

I get ideas from a little book I always carry with me

Emily Mwangi tells how Saint Josemaría Escrivá's teachings influenced her life and her work.

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“I met Opus Dei in Kibondeni College (Nairobi), where I was happy and studied enthusiastically. While I was there I achieved the National Certificate in Hospitality and Catering. Now I realise that as well as

the professional training I received a good dose of cultural and Christian formation that not only helps me to behave well and honestly, but enables me to help other people to do the same.

“My first job was with a tube manufacturing company. I was in charge of the kitchen: preparing meals for the company directors, 16 people altogether. They liked my cooking and often came to the kitchen to thank me. The first week there, I stayed behind after work to do some deep cleaning on the walls, fittings and floor. The following week the ‘top’ director asked me when the kitchen had been repainted, because it hadn’t been planned for. I explained to him that I’d only cleaned it, and he couldn’t believe it.

After that first job I worked in the dietary section of a hospital, also in charge of the kitchen. I was looking

after 240 people. It was a big challenge. As well as the professional aspect, I had to tackle some difficulties that came up with the employees, because I realised I needed to correct some wrong behaviour. Then I remembered some advice from Saint Josemaría: 'Don't take a decision without pausing to consider the matter in God's presence.'

I decided to take a long approach to the matter and one day, while we were working, I asked them why they never went to church on Sundays. They were surprised. 'How can we do the cooking, prepare all the menus punctually, and go to church at the same time? It's impossible,' one of them answered. So we drew up a shift schedule for Sundays, and like that all of them were able to go to their respective churches (each of the people working

in the kitchen belonged to a different denomination).

When I'd gained some experience in the job and knew my team well, I felt bold enough to tackle the subjects that I was concerned about. I asked them all for their cooperation. I was astonished to see how the problems sorted themselves out. In the kitchen we began to feel an atmosphere of real friendliness.

Later on, another head of department took courage to do the same: to talk with his employees and see how to meet their needs. There was a positive result straight off. When the directors thanked me, I said that in fact I'd got the ideas from a little book I always carry with me: *The Way*, written by Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei.”

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