

"Shosh" - the life of Mrs. Oda Namulanda

"Shosh" is the affectionate nickname that many students at Kibondeni College gave to the late Mrs. Oda Namulanda. It translates to "Granny" in English. The affection that moved those lady students to call her Shosh was born from the trust and good humour that Mrs. Namulanda cultivated with each of them through her inspiring work as a teacher and a mentor.

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Born in 1940 in Busia, Oda Namulanda trained as a teacher after secondary school and with the help of some friends, went to England to do a nursing course at Gravesend and Kent Hospitals in Manchester from 1963 to 1966. She qualified as a State Registered Nurse and Midwife. She worked in England until 1968 after which she moved to the USA and continued her nursing practice there. It was there in the USA that she married Mr. Ondwasi Namulanda whom she had met earlier in Kenya. With her husband and now two children, they moved back to Kenya in 1973 and were blessed with four more children. Between 1973 and 1997 she lectured, supervised and counseled students at the Kenyatta National Hospital KMTC

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Mrs. Oda Namulanda joined Kibondeni College in May 2010 as a part time Religious Education teacher. Thanks to her professional background, she soon took up the teaching of First Aid and Home Nursing. The students trusted her, joked with her and shared their joys and sorrows with her. She continued to work in Kibondeni until 2017 when her failing health didn't permit her to work any more. She was a firm friend to the staff members who appreciated her warm, friendly nature and good humour. One of her former colleagues attests that in these seven years, she has made a mark in the lives of each one in the College. The example of her Christian life and dedication to her work was invaluable to all as was the advice she would impart to the younger married members of staff. Another colleague

comments that the advice that they sometimes gave each other had its origin in a piece of advice that *Shosh* had given one of them earlier.

Throughout her life, Oda lived out her Catholic faith like any ordinary wife and mother, bringing up her children in the Faith through her teaching and good example. As a married member of Opus Dei, she put in more effort in these ordinary details, attended Mass daily, lived a life of prayer and made a heroic effort to be constant in *her own spiritual formation*. As one friend of hers mentioned in a tribute to Oda: *early this year when her health deteriorated she made extraordinary effort to hire a taxi to bring her for the means of formation. In March she was not able to attend her recollection. I decided to pop in to chat a bit with her. Lo and behold! She was much recollected in the garden, "following the recollection as best as*

she could"! It was time for Mass, so she did the readings of the day, and was making Spiritual Communions. I was edified by her determination to be faithful to the norms and customs of the Work. I think it was on this day that I asked her about her spiritual reading (she had kept a book for too long). She said "I have read this book over and over again; it is talking to me about my current situation". (The book was "I Call Him Father".)

Through her example she influenced many other friends to come closer to God. Most notably she brought her family, especially her husband, closer to God. As a close friend attests, she was very close to each member of the family. She prayed for them by name, and asked for very specific graces for each one. Her supernatural outlook blossomed during her husband's convalescence. She spent time teaching him the basic Catholic prayers. She got her children to install

EWTN so that her husband could deepen his faith. She recited the Rosary with him daily. She also taught her husband how to make a good confession and would remind him about it. Together with her son, she managed to arrange for a priest from Consolata Church to bring Holy Communion to her husband.

I was fascinated by the effort she made to teach her husband how to accept pain and to offer up all discomforts for different intentions. She often reminded him to pray for the intentions of the Prelate of Opus Dei, at which her husband would say, "this prelate of yours needs so much prayer and sacrifice!"

In February 2017, she was diagnosed with pancreatitis, which led to further complications in her health over the five months that followed. Despite her ill health, she made great effort to remain cheerful:at some

point she was admitted to Nairobi Hospital; she spent several days in the ICU. One of her friends went to visit her several times. During one of my visits, the friend narrates, her customary good humour came out: "I reached the door but St. Peter told me to go back and continue doing apostolate!" We talked for a good while, and laughed until the guard had to come and ask us to lower our voices.

One of her students narrates that even when she fell ill early this year, she would make light of her own sufferings and encourage us to pray for Mzee (her husband) instead. A deeply committed teacher, we all remember her coming to the college in May in great discomfort in order to hand over her teaching material to another teacher. When we visited her with the students, she was interested in their lives and each visit was marked by her characteristic warmth,

good humour and supernatural tone as she promised to pray for each one.

She also made great effort to travel to Western Kenya to bury her husband who had passed on in June 2017. In July 2017 she was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent chemotherapy immediately.

Unfortunately, the cancer had spread aggressively and she succumbed to it on the evening of 2nd August 2017.

She was surrounded at her deathbed by her friends and family who accompanied her in prayer.

Throughout her illness she never complained; rather she maintained her cheerfulness and composure and above all she maintained her spiritual outlook and life of prayer to the very end. *Another remarkable trait that Oda had was a reflective sense of appreciation. She often told one of her close friends "these days I only do prayer of thanksgiving... I*

cannot stop thanking God for the grace of conversion that He granted my husband. I cannot complain about anything. I am also grateful to my children; they are spending all their earnings on his medication." She shall be remembered as a loving mother who gave everything for her family; as a cheerful person who always had time for others; as an exemplary Christian with a profound sense of being a daughter of God and whose aim was always to bring others closer to God.

We thank God for her life and are comforted by the conviction that she continues to pray for us.