

# Family has its 'miracle' daughter through St. Jude, patron of desperate causes

Eldrizah Empuerto was shocked and trembling when she found out she was pregnant in the fall of 2001.

She and her husband had moved to Canada from the Philippines just two months earlier and were still trying to adjust to life in Vancouver.

Empuerto had been pregnant twice before, about a decade earlier, and both of her babies had been born prematurely. Neither had survived.

Her worst fears were confirmed a few months later; in May of 2002, she was admitted to B.C. Women's Hospital to give birth. Doctors said her unborn child was 24 weeks old, weighed only 500 grams, and would likely not make it.

"I was so confused, I was scared. It was just six months being in Canada," said Empuerto.

She had already buried two children. What reason did she have to believe this situation would turn out differently? She started praying for the intercession of St. Jude, patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes.

"On my day of delivery, the chaplain there asked: 'What do you want?' I said: 'I just want my baby to be baptized. I don't know what will happen after, but I want my baby to be baptized before it dies.'"

The chaplain asked the name of her parish. Empuerto and her husband Mark attended St. Jude's Parish, not far from their Vancouver home, but she hesitated. They were so new to the community, she didn't think anyone would know who they were. After she mentioned St. Jude's to the chaplain, "it was spread in the church. A lot of the church community, especially volunteers, prayed for us."



**Eldrizah Empuerto and her husband Mark say they have their daughter Mira Cleo thanks to the intercession of St. Jude. Agnieszka Ruck, Canadian Catholic News**

After about a week in hospital, Empuerto gave birth to a tiny baby girl. She named her Mira Cleo, a play on the word "miracle."

"From then on, it was a miracle for us every day" that the little girl lived, said Empuerto.

But everyday life was also still an incredible challenge. When Empuerto was discharged from hospital, her newborn fighting for life in a neonatal intensive care unit, her husband learned he was being laid off.

"I would walk every day to St. Jude's church. I pray, I pray, I pray," said Empuerto.

Then, she would catch a ride with Mark to the hospital to visit their baby girl. On their way home, she would go back to their church and pray some more.

Eight days after she was born, Mira was still alive. Doctors admitted to Empuerto they didn't think she would live that long.

Her daughter underwent a total of 11 surgeries and is now in Grade 12. She dances, plays the violin, and is an active member of St. Jude's.

"It was a scary and sad pregnancy, but I'm so glad she's here," said Empuerto. "God really provided for everything we need."

Her husband's job loss turned out to be a blessing in disguise, Empuerto said in hindsight. She doesn't know what she would have done if she had had to navigate the public transit system and visit her sick daughter in the hospital alone. Her husband was re-hired by his employer within a week.

"Through the intercession of St. Jude, God works mysteriously."

St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, has an incredibly popular following in Vancouver. The parish in his name receives hundreds of prayer requests for difficult situations and has earned the nickname "church of little miracles."

St. Jude's parish was established in 1944 and its first Masses were held at a community hall in Vancouver. Its first pastor was Father Donald Campbell.

The parish history says around the time Father Campbell was ordained, he made a novena to St. Jude for the healing of his desperately ill sister, promising if she recovered he would name the parish after the patron saint of hopeless cases.

Apparently his prayers were answered. St. Jude's Church was built and officially opened by 1947. The elementary school followed in 1954. Six years later, the community received a relic of St. Jude and became officially recognized as a shrine. To this day, the parish offers a weekly veneration of the relic.

St. Jude's Parish marked 75 years of prayer, community, and the miraculous intercession of St. Jude with a formal reception at a downtown hotel.

"Whenever I talk to people, I say: 'try to find a little light in the darkness you have, because God is there,'" said Empuerto. "It's like the world is on top of you. It's too dark. But then at the end of the day, you see."