

## [A Real-Life Horror Story](#)

Posted in [Honduras](#) by [kirstenrotz](#)

Several months ago, the older brother of one of our fourth graders was killed by the gang in their neighborhood. Later, we found out that it wasn't necessarily because he was involved in any gang activity, rather he refused to hand over his sisters to their violence and dangers. At 10 years-old, the fourth grader is the youngest of five. In addition to another brother, she has two older sisters, 17 and 14 years-old, respectively (the 14 year-old was one of my students last year); they are all being raised by their mother.

Now that their eldest brother is no longer preventing them from taking what they want, the gang returned to their family. The gang demanded that the family hand over the two older girls for a Satanic sacrifice (Yes! You read that right!) less than two weeks away from the day of the demand. More than likely, both girls would be violently violated, raped, and killed.

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Unbelievable, right? I mean, this is the stuff of horror stories. Making matters worse, everyone's hands were tied. If the girls did not go quietly, the whole family would be punished (read: killed). There is a community of Franciscan Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart in their neighborhood, who brought the problem to our attention, but the gang knows that the Sisters will do anything to help this family. At this point, they live on the edge of the neighborhood in relative peace with the gang. The Sisters know that if the two girls don't show up as demanded, the wrath of the gang will be on anyone and everyone they can find.

What could anyone do? The answer is simple. Pray. Here in my community, we did our best to come up with solutions. The bishop who works with the gangs was contacted to see if there was any sort of other agreement or negotiation that can be worked out.

The power of prayer and positive thought is incredible. I shared the first part of this story with my family and friends, and it spread like wildfire! I continue to be humbled and grateful for all those who took the quick minute to share this story with their friends and family.

PART II: Only two days after learning of the struggles of this family who is dear to our school and community, I learned that, thanks be to God, there was a very good plan in place to get my student, her sisters, and their mother safely out of the city. The plan would require them to start over in a city far away, and it would be hard, but much less difficult than the current situation. If everything were to go as planned, it will also keep everyone else who is involved (either directly or secondarily) out of harm's way.

The success of this proposed plan hinged on a few key discussions to be had in the following days with the family and the Franciscan Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

PART III: Maybe I'm naïve, but I really thought that the greatest need in this situation was just a good place for the girls and the family to get away to.

Within days of the demand/threat from the gang, the directors of the two religious communities, Sor Paty and Hermana Annie, met with the mother and her eldest daughter.

eldest daughter. At this point, the daughter was the only one in the family who knew of the gang's demands. Sor Paty and Hermana Annie presented the idea of the mother taking her daughters to a new home in a neighboring city as a chance to leave many of their current struggles behind, with the potential to start anew in a place with greater opportunities.

You'd think that despite a few initial concerns and reservations, the mother would have agreed. She didn't. She didn't want to leave her life, her home, her eldest son, and her own mother.

Sor Paty and Hermana Annie quickly realized that they were going to have to take off the kid gloves. They explained the situation with the gang in the family's neighborhood, with the eldest daughter's confirmation of what the gang promised would come to pass to the 17 year-old and 14 year-old.

"If that's God's will, then I suppose they'll have to go to the gang," was the mother's reply.

Is your mind being blown right now?

Mine was too. Try as they might, Hermana Annie and Sor Paty simply couldn't get the mother to see that her daughters' deaths at the hands of the gang were more than likely not "God's will". It turned into a negotiation. The mother finally agreed to think about leaving the city with her daughters...but only if her son and mother could go as well. Unfortunately, this doesn't work for the family home that had originally agreed to take just the girls.

The mother and family continued to be indecisive over the weekend. Although she was aware of the eminent dangers, the mother did not hurry in making up her mind. It wasn't until the following Monday that the mother finally gave her consent to leave with her family, son and mother included. Luckily, Sor Paty and Hermana Annie found another temporary alternative for the whole family. We are hopeful that this temporary hiding place will result in something more long-term.

Directly the following day, the family met at our school to be whisked away with minimum possessions to a new place far away, doing their best to live "under the radar".

PART IV: While this situation is nearly impossible to come to grips with, as it is, it's even harder to understand why a mother wouldn't immediately jump leaps and bounds to protect her children. It's been a question on all of our minds the past couple weeks. Trying to help me put things into perspective, Sor Paty asked me to step into the shoes of the mother. Her eldest son was recently murdered. She has lived a lifetime full of dire hardships (ones that most of us are far too fortunate to even fathom). She is incredibly reserved and shy, hardly opening herself up, even to people she knows and trusts. The family is incredibly close-knit; in times of hardship and pain, they take comfort in the company of one another.

After seriously considering the mother's struggles, we imagine she must be in shock. She didn't give any other reasons as to why she didn't want to leave initially, but I feel like it must be something akin to learned helplessness.

Who knew that our prayer truly needed to be directed towards the reception of this woman and her decisions regarding her family?

Please pray for this family. Pray that they will find safety in their new home. Pray the gang will make a miraculous choice to let their departure go. Pray for the Sisters who live in fear of the terrors that could be posed to their lives. And even pray for the gang members; it's too easy to forget that each one of them is someone's loved one. It's too easy to let them hide behind the "gangster" label. Please keep the people of Honduras close to your hearts. It hurts less to remove ourselves from the suffering of others, but it definitely doesn't help. Even interacting with my fourth grade student in the days leading up to her departure, it wasn't until I watched them drive away that I realized that despite this particular "dodged bullet", she and her family will continue living in fear and pain of the unrelenting struggles that are so prevalent in the marginalized populations of developing countries.

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*[Editor's note. Benefactors came to the rescue. They looked for a job, a home, and a school in another city for the girls and the mother. However, they did not want to leave the grandmother and family; so, they returned to San Pedro Sula after the deadline. By God's mercy, the demonic evil planned did not take place.]*