

7 Days a Week, 24 Hours a Day

Angela T. Fortunato (United States)

Angela is originally from New Jersey in the United States. She studied Biology at Northeastern University in Boston and is currently undertaking a Masters in Bioethics at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She plans to begin a doctorate in Public Health at the same university in the area of gerontology/geriatrics, particularly in the care of patients with chronic illnesses and to contribute to the advance of the health of the elderly in the US. She lives in Pittsburgh and is the fourth of five children.

The concept of having a unified Christian life that demanded of me to live 100% of my life, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, in a manner proper to a daughter of God, was the highest ideal I had ever encountered. I was especially struck by the call for a unity of life because I knew so many Catholic classmates of mine who, although they attended Sunday Mass, were living far from God. In public school, it was just assumed that our religions were a separate part of our life. Religion was only discussed in historical terms, and the Catholic Church was only taught in negative terms within that history. In school, there were definitely “rules of conduct”, such as academic honesty and punctuality to class. However, virtue was never discussed.

My school was very competitive academically, which probably encouraged my desire to do my studies well. I cannot even remember questioning the possibility of not completing my schoolwork. Well, except for the time I ‘experimented’ with not studying for a biology exam in 9th grade in an attempt to be ‘cool’. I felt so badly taking the exam and not knowing so many of the answers that I returned to my studies with a desire to always know all the answers. After hearing the quote of Blessed Josemaría: “An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer”¹, my attitude towards study changed.

In the very first point of *The Way*, he wrote: “Don’t let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail [...]”. In my extremely secularist surroundings, these

¹ *The Way*, 335.

words helped me to re-examine the purpose of my schoolwork. It was no longer just for me and my pride in knowing the answers. I now began to study as prayer, offering hours of study for my family and my friends, and for the needs of the entire world. Before, I might have said a three-second prayer for a family member before going to bed, but now I could offer a whole hour for that person! I also saw the circumstances of my school from a Providential and apostolic viewpoint; I had no reason to always be on the defensive about my faith.

I also learned from Blessed Josemaría to love the world. When I was in middle school (grades 6-8), I was an adamant environmentalist. I helped in the “Geo Club”, and reminded my classmates to re-use every piece of aluminium foil in order to help “save the planet”. I was learning about the wonders of the natural world, and how some actions of human beings were endangering those wonders. But, I also fell into the false notion that human beings were in the way, that the world would be better without us. I was pro-choice at the time, wanting a woman to be able to choose an abortion and to get one in a safe manner. Pretty soon, though, I learned more biology and philosophy from my parents and the people I knew that loved the dignity of the human person, and more, if you are a Christian and I saw the truth in the pro-life stance.

Yet at times, I still got down on humans, when I thought about how bad we could be and how much evil there was in the world. I will never forget telling my father: “I hate the world”. To which he quickly and strongly corrected me: “No, Angela. The world is good. We should love the world [...] passionately”. I now know that he himself had learned that idea, and even that phrase, from Blessed Josemaría, who gave a homily entitled “Passionately Loving the World”. The title itself tells us that my father was right. The world is good. Yes there are people who do evil things. In fact, we all do some evil things. But the world is good. And it’s good, not just on its own. The world is good because God made it and entrusted it to us, and we should take care of it for that reason. And we human beings are good because God made us, too. Those little innocent children who are deemed “unwanted” are indeed wanted by God, and need protection.

In my public high school, I started a pro-life club. I was an officer of my college pro-life club for four years. Just this year, I helped start a club at my university called “Do No Harm”, for medical, law, and graduate students who are willing to address the various life ethical issues from a pro-life point of view. All human beings are “unique and irrepeatable” as Pope John Paul II says. I’m so glad to be working towards such a good, noble cause. I still think it’s important to recycle, but I know that the material world has its importance not as an end in itself, but as a means for us humans to get to God. Every time I sit by the edge of a lake, or even stare at a dissected cat, I try to contemplate God in His creation.