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From Stomach Aches to a Joyful Feast: Celebrating St. Josemaría!

Chiamaka, in her last year as undergraduate in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, shares her fond memories of the Mass in Campus in honour of St. Josemaría.

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St. Josemaría said: “I will not stop repeating it until it is deeply engraved in your soul: Piety, piety,

piety! For if you lack charity it will be for want of interior life, not for any defect of character” (*The Forge*, point 79).

The Mass in honour of St. Josemaría is one of the many celebrations I look forward to each year because it reinforces in me, the message of sanctity in ordinary everyday life.

My name is Chiamaka Eme and I attend the means of formation given by Opus Dei members at Greendale Study Centre, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. I was particularly expectant of this year’s feast because it would be my last time celebrating in school as an undergraduate student. I came in contact with Opus Dei through my sister, Eby. It was 2019 and I had just gained admission into the university. My sister had invited me for a Saturday activity at Uzommiri Study Center, Independence Layout, Enugu. In her words, “This place that I am

taking you to ehheh, you will meet many undergraduate girls like you....". Immediately I stepped into the Oratory, I knew that a whole new chapter had begun in the pages of my life. Five years later and it has been a very good ride since then.

On the auspicious Wednesday, 26th June 2024, I took time to prepare myself as early as possible to help out in decorating the altar and distributing bulletins and prayer cards before Mass. A few hours before I left my house, my stomach punched me with a severe unexplainable pain that got me to lie on the floor as I took a painkiller and called on the intercession of St. Josemaría. Within the space of an hour, I felt relieved and proceeded to the church with haste and joy. When I arrived at St. Peter's Chaplaincy a few minutes after 4pm, some volunteers from Greendale were putting fresh flowers on the altar

while others were setting up books for sale. There in St. Peter's, there was a long queue, waiting their turn to speak with the priests available to hear confessions and have spiritual direction.

The Mass began at 6pm with six officiating priests. The Chaplaincy Hall was filled with people. It was soul-lifting to look around at the hundreds of people attending the Mass and think of the many more attending in various parishes and chaplaincies, coming together as a family to celebrate. The homily was given by Fr. Jude Egharevba. He intermittently made use of the Igbo language to drive home his teaching, reminding us of our identity as children of God, an identity that is solidified by our baptism. As paraphrased from St. Josemaría: "In Baptism, our Father God has taken possession of our lives... God has placed an indelible mark on our

souls through Baptism; we are children of God” (*Holy Rosary*, First Luminous Mystery).

He went on to list some of the features of the spirit of Opus Dei that serve as daily reminders for all children of God: Daily prayer which includes the Mass and the Holy Rosary; Doing our jobs well; Mortifications which entail conforming our lives to that of Christ; and Frequent Confession.

Fr. Jude concluded the homily by saying, “Anyi bu umu Chukwu, oge niile, ebe niile” (We are God’s children every time and everywhere).

Another highlight of a Mass like this is the presence of the choir! As always, they added colour to the celebration with beautiful songs.

As soon as the Mass ended, my friend, Chidera, came up to me, and

gave me a big bear hug with a big smile, and she said to me, “Thank you so much for inviting me. I enjoyed this Mass”. At that point, I too was grateful that the stomach ache did not deter me from experiencing yet another memorable Mass in honour of St. Josemaría.

I then hurried in the direction of the photographer to take pictures alongside other volunteers.

Chiamaka

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