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My Two Unique Families!

Angela Makolo, a university lecturer and numerary of Opus Dei, shares how her life has been shaped and enriched by two unique families — her close-knit biological family and her Opus Dei family — both of which continue to inspire her journey of faith, service, and mentorship.

01/10/2025

I am Angela Uchebuuchekwu Makolo, an associate lecturer in the

Faculty of Computing at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. I'm the third of eight children, born into a close-knit family where discipline, hard work, and strong faith were part of daily life. Growing up in the Catholic faith, I've continued to profess and cherish it throughout adulthood.

I am also a numerary of Opus Dei, embracing the gift of apostolic celibacy. I discovered this vocation over 34 years ago, as a young undergraduate student of Computer Science at the University of Benin. My journey with Opus Dei began quite unexpectedly during an evening Mass. A seemingly random encounter after the liturgy — in direct answer to a prayer I had just made — opened the door to a life I had never imagined.

While working a vacation job, I came across spiritual materials by St.

Josemaría Escrivá. The message in those books instantly resonated with me: sanctity in the midst of ordinary work. **It was a “Eureka” moment** — I had found the life I wanted to live. Soon after, I was introduced to a vibrant community of young women at a student residence. They were smart, cheerful, stylish, and absolutely in love with God. Their joy was contagious, and I knew I had found another kind of family — one that would shape my life forever.

In 2022, I celebrated my 50th birthday. My mentees from across the globe organized a virtual party for me, and I was deeply touched when they donated a golden chalice to mark the golden jubilee of the arrival of women of Opus Dei in Nigeria. The following year, I celebrated 25 years of fidelity to God in Opus Dei — a moment of profound gratitude and recommitment.

My biological family also remains a deep source of joy and grounding. After retirement, my parents moved back to our hometown in Delta State, embracing the life they had always dreamed of in the village. In 2022, we celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary in Lagos with a beautiful Thanksgiving Mass and a joyful family reunion.

In January 2025, my father turned 90. My siblings and I travelled home to celebrate this milestone with him. It was a moving occasion — he was overcome with emotion, shedding quiet tears of joy. That same year, as a promise fulfilled, a few priests of Opus Dei visited my parents in the village, bringing with them thoughtful gifts and warm fellowship. My mother, full of good humour even in her late 80s, made us all laugh with her candid remarks.

From my parents, I learned the essence of faithful love, discipline, peace, and unity. My father, ever the traditional disciplinarian; my mother, wise and nurturing — the heart of our home. Like many African women, she once dreamed of being “Mama Father” — the revered mother of a Catholic priest. So did my grandmother, a woman of deep piety who taught me the value of hard work and devotion. That same aspiration lived in me too, until I discovered my own calling to apostolic celibacy.

Before joining the University of Ibadan, I spent 14 years working in various IT roles at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), eventually leading the software unit. But my passion for teaching and mentoring led me to academia. Since then, I’ve had the joy of shaping young minds and

watching students blossom into leaders.

I was fortunate to complete a postdoctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, under the Empowering the Teachers Fellowship. There, I honed my skills in research proposal writing and secured a significant grant under the H3Africa Bioinformatics Network. That grant funded my latest textbook: *Personalized and Facilitated Learning of Bioinformatics* — the first of its kind written by a Nigerian and by a Computer Scientist. It was launched in June 2024 in honour of St. Josemaría and dedicated to the memory of three remarkable figures who shaped my life.

I also completed the Techwomen Emerging Leader Fellowship to Silicon Valley and later founded

Techmadel, a mentoring platform for girls in STEM. Through my university work, activities at Imoran Centre, and my advisory role to Catholic student groups, I've been privileged to mentor hundreds of young women.

Many of my former students and mentees, now thriving around the world, stay connected to the spirit of Opus Dei wherever they are. Some join online formation sessions, others continue attending activities or mentoring new girls through platforms like Techmadel. The joy of seeing their growth — academically, spiritually, and professionally — is beyond words.

Earlier this year, we hosted a fresher's welcome at Imoran Centre. Around 80 girls I had previously met during a university orientation signed up to be mentored. Each has since been matched with a mentor

based on her field of study. It's been wonderful seeing them flourish through this network of support.

Among the freshers who now participate regularly are future engineers, geologists, and medical professionals — all bright young women finding purpose, friendship, and formation in the midst of their studies. Watching them grow reminds me why I do what I do.

My life has been beautifully filled with God's mercy at every step. I've had the blessing of mentors who guided me both professionally and spiritually. Truly, I have grown — and continue to grow — in the **embrace of two exceptional families**: my family of origin, and my Opus Dei family.

Both have formed me. Both have loved me. And both continue to make my life a rich, joy-filled journey of love and purpose.

Family, indeed, is everything.

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(18/03/2026)