

24 Hours in Pursuit of Holiness

Perola discovered her vocation to Opus Dei – the call to seek holiness through one's work and daily life – when she was in the university. Here she describes what a typical day in her life as a doctor in São Paulo, Brazil is like.

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Thursday, 5:45 am, the alarm goes off! It's still winter! How hard it is to get up, but let's go! At 7 am I need to

leave for work! Today is the outpatient clinic!!!!

Bed made. Egg with tapioca in the pan. Coffee is ready!

I put on sneakers, with good shoes in my bag, for my 20-minute walk to work.

On Soundcloud I choose a meditation for my prayer. I listen to 10 minutes at home and the rest along the way. I walk at a good pace; the street is still half-deserted. As I listen to the audio and try to pray, at times I am distracted by what is going on around me, the city that is waking up with me. The yellow ipe trees have blossomed in late winter. A beggar is sleeping on the sidewalk, and I see a Church steeple in the distance.

The audio nourishing my prayer ends as soon as I reach my destination. What awaits me today? Elderly people (some nearly 100

years old), coming from different regions of São Paulo, telling their stories (I would like to have more time to listen to them), their problems and small achievements. Caregivers who come to me with questions; meetings with families; risk assessment with nurses, complications in the emergency room. Time is short, I have to make it count!! I cast a brief glance at my image of the “Trinity on earth” (Jesus, Mary and Joseph). It is placed in a discreet corner, but some patients and nurses discover it and remark on how gracious it is. My cell phone vibrates; a patient is calling. I have no time to answer it now, but as soon as I leave the clinic I'll return the call.

I look at the clock and see that it's already 1 pm. How hungry I am! Before leaving, I take a quick look at WhatsApp; the family group has new photos of my niece! This Sunday I

will visit them. And in the group for women Associate members of the Prelature there is no lack of prayer requests!

Before going on, I want to explain that to be a part of Opus Dei means (as you might already realize) to lead the same life as before: to have a family, a home, work, friendships, entertainment and obligations... But suddenly God invites you to offer Him all these things and your whole life.

I put on my sneakers and headphones and walk home along the same route. I call the patient who tried to reach me in the office and give some advice. Then I switch on the audio of the Rosary, remembering the prayer requests from the WhatsApp group.

I stop at the Schoenstatt Shrine to visit the Blessed Sacrament. On leaving, once again I realize how

hungry I am! Will I have lunch at that restaurant along the way today? No, better to eat at home! I finish the Rosary while defrosting lunch and preparing the salad. I eat lunch listening to the news Another quick look at WhatsApp. I invite a young friend to the Saint Raphael activity this Saturday, and call another woman who wants to take part in the next Saint Gabriel retreat. I talk to my sister-in-law and we set up Sunday lunch. I write in reply to some queries from patients. I open my laptop and renew prescriptions, arrange for exams, and fill out charts. I also need to prepare some lessons! At some point I take a break to do 15 minutes of spiritual reading.

At 3:30 pm, I pack up and head to Pilates, recalling many memories from my ballet days. I mull over options for attending Mass at the end of the day. I decide the 6 pm Mass will be the best option. I can get to

the church early enough to do my afternoon time of prayer.

After Mass I don't want to have dinner alone so I chat with a friend on a video call while I'm eating.

Another look at Whatsapp. Lots of messages, a reminder to Cooperators that this Saturday morning I will be giving the circle in hybrid format. I tidy up the kitchen and my room, which was a little messy.

Have I already paid all the bills this month? I check to make sure. Thank goodness!!!! 9.30 pm, my eyes are already heavy with sleep. But suddenly I remember that tonight the student who sleeps here in my home once a week because she is attending classes nearby will be coming. She's from a nearby town and her university is right next to my building. I make the extra bed for her. When she arrives we talk for a while, but we are both so tired that

we decide the best thing to do is to get some sleep. Tomorrow I have to teach graduate classes from 8 am to 6 pm. There is a 7 am Mass close to where I live. I set the alarm, say some prayers, and quickly fall asleep.

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