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God gave everything... and joy, and peace...

Mary Agbu, a young Nigerian mother of nine wonderful children describes how Opus Dei has helped her be more faithful to the Church's doctrine on life and matrimony. Her testimony shines out with abundant confidence in God's fatherly providence, and the joy that this brings.

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My meeting with the Work (as Opus Dei is fondly referred) was in the most normal of activities some thirty-four years ago. My older sisters had heard of a really nice girls club called Ripples Club which had a lot of interesting activities so on their first visit they took me along with them. The first impression of the house off Bode Thomas was really nice. Every one was friendly and the small Chapel was particularly welcoming and serene. I felt at home and looked forward to the continued visits to the Club. At Ripples Club we had Get-togethers, Study camps, Retreats, cookery and housekeeping, music, etc.

It was such a great place to be, we invited friends and met up for the camps and retreats and volunteered for assisting with the younger children's club, we learnt so much and during the Move to Wavecrest on

Adisa Bashua Street we were all involved in one way or the other.

I learnt so much and most of all learnt how to develop a truly personal relationship with God, which I must say, saw me through the difficult adolescent years, and later on through the distractions of University and early adult life.

On return back to Nigeria after my Law study in the UK, my younger sister had maintained contact and attended the monthly days of recollection. I joined her and started again to attend the retreats at Wavecrest. I was really pleased to meet up again with my friend Chantal Epie and also Bisi Falodun who was a former classmate/best friend at Mary wood Grammar School and by then a member of The Work.

With Chantal I could just about discuss anything! Her counsel was

always illuminating and helped me shape my views on moral issues as well as deepen my understanding of the Church's teachings, while slowly building up some practices of piety that encouraged a filial confidence in God .

It was on this background that I met my husband Chuka while serving on my Youth Corps posting at Mobil Oil and we got married almost twenty years ago (January 28 1989).

It was in those early years of marriage, while expecting our second child that I experienced the big challenge of learning to entrust everything in God's hands. I am usually a very opinionated person and a new teaching which I had hitherto not been aware of was the Church's teaching on human sexuality and procreation in marriage (probably because I never imagined that the Church had a say

in such issues which I thought were the sole preserve of the couple).

The first time I heard this teaching, it hit me with such a powerful impact that I almost went into a crisis of faith having already determined that two or three children was ideal. I could neither go forward nor pretend to go forward. I was in a manner of speaking at a crossroads and needed to reconcile myself with this position that we were as Catholics to have an openness to life (ref; *Humanae Vitae*)..., For a few days I could not do my prayer without the full import of this teaching, I totally lost my peace- eventually I did a little logical analysis on TRUST - Faith teaches me to trust in God as my father who made me and knows me completely... now, since God knows me that well, who would better understand my limitations and know that I could not possibly have more than two or three

children than He? He would give me only the number he knows I could manage, hopefully just three, but ultimately His WILL be done.

Hopefully pegging God's Will at three, I regained my peace and Trusted totally. Now the move from three to nine happened one step at a time, at each stage reaffirming my trust in him and He supplied the abundant graces and the means at every step of the way.

My Husband was a miracle: he moved from doubt to a TOTAL trust in God's providence while putting his absolute human effort to meet the challenges and responsibility that came with Acceptance.

God gave everything. Opus Dei's means of formation covered all aspects of family life. Implementing the formation received and effecting the tips from the family programmes became part of the ongoing

formation and proper human development which was absorbed by all members of the family and ensured growth in human and supernatural virtues, learning to grow in filial trust in God which is the key to the Joy and Peace amidst daily struggle of members of the Work.

We had what I would call the family support of the Work at all key points of life's challenges- Chuba's eye injury, my parents vocation, my mum's passing on - numerous others; through all this, the prayer support when most needed.

Saint Josemaria always wanted us to make our Homes other Bethanys where Our Lord could stop by and be totally welcome. That is our struggle: to keep a home that ensures Our Lord is always a Loved and welcome Guest.

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