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**MY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE LOVE THROUGH OTHERS AND HOW
THIS EXPERIENCE HAS INCREASED MY KINDNESS AND COMPASSION
TOWARD ALL PEOPLE**

In the village where I grew up, there is an existing tradition and culture which regards strangers as outcasts, especially those from a certain village named Umudara. I was told that people from Umudara are descendants of some individuals who were thrown into the evil forest because of one crime or the other. This was the village where I was born. But how did I come to live among the Udelu people?

Adaugo is a widow from Umudara who always wished to have all her children enrolled in school. She so much admired children from the neighboring village. They were smart, intelligent and could speak the English language fluently. “Oh! If wishes were horses, beggars like me could ride,” she would often tell herself. As each day passed, she was more determined to secure western education for at least one of her children. Previous attempts had failed, but she remained undaunted. Her children had been frustrated, left out of school on the grounds of baseless discrimination as social outcasts.

One day, a new idea struck her mind: “If I could take Eugene and keep him in an open place where people visit often, he could be picked up by a ‘good Samaritan’ who would send him to school. Nobody will identify him and he will no longer be discriminated against. Eugene is just 8 years old but very intelligent,” she thought.

A day came when she took me to a distant village. It was twilight when she told me to wait for her in the village town hall. She left and never came back for me. With heavy eyes as she was going, she said “My son, don’t hate me for doing this. I love you and want the best for you, good education. Access to education is your right and that is what I’m fighting for. May the God who brought you into this world protect you and provide you a helper. I love you my son.”

I cried and lost my voice. I could not run after my mother because she tightly tired me to the pillars of the town hall. It was 10 pm when Mr Eze, a famous village hunter, left his house for hunting. He had been reluctant initially. Along the road that leads to the bush, he saw a human figure. It was I, Eugene. He took me home.

Just like my mother wished, I was enrolled in school. My joy new no bounds. New pairs of sandals, socks, and a school bag were bought for me. By the end of the term, school results came out and I didn’t do well. I was very angry. I cried and even refused to eat throughout that day. But to my greatest bewilderment, I received a show of love. My parents were so compassionate, and they consoled me. They told me not to worry because they were going to get a private teacher for me. With these encouraging words, I brightened up again. Within a brief while, I started having private lessons at home. Through the private teacher I recorded resounding success in my academics in the subsequent terms.

One of those days, I came in first in the last terminal examination. My parents were very happy. They took me out to a cinema house and recreational ground just to make me happy and as a way of celebrating my success.

How things suddenly changed. Money started missing in the house. In every occasion, everybody would have an alibi to give but I never had any. So I became a suspect. The love for me started dwindling, and I grew thinner and thinner. I would cry to God to vindicate me. At a

point when it seemed God was incapable of answering prayer, I asked that He should take my life.

On one fateful day, I was in school and my father came back home in the middle of the afternoon. He heard the voice of someone moving in the house. He hid himself. When the culprit came out, behold, it was his second son. When I came back from school, they apologized to me and asked for my forgiveness. Quickly I told them that they did me no harm and that I still loved them. We continued living together as one happy family again.

It was only divine love that vindicated me. Divine love is the key to any successful friendship, family, organization and nation. It is the foundation and pillar of any stable and strong home. Any individual, family, organization or nation lacking divine love is like a house without concrete, a strong foundation, or pillars. Because divine love is that deep affection an individual has for another under God's approval, all creatures both man and animal normally express that deep feeling of love towards another. In fact, it is the way we can achieve a better living. Right from time immemorial, God the father of love has been a role model of love to mankind. Part of his love and kindness we have been able to emulate. God has expressed His love for mankind with actions. How? As the creator of the whole universe, He gave us the earth, our delightful home, filling it with abundant food and water, natural resources, fascinating animals and beautiful scenery. God sent His son to come and die for us which gives us hope for a wonderful and eternal life.

My experience of divine love is what I will never forget. It has made me care for others, showing kindness and compassion. According to the teachings of Christ, giving is better than receiving. I have learned to give and I have been practicing it. At school, I render help to those who are in need of it. I pay equal attention to everybody without discrimination. As it stands

now, I am an advocate of God's teachings of divine love. These are the various ways I have been able to appreciate my experiences of divine love.