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## **"Wherever I Am": Sanctifying Family Life and Daily Work**

Ayra, a Cooperator of Opus Dei in Macau, says that she has learned how to better care for her family and remain joyful and at peace in times of difficulty: "Embracing my crosses with a smile makes a difference in me and those around me wherever I am."

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I got to know Opus Dei in 1993, when I was studying in a university in the Philippines. I went to a centre of Opus Dei a few times.

I moved to Macau in 1998 but I did not find out that there was a centre of Opus Dei there until 2004. When I went there for the first time, I felt, somehow, at home, although I had a busy schedule and did not go often. When I became a Cooperator on November 22, 2013, I gradually started attending more activities that helped my spiritual life: doctrine classes, a Cooperator's circle, recollections, and an annual retreat. I also benefited from spiritual direction with a priest of Opus Dei.

Ever since I heard about sanctifying daily work — whether at home, work, school, or in the community — I have tried my best to apply this message wherever I am. I have had many of my prayers answered after

novenas to St. Josemaria, including my family's visas, my husband's job, and my previous and present jobs (which I providentially secured on the anniversary of the day I became a Cooperator), to name just a few.

As I continued attending the apostolic activities of the Work, I learned that my first apostolate is in my own home and with my family. My husband and three children try to be good Catholics and go to Sunday Mass, and I want them to benefit from the help I receive from Opus Dei and grow in their faith too. I was so thankful when a friend of a friend introduced my husband and two sons to the men's centre, and when my daughter started attending club activities in the same centre where I go for activities. Her love for baking and cooking (influenced by my husband, who is a baker and bakes a lot at home) made her a regular attendee of the Art of Living

program for girls since 2017. Since then, she has attended talks, overnight camps, and retreats for girls. She was a shy and quiet girl but has become more outgoing and now, at age 14, she attends doctrine classes and the circle for girls. She is very active in the centre, and I am happy to see that she also invites her friends. This year, she is part of the planning team for summer baking activities, and plans to help out with the camps.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I was one of the many people who lost their jobs. In spite of this, I remained happy and at peace — something I was not even conscious of until others noticed and mentioned it to me. Perhaps it is because, in the guidance I received from Opus Dei, I learned that crosses are really opportunities to be united with our Lord in his passion and death, and that we will surely also be united

with him in his resurrection. In the meantime, I realize that embracing my crosses with a smile makes a difference in me and those around me, *wherever I am*.

Ayra B. Rivera

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