

# **The More I Learnt, The More I Wanted to Know**

Gisèle: Opus Dei cooperator.  
Nothing magical. By rubbing shoulders with a friend and getting involved in L'Essor club in Montreal, the atmosphere and values caught on.

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**English subtitles available.**

Hello, my name is Gisèle. I am the mother of a family of four children. I would like to share my experience

with the girl's club as a homemaker who was Catholic but non-practicing.

I believed in a God. I could not believe that life was being born, living, dying... and after that there was nothing. I truly believed in something, a higher power. That there was something more. But I had difficulties with the institution, the Church. I listened to everything the media accused it of. I was part of a school of thought that was popular a few years ago and that is still very popular today. But eventually, I realized that I was only looking at one side of the story.

I was introduced to Opus Dei through a neighbour. Our children were the same age and played together, and then we began to talk together... There was something special in her gaze, in her attitude, in her speech, a... I want to say a quiet strength, an inner peace in spite of all the

challenges a family lives, really, the ups and downs we can experience in life, all of those things.

In speaking with her I saw that she was Catholic, practicing. She talked to me about Opus Dei. It sounded good but didn't interest me more than that and then one day I understood that it was her faith that she was living. And that she was putting into practice in her daily life. And I realized that the Church was not really what I thought it was. My perception of the Church changed when I saw it and understood it better. I observed it and I said to myself: "Oh, God, it's not for me. I will never succeed in having such a profound faith."

And then one day, she told me she had signed her daughter up for a club, a club for teenagers, offered by Opus Dei. She invited my daughter to see if it might interest her. She

explained to me that it was offered once a week for two hours, and that it was geared toward teenage girls from 12 to 17 years old. In the club, different activities were provided. It could be cooking in all its forms, theater, volunteering, debates, talks about friendship, exam preparation, all sorts of discussions for the benefit of the girls. There was also a catechesis component.

Since schools no longer teach catechesis, it is now the community's responsibility. The objective is simple. It is to better understand the purpose of life. I said to my friend: "I don't even go to church." She told me: "It doesn't matter. It is open to all believers and non-believers, and even if your daughter does not feel comfortable with the catechesis aspect, she can participate in the activities without going to catechesis." She said: "You cannot force people to have faith, to love

God." And then the thing that touched me the most was when she said: "Even if she doesn't have the faith, that doesn't make her a bad person, you know." Wow!

I went on to give courses on wood painting. There I was really in the center of the action at the girl's club. I could feel the ambiance, the Christian values that were behind it all, the beautiful friendships that grew. Friendship is very important during adolescence; mutual support... it's really nice to see. At the end of the day, the club equips the girls so they can reach their dreams, their goals.

Three or four years ago we had a reunion. I met some great people. I met independent women, who have drive, some of whom had accomplished... There was a teacher, a seamstress, a singer, an engineer, someone from every field really, and

they talked about how the club had helped them and how it continues to help them today in their lives as women. It was really nice. Many wanted to give back to the club. Some were looking forward to their daughter being old enough to go so she could benefit from all the club could bring to her life.

Personally, my daughter talked to me about what she learned and all. I asked her questions and I was able to learn, I began to learn a lot about religion, faith, how she described to me how she applied it in the simple moments of ordinary life. That spoke to me. I went and questioned my neighbour, my friend, who had become a friend, let's say, and different people in Opus Dei and I was more comfortable asking questions and to learning more, and the more I learnt the more I wanted to know.

Meeting Opus Dei, the way the girl's club worked, led me to a better understanding of the faith, Christian values, how to apply them in life. I pray every day, for a few minutes. And me who thought I would never be able to have a strong faith!

Today, two years later, I am now a cooperator of Opus Dei. For me it is important to participate. When I saw the results it gave, the way it was presented, seeing the well-being of these young people who have become well-rounded, fulfilled women, who are moving forward, who have found what they want to do in life, all the good that it has brought to them. I can't help being part of it.

Is there anything I would like to say...? Ah! Whether I have discovered the secret of Opus Dei. Yes! Thanks to spending time with them, going to the club and all... The real secret is

carried inside them: it is the faith, the love they have. The real secret? It's that they walk the steps of Jesus and they practice what Jesus practiced in their daily lives. That is what makes them shine. Something that comes from inside but goes outwards. A LOVELY secret!

**Anyone who wants to help out at L'Essor can contact Isabelle Saint-Maurice at 514-758-0686.**

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