

My name is Casandra and I have been at Saint Child for 9 months. I am 22 years old and am part Native American (Apache) and Spanish. I recently gave birth to my baby boy on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009. His name is Johnathan Lua Espinoza. My other 3 sons were taken by DHS and are to be adopted by their paternal great aunt and uncle.

2 years prior to arriving at Saint Child, I was staying from friend to friend, wherever there was a place for me to lay my head. My lack of permanent housing is one of the reasons my boys were taken away. I've struggled with meth and alcohol addictions off and on over the years as well. I was sober for a year and a half before I relapsed in May of 2008, after the birth of my 3<sup>rd</sup> son. Because of my relapse, I lost any and all the trust I had from my family, DHS worker, and former boyfriend. DHS tried several times to place me in clean and sober housing, but I refused to stay.

Today I am thrilled to know that my case worker is proud of the progress I have made while living at Saint Child. I am even more proud that my children have a clean, sober and loving mother. I now attend drug and alcohol treatment, am studying for my GED and I'm regaining the trust I lost. I see a counselor every week to help me with my post traumatic stress disorder due to a physically abusive relationship I was in, where I was abused if I did not comply.

My long term career goal is to be a forensic scientist. My main goal is to be a better mother and role model for my boys. They are God's gift to me and I realize this now. Had it not been for them, I would still be doing drugs, possibly in jail or maybe dead. I am remorseful for what I put my boys through and I will now forever guard my heart and my children from anything happening to them again.

Saint Child will allow me to stay up to 6 months after the birth of my baby, and I intend to stay the full time. From here I hope to move into a transitional living program.

God has finally opened my eyes and made me realize I was headed down the wrong path going nowhere. I am grateful every day that he placed Jackie, Cindy, Mike and Angela in mine and Johnathan's lives. They are wonderful people and it is because of them that I stayed here. Cindy is like a second mom to me and I love her so much. Mike is like the father I never had growing up. Angela can brighten my day when I'm feeling down. And Jackie is a great mentor and role model for me. I am thankful for everything they have done for me and for everything still to come.

I am a daughter of God now and I trust in him to help me through my struggles. I have been sober for 12 months now and I have faith in God that I will not go back to the way of the world!