

## Voices of Texas: Agnes Fernandes

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*-Agnes*



Agnes Fernandes of Sugarland lived through the murder of her son in 2008. Then, a year later her husband was murdered in an unrelated incident. Now, the men who murdered her husband are behind bars. After years of waiting, the trials are over.

Agnes recently shared her story of tragedy and forgiveness with a Bible Study group at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Sugarland.

Her son John, 23, was murdered in 2008. Since the assailant pleaded guilty, there was no trial. He was sentenced to 25 years for murder and 35 years for arson. He is eligible for parole after 12 years.

Joe Fernandes, 54, her husband, was helping a friend at a convenience store in Houston when he was murdered by four youths who wanted to rob the store. He had been on the job for only two hours.



Three boys were convicted of killing her husband. Two of them received life in prison and the informant will serve a 10-year sentence. The fourth man who was in the store at the time of the killing has not been arrested.

“Attending the trial of the man who pulled the trigger was like reliving the murder all over again. It was as traumatic for me as the murder had been. It was difficult to hear what the informant had to say,” Agnes said.

Agnes testified during the first trial. “It was especially painful for me when the jury was shown pictures of my husband’s autopsy. Attending the trial was a very traumatic experience. It was very emotionally draining for me and my family.”

Agnes, who is opposed to the death penalty, is grateful that none of the verdicts included the death penalty. She said she and her family have forgiven the men responsible for the murders. “We only hope that they reconcile with God and turn their lives around and become valuable citizens,” she said. “For me, that is what being Catholic is all about - forgiveness and the love of God. My faith has helped me through this double tragedy. If it wasn’t for my faith I wouldn’t have been able to deal with this tragedy.”

“Both the murder of my husband and my son were senseless killings. Valuable lives were taken for no reason at all,” Agnes concluded.

*Agnes Fernandes taught school for 35 years. She taught students in Pakistan, Kuwait and the U.S. She is a cradle Catholic from Pakistan. She plans on starting a support group for parents who have had a child taken by homicide and other traumatic deaths. She was approached by a group in her congregation to start the group after others in her church heard her speak about her loss. Her son-in-law, daughter and grandson moved in with her after the death of her husband.*

*This profile was originally developed by Chris Castillo for the Summer 2012 Seizing the Momentum newsletter.*