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“St. Josemaría helped me see my work as service”

“I phoned a friend to tell him I had discovered a treasure which I wanted to share with him.” Testimony of Patrick Utomi, a lecturer in business studies and a consultant in Lagos, Nigeria.

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My first contact with Josemaría Escrivá was somewhat dramatic. A friend of mine, an inveterate

traveler, came to my front door at a rather unusual hour, at midnight. When he was leaving, he suggested I accompany him to a recollection at a center of Opus Dei about 10 minutes walk away from my house. I accepted, moved more by the thought of getting him to leave than because I had really thought the matter through.

Next morning he came to fetch me and I went with him, because a promise is a promise. Three hours later, everything had changed. What I had heard that day transformed my life. At the end of the recollection I bought a book of homilies by St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*. Next month I went to the recollection again and bought more reading matter. That same afternoon, I phoned a friend to tell him I had discovered a treasure which I wanted to share with him. We went together to the next recollection....

I did not see my traveling friend again for over a year, but the treasure he had opened up to me is still with me. “A secret. –An open secret: these world crises are crises of saints. –God wants a handful of men ‘of his own’ in each human activity. –And then... pax Christi in regno Christi – the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ” (from *The Way*).

When I first came across these ideas which encourage us to work seriously and in an orderly way, so as to improve our prestige, I wondered if they might go against humility. Then I came to realize that a person who tries to act with honesty and a sense of justice, who loves his neighbour, if he has prestige as well, then it will be an encouragement for others to act likewise, and that way he will contribute to lighting up all the ways of the earth.

St Josemaría has also helped me to see my work as a service. As well as my professional work, I devote time to civil associations such as “Concerned Professionals” which brings together professional people who are committed to democracy and good government, and the Nigerian section of “Transparency International”, an organization for promoting civic honesty.

Another project I have been involved in is on behalf of widows. The idea came when I saw the sorry plight of widows in many parts of Nigeria and the humiliating rites they are at times subjected to. The center we have opened offers counsel and training for women with limited means, helps them get credit, and scholarships for their children. Besides, we have created a platform where they can come together to defend their rights.

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