

"I consider everything in the light of my vocation"

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It's a shared hobby – a shared passion! My husband and I love bird-watching. When I was first engaged I realised I had a choice – find a way to

be interested in birds, or be very bored when I went bird-watching with my future husband – and for the rest of my life! So almost by mistake I fell in love with birds too. Today is our seventh wedding anniversary – so we're going to an owl sanctuary.

I realised I had a vocation when I was fifteen, there was a clear moment in my mind when I understood the sanctification of ordinary work. It wasn't until I was at university in Oxford that I had the opportunity to attend any formation activities of Opus Dei and when I did, I joined very quickly. It was all lying there dormant so at the first opportunity it all came out. I'm unusual in that I've always known what I wanted and where I was going, from a very young age. It's a character thing.

My vocation is my own, independent of my parents – who are both members of the Work. I joined Opus Dei in a different time and place to them, they experienced a great deal of discrimination, I have never had that difficulty. I joined Opus Dei in 1992 when it was already a Personal Prelature, it had come of age by then.

Opus Dei helps me clarify everything in my choices, I consider everything in the light of my vocation – is this for God's glory, or my own? It gives me confidence in my decision-making. It's made me more who I am, I've learnt that we need to know ourselves – I've learnt more and more who I am and the potential I have, it is drawn out of me and makes me more me.

Opus Dei is very much about the individual who is making a change – there's no point in moaning about the world, we need to ask how we

are going to make it better? It's about practising virtues, and when you do, the world immediately becomes a happier place. We must go from introspection to looking outwards. This makes you happier, and helps transform society.

You have to sort yourself out in order to give yourself, otherwise you may throw yourself into good works, but maybe lose yourself in the process, get your own house in order, you can do the two things at once! The Sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction is so helpful for this. We are our brothers' keeper and by helping others you help yourself. Like teaching, you go out to help people and they end up helping you and giving you so much more. I find that many people today don't really like themselves, but I think it's because they don't know who they are or what they are here for. It's an existential crisis. You have to grow in

self-knowledge and your dignity as an individual.

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