

Spiritual Kitty Party

After completing her graduation, Joslin worked as a Computer Instructor and Computer Programmer in India and abroad. Now she lives in Mumbai with her husband and two daughters. During these trying times of pandemic, among restrictions, confinement and lockdowns, fear and uncertainties, she found a nice and simple way of keeping in touch, accompanying and helping her friends from home: virtual “Kitty parties.”

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Theresa, my elder daughter, introduced me to the message of Opus Dei and the works of its founder, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, around ten years ago. At that time, invited by some of her friends, she had started following some Catholic faith formation programme for girls and encouraged me to join a similar programme for ladies. Since then, for me, my two daughters and my husband, these programmes gradually became a very important part of our lives, so much so that my husband, Cherian, at times was the one encouraging me not to miss them.

Our family has a special devotion to the founder of Opus Dei. During our daily family prayer, Celine, my younger daughter, recites the prayer

to St Josemaría. There is a lot of spiritual wealth in his teachings. I like to think that going through and sharing them with others makes my spiritual “bank account” grow. In the end, what really matters is our spiritual wealth, and a very important part of this wealth is to pass on the joy of the Gospel to everyone around us, as St Josemaría wrote: *"You cannot just be passive. You have to become a real friend of your friends —by helping them. First, with the example of your behaviour and then with your advice and with the influence that a close friendship provides"* (Furrow, 731).

Due to the 2020 pandemic, being unable to meet with other families and friends, I was praying to St Josemaría to give me some idea on how to use my time well and be helpful to my friends too. That is how I got inspired to start with them an online group called the *Spiritual Kitty*

Party. As we know, in India a *kitty party* is an informal get-together of ladies, usually held in one lady's house, the hostess, who arranges food, organises games, etc. It is actually a way of fostering friendship and sense of belonging to a group.

The first session of our *Kitty party* was on the 16th July 2020, feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel. Several of my friends in Mumbai and from other places in India and abroad connected, and since then we keep “meeting” online every 15 days or so.

We usually begin our meetings with a Hail Mary, followed by a short reading of some text by St Josemaría or Pope Francis. Then we have a talk prepared by some of us based on specific themes like friendship, hope, love, Christmas, family life, etc. There is also time for us to share our professional and personal experiences, which fosters

confidence and friendship among the ladies. Finally, there is also time for fun and laughter, obviously, like in any kitty party!

Thanks to the new technologies and the different platforms available, for many months now we are able to be in touch with one another. At the same time, we are looking forward to the day, hopefully soon, when we will be able to meet again face to face and organize *kitty parties* not online but in our houses too. Even if the virtual ones have been very helpful during all this time, it is also true that, as Pope Francis says, "*they lack the physical gestures, facial expressions, moments of silence, body language and even the smells, the trembling of hands, the blushes and perspiration that speak to us and are part of human communication*" (Fratelli Tutti, n. 43).

Meanwhile, we enjoy our virtual meetings and keep praying together for the end of this pandemic in India and in the entire world.

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