

Sowers of Peace and Joy Conference in Toronto

This is the second yearly Conference at Brennan Hall at the University of Toronto. The speakers for this 2004 conference came from Kenya, Congo, Peru and the Philippines focusing on some of the key challenges they face in their countries, especially poverty, the AIDS epidemic, and education. Each foreign speaker was supplemented with testimonies from Canadian speakers. In this article from the Catholic Register in Toronto,

journalist Mickey Conlon
outlines the testimony of Mrs.
Marygoretti Munene of Toro...

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TORONTO, November 7th 2004. The message of St. Josemaria Escriva has helped Marygoretti Munene transform her life.

Munene grew up in rural Kenya, “fetching water from the river, firewood from the forest, milking cows.” Altogether, not an unheard of upbringing in her homeland, she told a Toronto conference Oct. 16 at the University of St. Michael’s College. The weekend conference, sponsored by Ernescliff College, was examining the theme “Sowers of Peace and Joy:

The Message of St. Josemaria Escriva at Work in the Developing World.”

But it was when she was introduced to St. Josemaria’s ways at Kianda College in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, her life changed, Munene said. At Kianda, run by the St. Josemaria-founded lay institution Opus Dei, she soon found that “no student is treated different than any other.”

The college lives by St. Josemaria’s call for people to live holiness in their everyday lives.

“We all have equal rights,” said Munene.

That may sound like a given in a nation like Canada, but it’s not something Munene took for granted. After all, on her first day at the school, after a life on the farm, she was meeting girls who were all talking about television and videos.

To a rural Kenyan, these were quite foreign concepts, Munene said. And the cleanliness of the campus, well that was something she had never experienced before either.

“I was worried. How do I cope with that cleanliness? How do I cope with those rich girls?”

Munene soon found that she need not worry.

“At Kianda all students experience love and the sense of belonging,” she said.

And it was her formation at Kianda that has helped her in the ensuing years. Munene noted the example of her marriage. She and her husband, she said, were both difficult, proud people, headed quickly to divorce. But the Christian teachings at Kianda of giving generously to others helped her steer clear of that path.

“If I had not met Opus Dei at Kianda my marriage would be over now,” she told the approximately 300 people gathered for the weekend long conference.

Today, Munene lives in Toronto with her husband and four children. She is currently upgrading her teacher’s certificate and hopes to resume the teaching career she left behind in her homeland in the near future.

The conference also heard from other speakers, including Margaret Ogola, a doctor who works with AIDS patients in Kenya, Nelly Tshela Mutay of the Congolese Centre for Culture, Training and Development, economist Jesus Estanislao of the Philippines, social worker Janina Ghiglino of Peru and Canadians Kari Lyn, who volunteered at Kianda and in Peru, and Professor David Conklin from the Ivey Business School at the University of Western Ontario.

Putting Into Practice the Message of St. Josemaria Escriva // The Catholic Register / BY MICKEY CONLON

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