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Our Family--Plus Four More

Rosa and Alberto already had twelve children when they decided to adopt four little girls from India. Along with her life as a mother, Rosa, a supernumerary member of Opus Dei, is an expert in child rearing, ran a music conservatory, and taught high school.

07/02/2006

"When we married, I had not yet met the Work," Rosa explains, "but

Alberto and I shared a natural and joyous expectancy of the children to come, as any Christian couple would. For the first seventeen years, I devoted myself to homemaking. The children came along, one after the other. I was 22 when the first one was born, 35 when the eleventh arrived, and then five years later, my youngest daughter."

During those years the family moved twice. "After the sixth child was born, I found that I had some free time. It's strange; the more children I had, the simpler our life seemed. While carrying the eighth baby, I enrolled in a merchandising school.

"This was the result of an agreement I made with one of my boys. One day when he was tired of school, to encourage him I told him that if his mom went to school he could surely do the same. I finished the course of studies when my eleventh child was

born. Experience taught me," she adds, "that having more to do helps a person learn to make better use of time."

Next, Rosa wanted to cultivate in her children a love for music. As there was no studio in their town, she decided to join a group of other women who were interested in opening one. What started almost as a joke turned into the Huelva Conservatory of Music: "We opened it with ten students and my grandmother's old piano. Now there are 600 students, and several other music studios have opened in nearby towns. I directed the Conservatory for ten years."

About that time, Rosa found her vocation to Opus Dei: "I asked for admission when I was expecting my twelfth child. I had heard of the Work since I was a teenager." When asked how this changed her life, Rosa

answered, "I live just as I did before, but with greater interior peace, and the awareness that as a daughter of God, nothing that happens in my life is out of place. I can't say that my vocation to the Work has added anything in particular to my Christian vocation; it's just one way of expressing my Baptismal commitment.

"Take, for example, our financial situation. When money was scarce," Rosa says, "I didn't have to worry about how to spend it. We made do with the essentials--the basic needs of the children, and their good education. We couldn't afford private schools so we supplemented their public education ourselves. I didn't know that our house had room for so many friends of my children, especially the dining room. But to make the food stretch, I made lots of vegetable soup and salads from the garden, and saved left-overs. My

soups became famous! Sometimes the guests were surprised that there was room for everyone at the table. There was nothing unusual about it and we did just fine."

The family moved to Seville when the older children were ready for the university. The younger girls attended a high school whose spiritual direction was entrusted to the Prelature of Opus Dei. And there Rosa found a position from which she retired after fifteen years of teaching.

Enter India

Rosa's final "madness" was the adoption of four little Indian sisters who were given Christian names after their catechesis and Baptism. "About that time," Rosa recalls, "I realized that while I was unable to bear more children, I still had a strong maternal love to give. I asked Alberto and the children what they

thought about adoption, and since we're all a little crazy, they liked the idea--especially Maria, the youngest. The adoption process was long and difficult, but two years later we were told that two little girls were available. But when we went after them and the authorities discovered how many children we had, they transferred us to a waiting list. We had to go back home in sorrow. It looked as if adoption was impossible."

But a little later, Alberto and Rosa contacted the president of a non-governmental organization who had gone to India to adopt a daughter. "A few days later, she called us with the news that the orphanage had four little sisters no one wanted. After considering the matter in a 'family summit,' we concluded that if we could have taken two, surely there would be room for four.

"These little girls were a gift from St. Josemaria and Our Lady. It was on October 2 that they left India (anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei), and arrived in Seville on October 7 (feast of Our Lady of the Rosary). They have opened for us an immense panorama of generosity. We've received the best thing of all, especially from the children. People tell us they were very lucky. I say it's our family that is lucky."

Alberto and Rosa have fifteen grandchildren, counting one who went to heaven a month ago. Two more are on the way. "We see in these little ones the youth of the future. The house is once again filled with laughter and constant requests to 'tell me a story, Grandma.' The truth is that we like this business of being grandparents."

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(08/18/2025)