

Sarena's story:

The Selfless Love of Adoption

Today, and every day since learning about *Gabriel Network*, I rejoice. I love to share my story about why I rejoice with all who will listen. My broken-English makes it difficult to tell, but each day I take another word from my Spanish-English/English Spanish book given to me by my roommate, Shelly. When I see the book, it reminds me to choose a word and speak it again and again as many times as possible until I “get it.” Shelly does not know that I have no idea what she means by the American phrase “get it.” But she tells me over and over that “you’ll get it, you’ll get it,” as if it is something the postman will bring.

I tell you all this with a joy in my heart that did not exist even just three months ago. The joy comes from my reassurance that by choosing adoption, not abortion, for my baby, I made the best decision possible for her to have a happy life. A decision I most probably would not have come to without the love and care shown to me by the *Gabriel Network*.

The day before Thanksgiving, I was brought to a small ranch house on a quiet street much different than any I’d been to before and met the ladies from *Gabriel Network*. I shared my story with them and relayed how, just the night before, I’d slept on a hard concrete floor in a building in downtown Washington. Little did I know, then, that the joy I speak of now was about to begin.

Living a quiet life in a remote mountain village in South America, I worked with my mother as a vendor in the market square. Mother was responsible for running our family business selling locally-made goods and produce. I was young and happy, relying on my strong Catholic faith to guide me each day.

Juan was an attractive man. A businessman who ran a successful import/export company. He was also persistent and convinced me that selling our wares through him would make us both very rich and make caring for my now ailing mother much easier.

This handsome man, who stood a foot taller than me, showered me with gifts, and with dinners at some of the nearby city’s finer restaurants. I was beyond being in love with him and accepted Juan’s proposal. I gave in to his insistence that we share his apartment even though it was an hour’s drive from the market—and mother.

Soon after the move, each day I began feeling somewhat ill. I soon discovered I was pregnant. I knew I could not share the news with my family but was certain that Juan loved me and having his child would be a welcomed event.



He beat me! When I told him, he beat me! The emotional and physical pain was more than I could bear. During the struggle, I did everything possible to shield my abdomen from the blows. After threatening to kill me if I did not rid myself of this “problem,” he kicked and punched me further. Left alone and bleeding in our apartment, I fled as soon as I could for fear he would come back and beat me again.

Unable to return home, friends arranged for a priest from Mexico, Father David, to escort me across a hot Texas desert in to the United States—a trip that took four days without food or water. Once over the border, Father David arranged my travel to Washington.

Even a thousand miles away, I feared for my life because Juan was a wealthy man and if he wanted to find me, he could.

I wrestled with the idea of abortion, yes, from time to time. I wrestled with the decision to keep my baby but was very afraid to lose the child if authorities found out I was keeping a baby in secret. I felt an unbreakable bond with the child I was carrying and I kept pushing away the idea of ending its life. I was not aware that I could give my baby the life he or she could have by what I learned was “adoption.”

After months of holding in fears, tension and stress, and crying tears of relief, I realized *Gabriel Network* was a God-send. A life-saving measure for both me and my baby. Soon into the conversation, the meeting grew intensely emotional for me. The housing director, the social worker and the client

care coordinator, all began crying with me as I realized my ordeal might soon be over and that there really were people in the world who care about me.

Three short days later I was sharing a room with Shelly. Shelly is the type of person who finds it difficult to relate to most people. An American, she seems as foreign to her environment as I am to mine. She is helping me to learn English and I am helping her to learn to trust and be trusted. We are becoming best friends. I am convinced this friendship is another gift sent from the Lord through the *Gabriel Network*.

With my due date rapidly approaching, I had not yet made a decision. Keep the baby? Or, give it up for adoption? Time eventually got the best of me and in late-December I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. I had only one day to make a decision. However, deep inside I knew what I had to do. My baby is now in the arms of a loving couple who waited years for the chance. I hope to meet her again someday to tell her how much I, and the Lord, love her.

I recognize that these things don’t just happen. These unexplainable dramatic events, are a total miracle, an example of Jesus’ love through a “network” of people who care.

It is why *Gabriel Network* exists. For people like me.

Sarena