanks to the Bible. I was an alcoholic and I neglected my responsibility towards my children and my parents. My wife became my mother. I was like her eldest child, she had to look after me and work to provide for our children but she had faith in God and prayed that one day her husband would change. His work is being done. Now I belong to a prayer group here, I go on a vigil with them the first Saturday of the month, I went on a spiritual retreat yesterday where we learned about Holy Week. I knew none of this before. Also with the help of the Lord, I have had the opportunity to help set up a Spanish-speaking AA group. We started off with three people. Now there are 18 of us in the group.

