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Africa's Moment

Liliane, a young woman from Cameroon now living in Paris, talks about the challenges her country faces and her life in Opus Dei.

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Liliane, could you tell us how you met Opus Dei in Cameroon?

I met Opus Dei in Komo, the village where my father was born. It's about an hour and a half by car from Younde, the capital of Cameroon. Some members of the Work and

students organized a ten day stay to help mothers improve their living conditions, especially in how they care for their children and look after their home.

These girls told us about the activities sponsored by Rigel, a center of Opus Dei in Yaounde. This center offers young women Christian formation, as well as classes in fashion design, study skills and English. I began to attend these activities and got to know the Work. Soon I decided that I too wanted to strive to be holy, doing what I like doing best: helping in the upkeep of a home.

One of the most noteworthy initiatives that members of Opus Dei in Cameroon began was Sorawell, a hospitality school, which I studied at. There young women are given the skills needed to work in hospitality management positions. It also tries to

reinforce the value of working in domestic tasks. In Cameroon it's very important to strengthen the role of mothers of families, so that in turn the African family will be strengthened.

Some of my classmates now work in restaurants, hotels and embassies. After finishing my studies, I decided to come to France, where I am now living.

How do you try to sanctify your work each day?

With naturalness! That's the first response that comes to mind. I'm just one more among my colleagues at work. In my daily interactions with them, I try to love each person that I meet. Rather than long discourses, what they want is to be listened to, and not have people speak about them behind their back, which is very common at work. They want to be accepted for who they are.

I try to stay calm during moments of a lot of pressure at work. This often gives me the opportunity to speak with my colleagues about deeper topics like the meaning of life. If anyone asks me about my interior peace, I reply that I place each day's trials and stress on the altar at Holy Mass, and I ask God for the grace to live each day well, with a lot of peace.

In my case, the path of sanctity I have undertaken involves celibacy: offering my life to God completely, in every aspect.

Would you tell us how Opus Dei helps you to stay close to Christ?

Christian formation has helped me immensely. It's impossible to love God and to address him frequently if one has a cloudy vision of him.

Christianity is still young in Africa. Cameroon will soon celebrate the

120th anniversary of the arrival of the first German missionaries. This is a very short time compared to the 2000 years of Christianity already lived in Europe.

Since Christianity has only recently arrived, it has not yet completely shaped our culture or our way of thinking. Sometimes you find people who, if their child is having problems at school or someone at work is hard to get along with, they will pay a witch doctor on Saturday to cast out the evil spirit and pass it on to someone else. And then on Sunday morning they go to Mass to ask God for the same thing! They think it's better to have two horses in the race than just one!

This is the atmosphere in which I grew up. The formation that I receive in the Work helps me to know the true face of Christ. Classes in the Christian faith, daily prayer before

the Blessed Sacrament and regular spiritual direction, practices that are encouraged in Opus Dei, have been a great benefit for me.

Would you like to return to your country and with your experience assist in its development?

Naturally! I very much want to return to Cameroon to be useful there and to encourage my African friends. I understand, however, that many Africans cannot find employment in their country and prefer to remain abroad; each case is unique.

There is exciting work to be done there. To begin with, there is the need to evangelize society. Unlike here, my country needs to be Christianized—not re-Christianized. One of the difficulties people face in Cameroon is a fatalistic attitude. Many young people think that our society will never improve. They see

work as merely a way to make enough money to survive, rather than as a means to acquire the human virtues needed to love God and others, and to assist in the development of our country. We Christians have to fill Cameroon with hope!

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