



FORUM ONLINE

“Let’s go out, it’s urgent”

ROUND TABLE, MAY 21, 2022

Cordelia Orisaremi’s Testimony

AN EXAMPLE OF MY DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN COPING WITH A DIFFICULT SITUATION IN MY LIFE

SELF-INTRODUCTION

I am Titilayo Cordelia Orisaremi from the southern part of Nigeria in West Africa. I am 54 and a sociologist by profession. I worked as a programme specialist with the United Nations in my country for several years until I resigned in 2007. My resignation was mainly because I needed to have more time to engage in other activities I loved to do. Because I had a PhD in Sociology, I decided to take up a lecturing job at the university of Jos my favourite city in Nigeria. I am currently an Associate Professor of Sociology at Baze University in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Besides being a university lecturer, since 2010 I have been lecturing at St Augustine’s Major Seminary and at the Catholic Institute for Formators (where religious and priests are trained and given specific skills on how to understand and better guide their new and young members in formation). Both institutions are located in Jos, in the north central region of Nigeria.

I have been a member of Caritas Christi for 21 years, thirteen of which I lived as an isolated member in my own country until we got a second member in 2014. I love my country dearly. As a single lay Christian woman, the greatest challenges I have had to contend with in my vocation are those brought about by insecurity and corruption. My beloved country has been terrorized by some self-styled Islamic terrorists (Boko Haram) since 2009 in addition to the activities of various militant groups, bandits, and kidnappers.

A MAJOR EXPERIENCE

A major experience of discernment I had to go through was at the peak of the Boko Haram attacks in Jos. I had not only made my home in Jos, I was quite happy with my job at the Jos university, at the seminary, in the parish, at the institute for formators and so on. Most of my social relationships were also in and around Jos. It was therefore difficult for me to imagine life outside of my beautiful city of Jos with its very clement weather. In fact, I had marked the exact spot I would like to be laid to rest at death! It was under my favourite tree by some rocks in my retirement home!! This was never to be!!!

In Caritas Christi, we have a practice whereby each member has someone within the institute (following certain laid down criteria for selection), who journeys closely with her as a friend, a confidant and a counsellor. She is called a “personal sponsor”. Because I wanted to remain in Jos, my first temptation and strategy was to downplay the heightened insecurity in Jos in my conversations and correspondences with my personal sponsor and with members of my family since they were all very far from me. Each time they heard or read about the crises in Jos, they would call to express their fears and worry over my continued stay in Jos especially since I lived alone. I devised ways of quelling their fears while I battled within. The more I secretly prayed and hoped for improved security, the more it degenerated. My spiritual companion, a priest, had muted the idea of considering relocating from Jos but I was not open to that option at all. With time I realized that I was not true to myself and to my vocation; and that I had not utilized fully, the means offered by Caritas Christi, a life and vocation I had freely chosen. The very first thing I did upon this realization was to book an appointment with the priest whom I found quite patient and understanding. He gently led me to engage frankly with my personal sponsor. After much battle, God’s grace opened me completely to an honest discussion about the true state of the volatility of my part of Jos. With her sisterly support, I gradually and painfully came to the decision first to move out of Jos to a safer place. Secondly, to detach myself from my property in Jos, and finally to bring myself to accept the possibility of selling it off and starting a new life. This painful decision brought me such an inner peace despite the uncertainty of a job prospect; how to raise funds to relocate and resettle in a new place; etc. I also sought help in discerning where to move to and from an informed judgment, the safest place within the country at that time was the capital city, Abuja which was some 250 kilometres from Jos. Knowing that I had undergone this due process was an impetus for me to launch out. I was encouraged to take a bold step to begin the process of relocating to Abuja. God in whom I trusted, made it happen.

Here I am today. As we say, “the rest is history”. Thank you all for your attention.