

"No one falls in love and ever remains the same"

"No one falls in love and ever remains the same. It marks the beginning of a new era, an epoch of something beautiful. It is a watershed moment in our lives; soon we begin to speak in these terms; 'before I met you' and 'after I met you'."

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No one meets with Christ and ever remains the same. He comes into our

lives as a light that shines on the different aspects of our day-to-day activities little by little; one day at a time until we suddenly realize that our human experiences are purposeful and we have started to see everything with the eyes of love.

I came to know Opus Dei, a personal prelature in the Catholic Church founded by St. Josemaria Escriva as an undergraduate University student. This for me began a journey of love, an ever growing love for God. It has impacted on how I relate with my family, my friends and my career as an Engineer. It has helped me to see the world through the eyes of love.

On my job as a drilling engineer, even though I am not usually a person that pays attention to details, seeing my job through the eyes of love makes me realize that by doing my job well, I am actually saving

lives. For example, if a drilling engineer doesn't carry out a good anti-collision analysis and proper monitoring of the drilling of oil and gas wells, there could be a collision risk with an existing live well which could endanger the lives and property of many. I do my work with better precision each day, learning and constantly improving as a way to sanctify it.

A pivotal factor in building better relationships and in loving another is effective and frequent communication, as we cannot love what we do not know. Opus Dei taught me that in order to deepen my relationship with Christ and to know him better; I have to be in frequent communication with him. This communication takes on different patterns throughout the day and can be collectively called 'the plan of life'. It entails attending Mass, frequent communions, reading a good

spiritual book, prayer, saying the angelus, praying the rosary and reading the scriptures. This has strengthened my love for God.

A while ago, I fell in love and my relationship with my boyfriend has brought me closer to Christ. I usually clear my schedule at about 7 pm every day because it is the time I converse with him. It is at this time that I have one of the most important conversations of my day and I eagerly look forward to it. This has brought to my reality the fact that each time I set up an appointment with Christ for example in my prayer, I have to meet up with it because he is waiting for me and I feel that he has put everything aside because he knows I am coming to speak with him. I know how he feels if I don't show up or when I don't inform him in due time why I cannot make the appointment and even make the effort to bring the

conversation forward. It is now so vivid to me that the norms of my plan of life are meetings with someone I love, a meeting with Christ who is eagerly waiting for me.

Two people in love can sometimes run out of conversations or feel too tired to speak but still long to be in each other's company just to be able to stare in endless gaze. Just looking at the beloved would give the heart of the lover joy, peace and serenity. In this same way, I walk into the chapel of the parish where I attend daily Mass, tired from a demanding day at work and having a day of frantically reloading my email, hour to hour hoping to find a positive response to some application I have made which would read “congratulations, you have been selected/awarded...”, the sort of mail welcoming me to my lifelong ambition. When I do not receive a response at all or I receive a mail

that reads “we are sorry...” crestfallen that my expectations are not met, I walk into the chapel after work like every other day. On days as this, I sit gazing at the tabernacle and just as a lover would say on a tired day to her beloved, I say to him, Lord, I have nothing to say today, I just came to look at you and I want you to look at me. This gaze gives my heart joy, peace and serenity.

In my local dialect, the Benin Language... when you say I love you, you say “I rueemwen we” translating to English it means "...you are in my thought's" or "I think of you". Because to love someone is to constantly think of them, their thoughts are in your head even though it doesn't distract you from carrying out your daily tasks. This brings me to a key aspect I also learnt in my encounter with the Opus Dei, being a contemplative in the middle of my every day life. This

is helped me put in effort to see that my thoughts and intentions are rectified towards the love of Christ.

Love pays attention to details; it is for this reason a lover would notice subtle changes in the appearance of the beloved, as a mother would notice changes in the life of her child. A lady would put in a little more care in her physical appearance, making sure her hair is neatly done and wears make up when someone she loves comes visiting. This has taught me that every day is not the same, some days are indeed special. So I put in more care in my spiritual disposition and details in my appearance as I prepare for Mass on Sundays and on feast days.

Seeing with the eyes of love now helps me pay a little more attention in my cooking and baking especially each time I know that I would be

sharing the prepared meal with a guest.

It has helped me to notice the nicest things in others before I ever notice if they have flaws. I seize every opportunity to say the nicest things to people when I have the chance to. My family members and friends get a poem from me on their birthdays specially written for them.

Learning to love Christ better through my vocation to Opus Dei has given my life direction and I know I must work with purpose. Last week, my colleague at the office asked me if I could attend a meeting that I didn't need to compulsorily attend insinuating that I attend as a spectator, just sitting and doing nothing. I told him I had other things to do and he said "why can't you just stay and do nothing?" Until then I didn't realize he had been observing my life for a while. My days are filled

with purpose; there are things that need to be done. I have to check on my family and friends via telephone conversations, I have to look up whose birthday it is so I can write them a poem, or work on a research paper to contribute to solving some of societies problems, to improve my knowledge about my career as an engineer so that I could work better, to read good books so that I could prepare better talks on Christian doctrine, volunteering as a lector in my parish and my professional association, creating the time to teach virtues in a club activity for secondary school students during my lunch break, designing a flyer for the up-coming recollection or to offer up hours of work for the intentions of my loved ones and let them know the exact hour I am praying for them. There is always something to be done.

As a little girl and till today I love to attend weddings of family and friends. These days I now attend not just as a spectator to take nice pictures to share on social media, and feast in the celebration while catching up with old friends. I now pray in earnest before the wedding and during the wedding Mass alongside the priest that the couple may experience a peaceful marriage, that their love may never wane, that they have a beautiful family and that God blesses their union.

These latent changes on how I now see the events of my daily life with the eyes of love is a testament that no one meets Christ and ever remains the same because we become better versions of ourselves. No one falls in love and ever remains the same.

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