

Because of two friends

Alice Augusto (Hong Kong) is married and has four children. She describes how receiving classes of Christian formation regularly helps her to be a better and happier person: "I can share from experience that there is always something new to learn. I found it very good to keep reviewing, and it has served as good guidance in my life and in decision making."

08/09/2016

You need interior life and doctrinal formation. Be demanding on yourself! As a Christian man or woman, you have to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, for you are obliged to give good example with holy shamelessness.

The charity of Christ should compel you. Feeling and knowing yourself to be another Christ from the moment you told him that you would follow him, you must not separate yourself from your equals — your relatives, friends and colleagues — any more than you would separate salt from the food it is seasoning.

Your interior life and your formation include the piety and the principles a child of God must have, to give flavour to everything by his active presence there.

Ask the Lord that you may always be that good seasoning in the lives of others.

Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, 450

Hello, I am Alice Augusto, and friends call me AA. I was born and grew up in Hong Kong, and I am married with 4 children. We moved to Australia in November last year, in order to take better care of my mother who is 90 years old and was living by herself.

I first met Opus Dei in 1997. I was spiritually a baby then, such that, I did not know how to pray, nor know how to go to confession. In fact, I learned from my family (even if we children were baptized as babies), that to go to confession once a year means, yes, we are already good enough! My relationship with God was at such a distance, and with Mother Mary, even farther away.

I recall that one day, 18 years ago, two friends brought me to Tak Sun Holy Family Chapel. I started going there for Sunday Mass and then daily

Mass. Then I brought my children to attend the Sunday school. After attending Mass more often, I began to attend other activities: doctrine classes and days of recollection, etc. I attended numerous activities for a good number of years.

What I can say is: just keep attending, which is what I did. With time, I have seen how essential doctrine classes are. Even after I finished the 3 year cycle, I continued to attend for more than 10 years. We repeated the topics because the Catholic doctrine does not change, but those priests connected the application of the doctrine to the problems and current issues of the society and of the world. I can share from experience that there is always something new to learn. We can never say we know everything and that we do not need to go anymore. I found it very good to keep reviewing, and these have served as good

guidance in my life and in decision making.

Another thing that I learned to appreciate and value a lot is the monthly recollection. Yes, it could take an hour more than the doctrine class, but we all need a kind of half-day retreat. The recollection is only for a few hours, a very good chance to revive spiritual energy that gives nutrients to our spiritual life. If we do not eat for a few days, we already feel very weak. Our soul also needs the nutrition to keep going. I would look forward to every monthly recollection. Also, thanks to the priests of Opus Dei, they helped me to do my confessions better, and introduced books about prayer to me. I became closer to God and Mother Mary, and I realized I was becoming a better Catholic.

When I was preparing to leave for Australia, a good friend of mine

suggested that I attend a 3-day retreat before leaving. Due to a not-so-great past experience, I was hesitant to go back. But she said, "You should try...again". I also thought, my children are in their teenage years now and it is alright for me to be out for 3 consecutive days. So, I did. I was moved by the loving care they gave me as I was not feeling well at that time and the details of affection they had with me, giving me a surprise with a nice birthday cake which was during this retreat. I really felt it was a family. That 2nd retreat was a marvellous turn in my life.

Years ago, I thought like many of my friends in Hong Kong, that 2 children are enough. But the priests encouraged me a lot not to be afraid, and to not agree to contraception as it gives more problems. Be open to life, to the number of children that God gives a married couple, and God

gives the support as well. It is very true. Now, I realize how good it is to have more children. Now, the older ones are so helpful, in the house or when we go out, they give me directions when I am driving the car; they care for the younger siblings, etc. I think we are very blessed. Yes, there is more sacrifice needed when they were little, but that was in the beginning; later on, there will be rewards too.

I brought my children to attend similar activities as well, and my husband, who is not Catholic, has met many at the men's centre and they became good friends. I like what Opus Dei has to offer and they take care of each member of the family. Most of all, in Opus Dei, I learned about sanctifying my work, including housework and taking care of my family and everything that I do. I appreciate the teachings of Saint Josemaria, his guidance and spirit,

which I agree to and want to follow
in my life as well

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