

Left to Tell: Albert Alos' Sowing the Seed

It was not so easy to convince Professor Albert Alos to publish *Sowing the Seed*. Although the collation of the manuscript started in 2011, Alos only agreed to have it published five years later.

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This initial reluctance by my author – whose humility moved him to think that having the book out, will be a

personal appropriation of a collective effort – changed after the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of Opus Dei in Nigeria. Alos relented because he realized that Providence had “left him to tell” the story about the beginnings of Opus Dei in Nigeria. A responsibility he could not shrink.

Sowing the Seed chronicles the adventure of Love and undoubtedly of sacrifice of those who responded generously to the invitation of St Josemaría Escrivá to start the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Nigeria. On October 20, 1965, Dr Jeremy Joyner White and Fr Joseph Gabiola arrived Lagos from Nairobi, Kenya. They were later joined by: Fr. Gerard Gutiérrez (who arrived in April, 1966), Fr. Professor Louis Joachim Munoz (August, 1966), Dr Anthony Guillén Preckler (October, 1966) and Professor Albert Alos (who arrived in October 1967) to start the

apostolic work of Opus Dei in Nigeria.

Sowing the Seed collates so many historical details about Opus Dei in Africa's most populous nation.

However, one of the most striking commonalities of the protagonists in the story is their unweaving faith that almost borders on "madness". Or how else does one explain that these *oyibos* [Nigerian pidgin for white men] left the comfort of their countries to settle in Nigeria which was on the threshold of a Civil War? Or the rather "crazy" projects that they pursued: building the Helmbridge Study Centre, Iroto Conference Centre and Irawo University Centre without a single dime of their own and in a country that was undergoing an excruciating economic meltdown? But "madness has always been the term the 'prudent' people apply to God's works. Forward! Without fear!" (St

Josemaría, the Way, #479). It's easy to understand their "madness": like father, like sons!

In addition, Alos and others who planted the seed in Nigeria imbibed the tenets of this African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. *If you want to go far, go together.*" *Sowing the Seed* shows how they were able to convince Nigerians – non-Catholics and even non Christians – to collaborate in many educational and social projects. This is a testament to their assimilation and respect of their host country, not acting like expatriates but actually becoming real Nigerians to boot.

The back cover of *Sowing the Seed* shows Alos smiling in gratitude and surrounded by many of his Nigerian grandchildren. These words of St Josemaría obviously summarizes the sentiments of the author of *Sowing the Seed*: "the seed you sow in many

nations will provide abundant fruit; and you will be astonished to the depths of your souls, because the fruits will be out of all proportion to the means we employ, which are very little in comparison.” Alos and others had planted a tree which will continue to provide shade for generations yet unborn.

Professor Alos he was “left to tell” the history of Opus Dei’s first ten years in Nigeria, a duty he fulfilled in *Sowing the Seed*.

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