

November 5, Ordinary 31A (Joshua 3:7-17)

Such an unbelievable and far-fetched plan. And yet the people believe Joshua.

by [Margarita Solis-Deal](#) in the [November 2023](#) issue

Joshua, an Israelite, living in a time of struggle, conflict, and violence, attunes his ear to God. God calls Joshua to mobilize a full community to get to safer ground and perhaps to a place where living in peace is possible. The promised land is waiting, but there is one catch: Joshua and his people will need to go through a swollen river to get there.

It is difficult to appreciate the enormity of this task, but God tells Joshua that he will not be alone in this great mobilizing effort. God is with him, and the people will see this to be true.

Therefore, with full trust in the voice he hears, Joshua sets out to tell the people that the living God is with them as a community. He continues by giving the complete, unbelievable, awesome description of how God is going to help them cross the Jordan River.

Such an unbelievable and far-fetched plan. And yet the people believe Joshua, they trust him, and they see God's presence in him. Off they go to the Jordan River, trusting in God and in Joshua with the great hope that better days will come. The journey is not going to be easy, and Joshua better have understood God's message correctly.

The beauty of this story is that Joshua invites the people to trust God and to hold onto that trust, fixing their eyes on God no matter what unfolds. The God who is present in all things and through all things. The living God who will lead the people through the swollen river. They listen, they trust, and off they go.

Maria and Pedro, after much suffering, yearned for better days in a place where living in peace was possible. Where earning a decent wage to buy food and have a safe place to live was doable. Where their children would have opportunities to live a

life filled with hope and possibility instead of poverty and violence. Living on two dollars a day was not enough to feed their family. They prayed, they discerned, and they trusted that the living God would be with them.

Off they went, leaving their beloved Mexico to *el norte* with the hope that life would be better. They journeyed together with their three children, traversing the mountains, the rivers, and the desert lands.

One difficult day during their travels, Maria started falling behind. She reached her physical limit. Exhausted, she pleaded with her husband to leave her in the desert. Pedro, full of compassion and love, said to her, “Maria, when I married you, I promised to love you throughout my entire life, and I will not leave you. God will guide us through.”

Pedro mobilized his family on their way to a better life. He trusted in God and kept his eyes fixed on the living God. When they finally arrived at the edge of the Rio Grande, the river did not part and the flow of water did not stop. Yet Pedro’s trust that the living God would continue to guide them—and that Maria would hold her own—did not falter. The family lives in Philadelphia today.

The beauty of this story is that Pedro invited his family to consider a living God. The God who is present in all things and through all things. The living God who guided his family to a better life. They listened, they trusted, and off they went.

I was working in Guatemala with an organization that provided medical and surgical care to those living in remote villages. My husband and I had sold our belongings and adventured off to a place we’d visited only once before—and that had been for the job interview. A year later, when I was just starting to understand the scope of my role, my siblings and I realized that my mother’s Alzheimer’s disease was advancing and her symptoms increasing.

My husband and I knew what we had to do. My husband moved first to Florida to find work, and I followed to start a caregiving journey that lasted eight years.

The beauty of this story is that we held on to a living God in the caregiving process. The God who is present in all things and through all things. The living God who guided my mother to eternal rest. We listened, we trusted, and off we went.

The Joshua story is a trust story about the living God who guides our life’s journey. It is our story. Listen, trust, and go.