

Mother Lange was an immigrant  
*By Sister Virginie Fish, OSP*

Without immigrants, where would we, as a nation, be?

While concerned about legislation to curtail and control immigrants, we forget the tremendous contribution immigrants have made to this country, to the church, the world.

As with immigrants the world over, the family of Elizabeth Clarisse Lange fled the revolution of Haiti. They sought a better life taking refuge in Santiago de Cuba. Elizabeth, due to dire circumstances there, migrated to America and eventually settled in Maryland—a slave state, no less. However, settling in Baltimore, provided the opportunity for her to be the instrument of God's miraculous intervention.

Due to the political, social, religious and economic situation existing where God “planted” her, Elizabeth Lange, an immigrant, a Catholic, and an educated black woman proved to be a formidable instrument in the hands of a providential God who made a way out of no way. She became the Haitian immigrant that revolutionized the Catholic Church. She founded, by God's grace, the first congregation of women religious of African ancestry in the world. She, an immigrant, is Haiti's gift to America.

Should America ever forget that the only non-immigrant on our shores is the Native American, we would effectively close doors to a rich source of wealth.—mindful that there is more to wealth than money. There is the wealth of contributions spawned from ideas, vision, courage, determination and the generosity that only the love of God can ferment in the souls and deeds of his instruments.

Immigrants have much to give. We can not allow paranoia, jealousy, fear, power and the status of the privileged make us forget whence we have come. Nothing is impossible with God. We must demand that doors of opportunity be left open for others to come to our shores, enlighten us, gift us, and share with all of us the unlimited wisdom, skills and grace God offers us through his immigrants.