

In Kenya: Conversion Amid the Pandemic

Njoki, a Cooperator of Opus Dei living in Kenya, talks about helping a friend to become a Catholic amid the ongoing pandemic.

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The month of February 2020 was a good month, a month like any other. Well, perhaps this is not entirely true as 2020 is a leap year, which made February longer by one day, a big

deal for those born that day. But I digress. My name is Njoki, and I'm a Cooperator of the Work. This is the month I was introduced to Francy, a lovely young lady who is a 2nd year Law student at Strathmore University.

I vividly remember our first meeting as she is naturally friendly, bubbly and chatty. It was easy to strike up a conversation right away. She said she wanted to become a Catholic and hoped to be baptized as soon as possible. I found her enthusiasm very encouraging as she was eager to embark on the journey. I arranged to meet regularly with Francy to go through the Catechism of the Catholic Church's section on the sacraments of Christian initiation.

In the following month, March 2020, COVID-19 hit and we went into a lock-down. By this time I had only had two meetings with Francy. Due

to the unpredictability of the situation we quickly adapted to the online learning as the rest of the world was doing and continued meeting weekly. Our preferred mode of meeting was via the zoom platform which worked quite well for us.

This turned out to be an exciting experience for both of us as we adjusted to a new way of doing things. We occasionally had a few interruptions from Francy's 6 year old brother Santana, which were very welcome. He was not convinced that his sister was actually attending class and so he would pop in during the sessions to see the 'teacher' and say hello, beaming his huge smile.

Our sessions progressed well over the months that followed. For some of the classes, I would provide Francy with reading material in advance, and we would begin the

class with her giving a summary of what she had read, which would be followed by an interactive session to delve deeper into the topic.

We were able to conclude the classes in the month of August 2020. Francy received the sacraments of Christian initiation on 26th September 2020 at Our Lady Help of Christians Shrine. The day she had been longing for was finally here! Her loved ones were present, including her mum, her brother Santana who recognized my face immediately from the zoom sessions, her aunties, cousins and friends. It was indeed a beautiful day.

Preparing the classes was a good refresher of the teachings of the Catholic Church for me as well. The reference materials that I used were *A Question Answer Catechism* by J. Babendreier, P. Castiella & P. Mimbi (based on the Catechism of the

Catholic Church) and *The Faith Explained* by Leo J. Trese.

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