

# **“I sought peace in drugs and Reiki... and found it in prayer”**

Catarina, who lives in Porto, Portugal, is a social worker. After a turbulent time in her life, she says that God helped her find peace in prayer, in her family, and in her work with the homeless.

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When Catarina was studying at the university, she tried to find a

meaning for her life. Ever since she was a young girl, she had been eager to delve into deep questions about what life was all about.

After spending some time in the Azores, an illness obliged her to return to Porto. And confronting her illness, she took a mistaken path: “I tried different medications, alternative therapies like Reiki, and even started going to night clubs.”

One day, on a long walk with a friend, the topic of God came up. “I sensed that God touched my heart and began a new stage in my life.” Catarina went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, after many years, and began to pray the Rosary and to attend Mass.

In the mornings she took the subway to go to Mass in the church of the Congregation. One day, at the end of Mass, a young man came up to her and – to her surprise – asked her to

pray for him because he was going off to a seminary in China. He introduced her to his mother, who was also at the Mass and who is a member of Opus Dei, and thus Catarina became acquainted with the Work. She began to receive spiritual direction, and attended other activities of formation. “In Opus Dei I discovered that everything that makes up part of our lives is compatible with friendship with God, and we can live our daily lives alongside Him, with naturalness and joy.”

She says that her commitment to God has helped her to be a better professional, a more loving wife, and after the birth of their daughter, a more attentive mother.

In her efforts as a social worker, she tries to help many homeless people in Porto, doing so with a Christian outlook. Together with her

colleagues she strives to improve the living conditions of these people and to facilitate their social reintegration through work. As in so many other places, this problem intensified with the pandemic, since many people have lost their jobs and sometimes find themselves living on the street.

“The Work has helped me to give a deeper meaning to my work. In every homeless person I see Christ, which spurs me to strive to overcome their problems and be of service.”

And she concludes: “Looking back on my life, I realize that God has always been there, that He has been guiding me through all the circumstances in my life.”

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