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What do Guadalupe and Harry Potter have in common?

Sophie, doing her one-year national service posting at the Pan Atlantic University in Lagos, Nigeria, explains her experiences in distributing prayer cards during the orientation camp, and how she ended up having her face made during the "Jean Carnival".

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My name is Sophie. I am currently on a one-year national service posting at the Pan Atlantic University in Lagos, Nigeria. This service year is compulsory for all graduates of higher institutions in Nigeria. It begins with a three-week orientation camp in any of the 36 states in the country. Thereafter, you are posted to an organisation which becomes your primary assignment for the rest of the year. Usually, this posting is based on one's area of specialisation.

When I received my call-up letter to report to camp, I already had some concrete goals. These were - to have fun, meet people and experience other cultures. The trip to the camp was beautiful as my dad decided to drive me there. It was a great bonding time. We spoke about so many things.

On the first day, I met a couple of nice people who had arrived before

me, and they helped me settle in. One of them was called Marvelous. She made an impression on me because she had a permanent smile on her face. It was difficult to know when she was angry or upset. I found it really amazing and kept thinking, this lady lives the teachings of St. Josemaria about being ever cheerful. We soon became best friends and were nicknamed “perfect match”. In the dormitory, I also met other nice ladies.

I was assigned to Platoon Six. Yes, the time in camp also includes some military training such as beagle calls, early morning drills and the marching as well. I had the opportunity to meet people from all over the country. It was fascinating to listen to others speaking English in the most varied of accents.

Before I left for camp, I collected several prayer cards of St Josemaria

and Blessed Alvaro from my Centre. The director jokingly said I shouldn't come back with any of them, and I took this comment literally. So, a few days to the end of the camp, since I still had so many prayer cards left, I used every opportunity to share them to every Catholic I met. I even gave a Muslim girl Don Alvaro's prayer card since Don Alvaro studied Arabic at some point.

There was a day set aside for fun activities called the "Jean Carnival". I met a group of people at a face painting stall. I thought to try it out for the fun of it. My guardian angel nudged me to share more prayer cards, which I did. Now the interesting thing was choosing the design. Being a fan, I decided to have Harry Potter painted on one cheek, and "Quimica " on the other, in honour of Blessed Guadalupe. I must have looked like a walking signpost because Harry Potter fans stopped

me often. We talked about our shared recollections of the books and movies. For my other cheek, it was the opportunity to explain to them what it meant, and about Blessed Guadalupe. I always ended these conversations by giving a prayer card of St Josemaria or Don Alvaro.

It was a fascinating experience in the camp. I look forward to my service year and to making more friends.

Sophie Obomighie

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