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My Family Treasures

St Josemaria has always taught that children are the treasures God grants to a family and I deeply feel that my children are the mentors of my life. What I try to do is to support and encourage them wholeheartedly, praying that there would be nothing that could harm the good that God has bestowed on them.

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I am now waiting for Yi-yun who is taking the IQ test to qualify for

elementary school. She is our third child. She came seven years after her 2 older sisters were born. The knowledge that a new member was coming to our home delighted everyone in the family. St Josemaria has always taught us that children are the treasures that God grants to a family. That same year, my husband was baptized and I became a supernumerary member of Opus Dei.

Yi-yun was born on Jan 6, the feast of Epiphany. That day she was surrounded by people who loved her, especially her two sisters who gazed at her, filled with awe and blinking with delight. I recalled that one of their friends had asked them, "What is your sister like?" They answered, "Have you seen the most beautiful thing in this world? She is 100 times more beautiful than that. Have you seen the loveliest thing in this world? She is 100 times lovelier than that!"

Yi-yun started to eat solid food for the first time at 4 months. Like all new parents, we were ready to video her as she took her first bite. While I was so excited for her to taste the food, she suddenly began to stare, her body became lifeless and she stopped breathing. I started screaming and my husband tried massaging her chest at once. I was frightened by what I saw. After about a minute, she returned to normal as if nothing had happened.

We brought her to the hospital, and while the doctor was examining her, she was as lively and normal as ever. But as we were about to leave, the second attack happened right before our eyes. She was immediately sent to intensive care: she was diagnosed to have epilepsy. Yi-yun who had never left my side since her birth 4 months ago, now had to be left alone in the ICU. As I waited outside, I suddenly felt so vulnerable and

helpless. I could only beg Our Lord for his mercy, to spare me from being tested in my love for my youngest daughter.

With the prayers of everyone, her sickness came under control. Shortly after, I was expecting our 4th child. I was quite worried about how I could take care of Yi-yun and look after another baby at the same time. But recalling what I have learnt through the spiritual guidance I received in Opus Dei, that everything works for the good for those who love God (*omnia in bonum*), I left everything in God's hands.

When Yi-yun was 15 months old, our son was born. Although it was evident that Yi-yun's development was slow, her care for her brother was not slow at all. For example, with her tiny hands, she would try to pat her baby brother to sleep. Even though she had no idea where this

little creature came from, her eyes that gazed at him were filled with love.

I deeply feel that my children are the mentors of my life. In my two older daughters, I could also see the marvelous work of God's grace in their souls. What I try to do is to support and encourage them wholeheartedly, praying that there would be nothing that could harm the good that God has bestowed on them.

When they were younger, together with some friends, the *Little Women's Club* came into being. It was a club for girls aged 6 to 12, to help them appreciate life and to grow in virtues. There was a wide range of activities, such as cooking classes, arts and crafts, literary appreciation, music appreciation, good table manners, outdoor excursions and more. Each activity began with a talk

on a particular virtue. In a natural way, the girls were taught to bring the virtue into their lives. In the current educational environment of my country, intellectual education is everything; the main focus is to be able to enter a good school. With the *Little Women's Club*, we tried to foster positive attitudes necessary for the kids to learn to face the challenges that would come their way in life. It was like a clear stream in stagnant water...

In the process of running the club, all my good friends got deeply involved, generously giving themselves to teach the virtues to the kids by becoming both teacher and friend. At the same time it gave me a very good opportunity to talk to each one about the spirit and message of St Josemaria, trying to bring them closer to God.

Sharing experiences with another supernumerary who has a similar club, I received the wonderful inspiration to encourage my teenage daughters to form their *own* club in the same spirit of *Little Women's Club*. Now my eldest daughter has started *Sunshine Club*, which has more than 10 members, and they make their own rules and meet monthly. The afternoon before Easter, they organized a charity performance to raise funds for the "*Slow-flying Angels*", an organization that helps develop the capacities and skills of slower children. After school, they practised and rehearsed a lot. They divided up the tasks for this event among themselves, making flyers and posters, scheduling the practices, etc. The parents enjoyed the performance immensely; it moved them to give generously. This was a big encouragement to the girls.

Meanwhile, my two little ones have opened up a new chapter in my life.

At two, Yi-yun still could not say a single word. She was discovered to have moderate autism. When I first learnt that she was autistic, I cried for three days. All the consoling words from friends did not help me. After three days had passed, I felt that God held back my tears and transformed them into tremendous strength. I came to be fully convinced that I had to be the window to life for my children; it is I who would have to open that window for them.

Likewise my son also has mild autism. By 3½ years, he could only repeat words and phrases without understanding what they really meant. When the doctors confirmed that he was also autistic, I no longer had time to cry. The only thought occupying my mind was what kind of

help he would need and how I could provide it.

These two are the special blessings that God has sent to my family.

In the process of accompanying my younger children, I felt as if God has opened another world for me. With all my heart, I can truly say that I care for all disabled children and their selfless parents; it is not just a cliché because I can now understand how they feel.

And then there is the other world of hospital workers, medical specialists, physiotherapists, hydrotherapists, kindergarten teachers... all working silently and effectively. They accept the children with open arms, without any reservations, caring for them, teaching them and consoling the parents. What they give way surpasses the call of duty. Here I have witnessed the most sublime that there is in human nature.

Humanly speaking, my two little ones may not be perfect. But from another point of view, they are like little angels: they would be incapable of any bad intentions. They struggle earnestly to learn how to cope with the simple things that children usually pick up effortlessly. They pray diligently for others and always receive God's mercy.

My son, who has a heightened sense of touch, would willingly tolerate the discomfort of a hug or holding hands, and that would make his little sister delightfully happy. Due to their speech impediments, whenever they manage to express themselves in a complete sentence on their own, I feel so happy I just have to write it down! Once, I coughed while driving and suddenly a little hand was patting me lightly on the back. I was so moved that I almost cried. It was a sign of compassion, and from an autistic child, it was a big step. The

two little ones can really transform the little things of ordinary life into something extraordinary. They are often a motivation for the people who come into contact with them to want to become better.

The IQ test result of Yi-yun is ready. It shows that her autism is improving although she still has slight mental inadequacies and her epilepsy requires medication to keep it well controlled. I am very glad that both my children have greatly improved. At times though, I can't help but grieve when I see them suffer, but I am firmly convinced that with the strength that comes from knowing we are children of God, I will grow stronger. I know that other wonderful chapters lie ahead, and my husband and I will have to guide our children forward to complete them.

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