

"Opus Dei taught me that God is counting on me"

Gloria Osezua met the Work in response to her search for a greater self-giving in her Christian life, compatible with being a wife, mother and worker.

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Before I met the Work, I was a Sunday, Sunday Christian. Whenever I saw anyone going to church on an ordinary day I would always ask the

question, "What feast day is it today?" My idea was to do the minimum which was to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

This was my style until something very catastrophic happened in my life that opened my eyes to the other side of midnight. My first daughter was struck by polio at the age of eight months before she could walk. I was told thereafter that she may not be able to walk again. This had a profound effect on me. It was then I remembered that God is alive and that only He could decide with finality the fate of any human being. I wrestled with this situation for three years before my daughter could walk. This great favour I received from God brought a new dawn to my life.

I was overwhelmed with joy. From then on I felt this desire to do

something special for God to show my gratitude. In my search to fulfil this desire I tried joining the charismatic group in my parish but soon found out that their spirituality did not quite agree with my disposition and I never went back to their meetings. Next, I tried joining the legion of Mary but even that did not give me the challenge and fulfilment I was longing for.

I used to have very long chats and debates that would go into the night with my younger brother who was then a student at the University of Nsukka whenever he was around. He was also aware of my recent desire to serve God better and did not know how to go about it.

One holiday he came back from school with a message that he had found something he believed I would be interested in. He gave me a brief on this new experience he has had

himself with a new organization in the Catholic Church that teaches you how to pray. This was the first time I heard about Opus Dei.

At the end of the holiday he went back to school leaving me with a copy of 'The Way' which for some strange reason I did not open until his next holiday. He read to me some points in "The Way" dealing with character and I felt as if the writer was addressing a number of those points to me. This started an unquenchable hunger in my soul. The desire to know more, hear more, increased as the days went by, until my brother was able to get me the address of the women's Centre - Wavecrest- in Surulere.

The next day I took a drive to Adisa Bashua (Street) in search of this centre and I must have knocked on more than half a dozen doors on that

street before I finally knocked at the right gate.

I was met at the door by one of the oldest members of the Work here in Nigeria, Ms Joan Gilmartin who became a good friend and continues to be up to now.

She asked me a few questions like, "Who introduced you to the centre?", and "when was your last confession?", and I instantly knew I was in the right place. She showed me to the chapel, gave me a green pamphlet, "How to prepare for confession", and told me to come back when I was ready. Four days later, I was back for my first confession after a long time. My formation began thereafter and I knew that I was never going to be the same again.

My first challenge after meeting the Work was contending with my husband, who did not understand

my new found love, and was ready to put every obstacle in my way, to prevent me from going for my formation, or having anything to do with the centre. Instead of being confrontational and creating a scene, I learnt to pray a lot for his conversion. Opus Dei taught me to be patient and loving to my husband as God is to me. Therefore I was able to always forgive him and excuse his conduct, and through such affectionate tolerance, I was able to win him over for Christ. He agreed to go to the men's centre for his own formation; learnt to pray the Holy rosary all over again, and today, he is a member of the Work.

Before I met the Work, my career took the front seat in my life, and every other thing was secondary including my family. But as I grew spiritually, Opus Dei helped me to reorder my priorities, I was able to understand that my husband and my

children come first (in that order), and that God is counting on me to bring souls to Him, starting with those in my family. I also learnt from Opus Dei that I'm meant to love God through my husband and children. With my paid employment, I found out very quickly that this was not going to happen, as I would not be able to give the desired attention to my family. Consequently, I discussed this with my husband, who was now able to appreciate my viewpoint, and it was agreed that I should quit my outside job, so as to give more time to my growing family.

My first week at home gave me an insight into what I had been missing. My second daughter came home from school filled with so much joy, hugged me and told me this, "mummy, I got down from the car at the gate and remembered you where at home to receive me. I couldn't walk so I ran to meet you". I was

touched. Although I missed my Job at the time, the fact that my sacrifice brought happiness to the family- which is what Opus Dei teaches- made it worth the while.

Before I met the Work I had a different opinion about being generous and being open to life, so I had three children and believed that that was okay. But Opus Dei has taught me that being open to life, is part of living generosity and obedience to God. Now I have six wonderful children for which I am grateful to God every day.

I used to believe that being in communion with God, was something meant for the priests and religious, but Opus Dei has helped to realize that holiness is a universal call from God, and with the plan of life, sanctity has been put within my reach. Now, I wake up in the morning, offering my day to God, my

fears and aspiration. I am able to maintain this relationship by setting aside some minutes during the day to have conversation with my father God, telling him about my successes and my failures; thanking him for the successes, and also for the lessons the failures taught me. "Our mother of perpetual help is always there for me", said the founder of Opus Dei, so I go to her ever day, by praying the Holy rosary, as I need her to put in a good word for me with her Son for my intentions. I draw strength every day from the Holy Mass, because I meet and receive our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. When I mess up- which I do quite often I go to our Lord in the sacrament of reconciliation to say I am sorry. Keeping this relationship alive has not been easy, but Opus Dei has also taught me to know I can always begin again when I do fall.

I cannot enumerate the totality of the effect of Opus Dei in my life, but it suffices to say that it has had a tremendous impact on my life. I thank God for finding me worthy of this experience. I also thank Him for my vocation, and pray for the grace to be faithful to the end.

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