

# Challenges to the family in Kenya

More than 500 people took part in a series of talks and panel discussions on the family, organized by the Family Development Institute of Kianda School in Nairobi, as a way of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the school and also commemorating the centennial of the birth of Blessed Josemaria.

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Children, unlike televisions or computers, don't come with an instruction manual. Hence the need for the symposium, "Today's challenges to the family," held at the Kianda School recently. The event was sponsored by the Family Development Institute (FDI), a group affiliated with Kianda School, which has the aim of supporting the family and its values. The conference was opened by Joan Odera, a former student and now the Principal of Kianda School, and included five panel discussions directed by parents of children in elementary and secondary classes of Kianda.

The discussion panels dealt with a number of varied subjects, including media and entertainment, the Internet, social life and recreation, the consumer society, and relationships within the family. The panels proved to facilitate an enriching interchange of

experiences. A common ground of agreement could be seen regarding the importance of the family as the foundation for the education and psychological motivation of children, the underpinning of their primary values and virtues. When the family is strong, it makes its members capable not only of resisting the negative influences proceeding from the consumer society, but also of communicating their positive values to today's world.

## **The Roots of Kianda**

In the two introductory conferences of the symposium, Olga Marlin and Eva Beuttaah spoke about “The Roots of Kianda.” Professor Marlin gave a history of the school and recalled the interest that the founder of Opus Dei had in the sixties in founding an interracial school in Kenya from which a Christian spirit could radiate out to the whole of society. Thus

Kianda College was born in 1961 as a secretarial school. The College gathered together students of African, Asian and European origin and was a graphic expression of the profound truth of the words of Blessed Josemaria: “There is only one race, the race of the children of God.”

Professor Marlin ended by encouraging the parents to continue to move Kianda ahead “so that in 25 years,” she told them, “it will be you who will be telling the story of so many dreams that have become a reality.”

Mary Kibera, the director of the Family Development Institute, concluded the symposium by pointing out the need to create new forums in which families can exchange experiences and support one another in their educational task.

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