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In season and out of season: parents teaching catechism at home

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary to change our plans in ways we didn't imagine. Due to the pandemic, we had to postpone the date of the First Holy Communion of the girls in Kianda, a school for girls in Nairobi. With the impossibility of teaching catechism classes at school, we decided to give the classes online and besides, to involve their parents since they

were spending more time with their children at home.

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We spoke to each family, one by one, inviting them to prepare a topic each from the catechism text used in the preparation for First Holy Communion. They would then make a video of them teaching that lesson to their children, and in that way, we would have a collection of videos covering the whole subject. They did it! It was great to see how much training these parents had received through the school.

I then thought that we could do something similar for parents who do not have much training on the topic: a virtual course for parents who want to teach catechism to their children. This way they would be

able to answer the questions that all children ask.

We involved Assumpta and Sarah who, with their husbands, prepared the lessons and gave them through Google Classroom, with the help of audio-visual materials, songs, short stories for children etc. We prepared an explanation of the project which could be sent to friends and acquaintances via WhatsApp.

Shortly after starting the preparations, Sarah heard her husband say, "this project is transforming me! Every free minute I have, I spend reading stories in the Bible to complement my lessons..." Assumpta has involved the whole family in the project. Once she had collected the ideas for each lesson, she asked her daughters to prepare slides for the presentation. The PowerPoint presentations they made

were very well done and quite engaging.

During the weeks prior to the beginning of the course, the two teaching couples prepared the lessons by consulting with each other on the best way to present the topics, while we all contacted families we knew who would like to participate in the course. Thus we prepared to begin our online course on August 1st 2020: Parents teaching catechism to their children at home.

On the first day, the different couples participating in the program introduced themselves to each other. The couples talked about their family and why they had enrolled in the course. Some wanted to teach the Faith to their children and help them to love it from a young age. Others were thinking of passing on the content to other children in their neighbourhood or to the parish

where they teach catechism, etc. It was good to see the enthusiasm of the 17 couples who attended.

Once the introductions were done, we moved on to the organization of the lessons. There would be two sessions each weekend: one in the morning and one in the afternoon, Saturday and Sunday. Each couple would choose the session that suited them best.

In the following weeks the number of participants increased to 24 couples and then to 35. The participants came from Uganda, and from different parts of Kenya: Kisumu, Kinangop, Thika, Mombasa and Nairobi... plus a Kenyan family living in France! It was interesting to note that those who were farthest away were the first ones to appear in the Classroom!

Bellitah began the classes alone, because her husband works abroad,

but soon after, she told us that her husband would be joining the course. He too wanted to be able to teach his children.

So as to get more involvement from the children, we decided to organize a performance at the end of each month for the duration of the course (three months). The children from each family would present some of the things they had learned. The first one took place in August.

It was a pleasure to see and hear the children telling their stories on the Creation, Adam and Eve, the Guardian Angel.... They also illustrated it with songs and prayers. We had fun together and got to know each other quite well. We are looking forward to the end of the pandemic so that we can have a face-to-face meeting with all the families.

Hilda commented once that some neighbouring children joined the

catechism classes they were giving their children. When we were discussing the topic on Baptism, some parents suggested that we organize another course for godparents, so that they can better fulfil their role. One parent said, "I thought I came to learn how to teach my children, but I am the one learning." And I was impressed to receive the following message from one of the mothers; "everything you are doing will have an impact on future generations".

M.O

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