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Robin: "I want my family to radiate love"

Robin is a musician, married with three children. In this interview, we ask him about his experience of evenings of recollection and the retreats he's attended at Zonnewende (Netherlands).

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You met Opus Dei through a family member, first participating in catechetical evening classes and

later in recollections. Why were you interested in Opus Dei activities?

I saw them as something valuable.

What was valuable about them?

I gained a deeper knowledge of the Catholic faith, and the formation had a rich content I'd never encountered before.

As a child, I never learned how to go to confession and I didn't know what the sacraments really entailed.

Through the formation I received, my understanding grew from taking it for granted as something cultural to a deeper, lived reality, something I embraced on a personal level.

How has Opus Dei helped you?

Firstly, it gave me the opportunity to go to confession. That is the sacrament for the forgiveness of sins,

and it allowed me to grow: to confront my sins and find a way out. And I found a deeper level in my life of prayer. The meditations guide you by the hand; you get inspiration on how to pray.

Would you say that you've become a different kind of Christian?

Yes, I've gone from a "cultural Christian" to a practicing Christian, someone who lives his faith in daily life.

You've been attending monthly evenings of recollection for six years...

Yes, the first recollection I attended was in Utrecht. I benefited greatly from sitting before the Tabernacle and surrendering to the silence, allowing myself to let go in silence. This is something I can never do at home, and maybe not even during Mass, because there are so many

stimuli from other people and music. In silence in front of the Tabernacle, I can pray in another way and have a conversation with Christ.

Why do you take time to reflect?

Because I need to take a step back and pray. And I also need to go to confession often. Additionally, there is a talk given by a layperson, where you gain knowledge of the faith that you wouldn't otherwise have. There are always special topics that help me in daily life. During the talk, you learn to identify areas where growth is possible – with some effort, of course.

And also the team spirit: there are others, you're not on this journey alone. Being there together and being faithful strengthens everyone. It's encouraging to know that there are other men with the same passion.

What was difficult for you?

A few years ago, we started with a group of young adults, and I know from others that they initially found the duration difficult. It's not very interactive. Sometimes you don't catch everything the priest says during the meditation, but that's okay because you can also pray silently in your own way during the meditation. Often, you understand the key points that matter.

If you were to invite someone, what would you say?

The lack of stimuli can be challenging, and it's okay to experience that discomfort. Time seems to slow down. It's very important for me to have something that allows me to simply step back.

At home, it can be difficult to pray in peace. That's why I see the evening of recollection as a gift that helps me

build a better prayer life and grow as a person.

How do you feel when you go home afterwards?

Often, you think: I feel recharged. But when you get home, you quickly land back in reality. You've had that moment of reflection, but at home, you can be in a completely different mode.

Is it still worthwhile?

Yes, I think so.

You've also participated in a retreat, which is like an extended recollection of three days or so. What was that like?

The retreat was similar to a recollection, but more intense. It brought me much more depth in my life of faith. I especially appreciated the conversations with the priest and

found the meditations inspiring. At some point, I noticed that the amount of material became overwhelming. That's when I took a break to exercise, and then I was ready to continue.

What difference does it make in your daily life?

I've started to see my work differently. Work takes on a deeper dimension, and you can offer it up and become aware that it is also a sacrifice.

And family life?

That it, too, is something you can offer to God. Everything can be given to God. That's what Opus Dei means, the Work of God.

What do you hope for in the future?

I want my family to be more active and to radiate love. I would love for my children to not only be my children but also my friends. I want to be fully present to my wife and children, share hobbies, and create beautiful moments together.

What does Opus Dei mean to you?

That you can make an offering out of the whole day; that you can take God with you in your work and daily events, as a friend. When you do that, everything becomes something positive, even the difficult things, because they are a gift for the Lord.