

There is Life beyond Retirement

“Some people retire and go off to Marbella. When we retired, we got the chance to move to Congo.”

10/24/2010

Ines and her husband, Ramon, are both doctors, and parents of ten. They have joined Monkole Hospital's current project that asks retired doctors to move there to contribute their professional experience.

Monkole Medical Centre started in 1991 as a modest mobile clinic. Today they have a hospital with 46 beds and medical care in paediatrics, internal medicine and surgery. Retired doctors Inés Dorronsoro, Ramón Díaz and Antonio Medarde are trying to see how they can help set up a Microbiology laboratory.

Ines and Ramon don't consider themselves heroic; the heroes are the people who live there permanently. "Take a look at Europe and then take a look at Africa, there is no doubt that we should help in whatever is possible... it doesn't cost me an effort to move to Kinshasa," states Ramon simply.

There is life beyond retirement

All their lives, they had learned from St Josemaría to work tirelessly, seeing their work as a springboard for passing on the spirit of Christianity. "Work that is done well is always

profitable,” says Ines. Ever since her friends and former colleagues heard that her new home would be in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they have been telling her they’d like to come too. The local media and the University of Navarre newspaper have also shown an interest. Ines smiles and added, “Moving to Africa does have its glamour!”

Budding doctors

Ines Dorronsoro and Ramon Diaz met in the University of Navarre at the beginning of the 1960s while studying at the Faculty of Medicine in Pamplona. They got married on June 26, 1965. The day before the wedding, Ines sat her final exam, and the day after, they flew to Madison, Wisconsin in the US, where Ramon had been offered a three-year research position.

They had both met St Josemaría during their student years and attended Christian formation activities organized by Opus Dei. Both had become Supernumeraries.

After the US, they returned to Spain, but moved to Tours, France two years later. Three years on, they returned to Pamplona. By that time they had five children.

Ines and Ramon were both heads of Microbiology units for more than 20 years at the Navarre hospital and the Navarre University hospital respectively. They had come back from the US with the idea that it wasn't a good idea for the husband and wife to work in the same place. Ramon was a WHO expert in brucellosis, also known as Maltese fever, which has now nearly died out thanks in part to his research work.

Retirement

From 5 children, the number increased to ten. They now have five grandchildren. For Ines, retirement was liberation: at last she would be able to spend more time with her family, and have lunch with her husband. That was her highest “ambition”.

But life is full of surprises, and their latest surprise was Africa. Although they had travelled a lot, worked in foreign countries and were used to the difficulties of juggling a job with a large family, they had not set foot on the continent before.

Monkole Hospital's latest project

Monkole hospital is a corporate work of Opus Dei in Kinshasa, Congo. Promoted by the non-profit organization Congolese Center for Culture Education and Development (CECFOR), Monkole is situated in the municipal community of Mont-Ngafula. This semi-urban district in

the south-western outskirts of Kinshasa has an estimated population of 220,000 that live on virtually no income.

Its latest project is to ask retired doctors and other medical professionals to lend their professional expertise by moving there for a stint. It would be like a breath of fresh air for this institute in one of the least developed countries in Africa.

Most places in Congo have neither electricity nor running water. There is also a shortage of medical laboratory staff. In developed countries, people talk about “nuclear medicine”, while in most parts of Congo, the most elementary practices of medical hygiene are still lacking.

Ines and Ramon made a two-week trip to Monkole just before Christmas 2009, and are now studying how to set up a much-needed laboratory

there. They are looking for public funding, and when they have sorted all this out they will move to Congo.

They are sure that they can rely on St Josemaría's help for this new stage of their lives. They feel it was significant that they got married on June 26, which years later would become St Josemaría's feast day.

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