



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Strathmore College, Kenya

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Strathmore College opened in 1961, just as Kenya was preparing for independence. When independence finally arrived in 1963, the country faced three serious problems: illiteracy, poverty and disease. There was an urgent need to tackle these problems, especially the lack of basic education, but at that time there were only a handful of secondary schools, and none of them was open to all three races that inhabit Kenya – African, Asian and European.

This was the situation that had originally moved the founder of Opus Dei to send trained teachers to Nairobi to set up a school there. He told them to set up whatever kind of school they thought most in accordance with the characteristics of the country, but there was one feature that he insisted upon. No matter how ingrained old habits were, and no matter how difficult the task of overcoming official vetoes and prejudices, the school that they set up had to be inter-racial.

“Our Lord has come to bring peace, good news and life to all men. Not only to the rich, nor only to the poor. Not only to the wise nor only to the simple. To everyone, to the brothers, for brothers we are, children of the same Father, God. So there is only one race, the race of the children of God. There is only one color, the color of the children of God. And there is only one language, the language which speaks to the heart and to the mind, without the noise of words, making us know God and love one another.”

Strathmore College (high schools are called “colleges” in Kenya) has as its motto the phrase *Ut Omnes Unum Sint*, meaning “That all be one.” The motto is also represented by the college emblem of three hearts, which express the idea of living in harmony with everyone, regardless of race or creed. They also symbolize the unity that exists in the college among parents, students and teachers.

Currently almost all the teachers are native Kenyans, some of them former pupils. The school has high-quality science laboratories, IT rooms, sports fields and a large library, which promises to be the seedbed for many future intellectuals.

One Tutor for Each Student

For students to develop a complete personality, the family needs to be involved in the educational process. For this reason, parents have periodic talks with teachers and often exchange ideas about the students' education.

One of the challenges schools face in today's society is how to help students develop their own personality in the midst of sweeping cultural changes. The personalized attention on the part of the parents and teachers is the key that enables Strathmore to solve this problem. Nowadays students receive less and less guidance from their parents. Strathmore assigns a tutor for each of its students, who often acts as an intermediary between students and their parents; he encourages the students individually and helps them to deal with any problems they might have.

In addition, Strathmore has a chaplain who is available to offer spiritual help to anyone who might need it. The chaplaincy also organizes seminars and workshops for parents and teachers. Many people are surprised to learn that in Strathmore, unlike most other Kenyan schools, there are no prefects. In this way, Strathmore promotes leadership among students. Leadership skills are also developed through sports; it is the students who choose their captain each year. These captains, besides leading their teams in sports tournaments each year, have periodic meetings with the teachers to go over matters that affect college life. This spirit of freedom, which goes hand in hand with the Christian identity of Strathmore, contributes to the students' personal development.

When the academic year at Strathmore ends, some students work as volunteers on social projects during the summer vacation. When John Muthiora, an English teacher, first proposed this idea, the response was overwhelming: more than 100 students signed up to help in hospitals, doing various kinds of work. Kevein Okwel, a volunteer in the oncology unit of Kenyatta National Hospital, summed up his experience in these words: "Not even all the money in the world could buy the joy and satisfaction I have felt in helping these people."

When Strathmore completed its 25th year, it received an unforgettable visit: Daniel arap Moi, then President of Kenya, attended the college's anniversary celebrations.

For further information see: See further:
<http://strathmorefoundation.org/strathmore/strathmore-school/>