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Connecticut Teacher Marisol Arroyo-Castro Takes Classroom Crucifix Fight to Federal Appeals Court After Being Escorted Out of School

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Private speech,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Marisol Arroyo-Castro, a veteran Connecticut public school teacher with more than 30 years in the classroom, is taking her fight over a classroom crucifix to the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, with oral arguments scheduled for 7 December 2026 in New York City. Administrators at DiLoreto Elementary & Middle School in New Britain ordered her in December 2024 to remove a crucifix she had displayed near her desk for roughly a decade. She refused - and within days she had been formally reprimanded, suspended two days without pay, and escorted out of the school.

The crucifix had not been a secret. It sat near her desk for about ten years, through countless school days, while she taught generation after generation of New Britain children.

Then, in a single December week, it became the reason her career unravelled. What happens next in a New York courtroom will decide whether a teacher's quiet expression of faith belongs to her - or to the goverment that signs her paycheque.

Marisol Arroyo-Castro Crucifix Teacher Second Circuit

The sequence moved fast. On 11 December 2024, Arroyo-Castro was formally reprimanded for insubordination after refusing the order to remove the crucifix. The crucifix was taken down anyway.

She was suspended for two days without pay, placed on paid administrative leave on 16 December 2024, and in March 2025 she was reassigned to a non-teaching role.

She sued in January 2025, arguing that the school had violated her First Amendment rights. In November 2025, a federal judge denied her request for a preliminary injunction, finding that a display inside a public school classroom counted as government speech - the school's message, not the teacher's. Her lawyers, the First Liberty Institute and the law firm WilmerHale, are now asking the Second Circuit to overturn that ruling.

Connecticut Teacher Escorted Out Crucifix Classroom

Being escorted out of a school you have served for three decades is not a small thing. For Arroyo-Castro, it was the public end of a career built classroom by classroom, in front of colleagues and students who had known her for years. The district has not hidden behind silence - it disputes her account of what happened, and says the matter goes further than a single religious symbol.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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