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"Beginning and beginning again!"

Writing from Nigeria, Jacinta describes her struggle to overcome her addiction to Instagram, and the help she received from the writings of Saint Josemaria.

02/15/2022

We all know the feeling you get when you walk into a class late, especially when that lateness could have been avoided. Well, here I was again, hurrying into my department

because I was late, for the umpteenth time.

I'm a student of hospitality, and as part of my studies I work in the food production department. The director of my department was puzzled about my repeated lateness and she called me aside and tried to find out why I arrived late so often. I replied vaguely, saying, "I was using my phone."

For the longest time, I have struggled with an addiction to Instagram and this has affected many areas of my life. I always felt the need to stay up to date, and to do that I spend hours on end scrolling through the bottomless feed of Instagram. This was to the detriment of my work, my studies, my sleep and even my relationships, especially my relationship with God. I couldn't really focus on the things that were important. I constantly felt I was

missing out and I was ready to jump back to my phone as soon as possible.

I saw the damage this was causing, but like all addictions it seemed almost impossible to pull away. I had deleted the Instagram application from my phone nine times! But as you can guess, I could not have possibly deleted it nine times if I didn't keep re-installing it. Each time I re-installed it, I told myself I was going to be disciplined, but this discipline lasted less than 48 hours and I was back at it again.

During the conversation with the head of my department, I was so ashamed that I could not bring myself to tell her about what I was doing on my phone that resulted in my lateness. However she corrected me in such a friendly manner that I resolved to be better and to delete the application for good. This

resolution didn't last long. I even began talking to a priest about the struggle I was facing and I got an application lock which allowed me to lock various applications on my phone. I received it eagerly with the intention of locking Instagram away and reducing the time I spent on it, but this didn't last very long either.

"All contrite you told me: How much wretchedness I see in myself! I am so stupid and I am carting around such a weight of concupiscence that it is as though I had never really done anything to get closer to God. O Lord, here I am beginning, beginning, always just beginning! I will try, however, to push forward each day with all my heart."

This is a quote from a book of Saint Josemaría entitled *The Forge*, and it describes exactly how I felt on a particular day after spending long hours on Instagram. However, I

began fighting again and this time I tried something different. I gave my phone to a friend who kept it for me till the next day. Although I missed it, this allowed me some quality sleep and a recollected mind for Mass the next day. This helped a lot, but after a while I began making excuses and I stopped giving my phone to her.

In another of his books, *The Way*, St. Josemaría wrote about a friend who despondently told him about his inability to conquer himself. Fr. Escriva replied, “have you really tried to use the means?”. This struck me and I knew in all honesty that the *means* at this point in my life was to stay totally away from Instagram for as long as I needed to.

So for the 10th time, I deleted the Instagram application from my phone. For the first few days I felt something was missing but I kept up the struggle to resist it and after

some time I began to feel a lot of peace. I now had time to attend to many other things on my schedule and I was able to pray better with more peace. This is not to say I have not been tempted to re-install the application. But as St. Josemaria said, “here I am beginning and beginning again!” So I will keep struggling with the help of this saint.

Jacinta Okeke

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(06/14/2025)