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## **“A friend’s invitation changed my life”**

"My parents and my sister are Evangelicals. I too, for much of my life, was an Evangelical. Until a friend's invitation changed my life." Elias, a philosophy student in Mexico City, recounts the path of his conversion.

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My name is Elias. I was born on October 30, 1999 in Mexico City, in a home where there was always love, affection and freedom. My parents

always encouraged my little sister and me to go our own way, to make our own way in life.

In 2018, I started studying philosophy at the university. There I met Manuel, who is now a great friend of mine. One day Manuel invited me to dinner at the Panamerican University Residence run by Opus Dei. I remember having a great time there, but for various reasons I didn't return. After some time, Manuel invited me to a Circle, as they are called in Opus Dei, for talks of Christian formation. I wasn't a Catholic, and my friends knew it. But Manuel decided to overlook this or, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he forgot it. I began to go more often to the residence and thus came to know the Catholic Church better and discovered the spirit of Opus Dei. I think none of this would have happened – or at least it would have

been in some other way – if it hadn't been for Manuel's invitation.

Some years before this happened I had considered the possibility of converting to Catholicism. Part of my extended family is Catholic, and at times I attended baptisms, weddings, first communions... Also, when I traveled abroad, much of my free time was spent getting to know churches. I remember how impressed I was by the beauty of the ceremonies and the churches. It was precisely through the aesthetic, the visible, that I began thinking about converting. But it wasn't until I started studying at the university that I seriously considered it.

After attending the Circle for some time at Manuel's invitation and making more Catholic friends, I realized: "These people view the world and what needs to be done more or less in the same way as I do.

They are people who try to go to Mass every day, to educate themselves in the faith, to show true affection to their friends.” So I concluded: “I think this is for me.”

Of course, there were many things about the Church that I didn't understand very well. It was especially difficult for me to understand the role of our Lady and the saints. Little by little, I realized that to a large extent I continued living in the same way as before – trying to love God and my fellow men and women – with the advantage of knowing that along with me there are millions and millions of people who did the same and who now, from Heaven, want the same for me: they want me to be happy. It was like discovering that I am now part of a much larger family.

I received Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation on October 3, 2020

in the Panamerican University Residence. Along with several of my friends, I was accompanied that day by my parents, my sister and my maternal grandmother. It was a very moving day for me.

Recently I asked for admission to Opus Dei as a supernumerary. Today I can say that I owe my vocation to my parents. They taught me to love God and serve those around me. Thanks to them, I understood that I could win a place in Heaven day by day, through my work, when with my friends... I realize that God thought of everything from the beginning so that – if I want – I can be happy. He put me in a specific home with specific parents. He gave me my friends and my way of being. All of this has shaped my relationship with Him and with others, and has led me to discover what He is calling me to: to strive for holiness in ordinary life.

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