

# **“I can only give thanks to God for having rescued me from there”**

A complicated life, built on drugs and constant lies... Alba shares the story of her conversion, and how a good friend helped her on the path to happiness with God.

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My name is Alba. I was born twenty-four years ago in a town in the province of Soria, Spain. When I was

about five years old my parents separated, so my older brother and I lived with my mother.

I was baptized out of “family tradition,” as one more social custom. When I reached the age for First Communion I couldn’t do it; my mother was found to have breast cancer and we had to move to another city for her treatment. I spent that year in a boarding school run by nuns in Valladolid; the memories I have from that time are filled with a lot of affection and support.

The following year my mother recovered. I decided that I wanted to make my First Communion, influenced more by the presents I would receive and by the new dress I would be given. I made it in my town, with children five years younger.

I don't recall going to Confession, but I do remember the catechism classes given by a wonderful woman. The truth is that at that time I understood the catechism as just another nice story that was hard to believe and very likely untrue. So little by little I was fostering my own lack of belief.

## **A dark world**

I reached adolescence without knowing how to discern good from evil, and with no motivation to learn how to do so. At thirteen I began to attend parties, to drink... and later to smoke, fool around with drugs, and immerse myself in a world that I considered “normal” but that was actually very dark.

I saw myself as a free person, and even had the word “*Freedom*” tattooed on my arm. But I now realize that I didn't understand anything about what true freedom is. At that time I defined it as *doing*,

*being, and believing whatever I wanted.* But hidden behind that facade was the strong influence of bad friendships, punk and reggae music, a lack of real personality and a great desire to attract attention, with a “big ego.”

I didn’t finish high school. I stopped going to class, constantly pretended to be sick, and began to create a huge “pack of lies” about my life.

At the age of sixteen I was living on my own in Valladolid. I started smoking marijuana daily and spent most of the day sleeping. I would get up to smoke, go out for a while and then come back and lie down again. Little by little, I was losing contact with my real self and reached a point of self-destruction so great that I often lied to my friends and spent all day under the influence of drugs. I was never truly myself.

**A personal experience of God**

At seventeen, one Saturday night when I was alone at home I had a personal experience of God. I “saw” Him with the “eyes of my soul.” It’s not something that can be described in words, but it was more real for me than myself. At first I felt a great fear. I cried a lot and went to bed fully clothed. I also wrote myself a note that said: *It has not been a dream, it's real!* The next morning (it was a Sunday), I went to the nearest church. I was crying for a long time, not with bitter tears but tears of joy. I sensed strongly that God had always loved me, even though I had not looked for Him nor did I have Him present in my life.

From that day on, I knew that God exists, and that He is at my side continually. I knew with certainty that I had received an undeserved gift and had to care for it. But my life, for all practical purposes, continued on as before.

Then came that Tuesday in the month of May 2013. I recall it all perfectly. I arranged to meet with a girlfriend in my house, to get high. That weekend I had been in my home town, and someone I knew there gave me a “chicken” (a kilo of cocaine). So I let my friend know and told her to come over to enjoy it. And then what I call “the other blessing” took place, which is very difficult to put into words or even understand. To snort the cocaine, I was going to use a paper bill rolled up as a straw. But when I bent down to use it my hand became paralyzed and I couldn’t move it. I became very frightened, as did my friend. At that moment I knew for certain that evil was present, and I sensed clearly that it was the devil.

We both got goose bumps and were unable to speak or react for quite a while. My “detachment” from the world of drugs was immediate. At

the outset, I didn't recognize what I was doing as something harmful, and so I continued taking drugs, until what I call the "illumination" came, and from that moment on we no longer took drugs. I made the decision to change my life and my surroundings, and I returned to my town to live with my mother and brother.

I told my mother everything that had happened to me: my lies about my studies, my daily addiction to drugs, my encounter with God that night, and my decision to change my life. She listened attentively, but thought that what I was telling her was the result of hallucinations caused by drugs. This made me suffer a lot and I began to pray to God with all my might that my mother would believe me, understand me, and not think I was crazy. And that is what happened.

## **The advice of a missionary, going to Soria**

In one of the many conversations we had about my conversion and what had happened to me, I was crying uncontrollably and asking my mother to understand me. And she recognized that some of the words I spoke were not mine but came from the Holy Spirit, who interceded for me.

So my mother took me to speak to a priest in my town who was there temporarily for the summer. He was a missionary in Nicaragua. He listened with real interest to my story. I asked if I could go to Nicaragua to help in his mission, since I just wanted to escape from the world in which I had been trapped. But he prudently (as I now see clearly) advised me to resume my studies and stay close to my family.

The following year I went to Soria to obtain a diploma in Health Emergencies. I went from not having finished high school to obtaining honor grades in Nutrition Studies, which I am now finishing.

## **In Valladolid, a friend in Opus Dei**

At twenty-one I decided to return to Valladolid. I began to study for a higher degree in Dietetics. In the class I met Blanca, the first person I knew who was openly a believer and practiced her faith. We soon became good friends. She invited me to go to Mass with her on Sunday at a church where she sings in the choir. After a number of conversations, she suggested that I speak with a priest of Opus Dei. With all the sincerity I am capable of, I made my first confession, from which I emerged happy but confused. Due to my poor formation, I didn't understand the

wonder of the Sacrament of Forgiveness and Joy.

In my regular conversations with Blanca, I saw that I lacked solid arguments to defend the Christian faith. I attended very interesting talks, and I began to read about the Church, the faith, and the life of Jesus.

Then one day my aunt asked me if I wanted to be the godmother for the Baptism of her daughter. But to be a godmother one had to have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, which made me realize my need for more Christian formation. One thing I saw very clearly was that if I was to be confirmed it had to be out of real conviction.

## **I decide to receive Christian formation**

So I asked Blanca if she knew someone who could instruct me in

Catholic doctrine. She suggested that I get in touch with Chus, a numerary in Opus Dei who was a friend of hers, so that she could give me the classes I needed to receive Confirmation.

I recall telling her, "I want to receive Christian formation, in order to have very clear that what is now a sentiment has to become a conviction. I needed to understand, finding reasons for my strong feelings of love for God." It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

I received those catechism classes for a whole year. Every Tuesday we got together in a cafeteria, where I received the knowledge that clarified my mind and strengthened my heart. I learned not to let myself be carried along only by my feelings in my relationship with God. I began to see, with a new light, that God is at my side, whether I feel Him there or not. I began to understand the redeeming

value of the Holy Mass, what happens when the priest pronounces the words of Consecration. And since then my perception of the Mass has changed. Now I want to go to Mass not only on Sundays, but as often as I can. I have understood the great interior freedom that living my faith brings me.

And finally, I have understood that freedom is not doing whatever I want, like I used to think. Rather true freedom means not being a slave to my impulses.

I am much happier and freer than before. When I think of the world of drugs in which I was trapped, I can only give thanks to God for having rescued me from it. Sadly, we see many young people today who lose their lives due to a drug overdose, whose ability to relate to the world becomes more and more warped. But I never lose hope, because I

know that God is always there, even if I don't sense his presence continually.

In May 2019, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation. It was a special and wonderful day, and I felt the grace of the Holy Spirit acting in my soul. There, besides my family, were my good friends Blanca and Chus, who have been my guides on my path to the Christian faith.

Original story in Spanish: [Incansable Amor el Suyo!](#)

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