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A life, a dream and magnificent realities

“I brought a seedling to Africa, little suspecting where it would fall and into what it would grow.” The seedling is now a magnificent reality seen in the many social projects that have been pioneered by Kianda Foundation, a not for profit organization, of which she was among the founding trustees.

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On Sunday, January 5, at 3.45 pm,
Olga Marlin, one of the first women

of Opus Dei in Kenya, passed away at the age of 90, following a long illness, cheerfully and bravely born.

Olga was born in New York on November 12, 1934 to Hilda van Stockum and Ervin Spike Marlin. She was the eldest of six siblings: Brigid, Randall, Sheila, Liz and John.

She met Opus Dei while she was a university student at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, where she studied modern languages and received her MA degree and Higher Diploma in Education in 1956. She joined Opus Dei as a numerary in 1955 at the age of 21. Her total self-giving on this day marked the beginning of a series of fruitful surprises and adventures from Our Lord that she would encounter and respond to with an affirmative “yes!” throughout her life.

In response to St Josemaria’s desire for apostolic work to take root in the

African continent, Olga, together with other women of Opus Dei, arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 13, 1960. In her book, *To Africa with a Dream*, Olga tells the lovely and charming story of personal sacrifice, risks taken, companionship and shared endeavour as she and her companions took the first steps in the beginnings of Opus Dei in Kenya.

Just a few months into their arrival to the country, the women set up their first project in 1961 - Kianda Secretarial College, the first multi-racial girls' school in East Africa. In the same year, they began Kibondeni School of Institutional Management — a training unit for women attached to the catering department of Strathmore College. It was a unique institution in pre-independence Kenya, where catering jobs were done by men. Since then, their efforts and dedication have had

a great impact in providing education to African women.

In her book, she says, *“I brought a seedling to Africa, little suspecting where it would fall and into what it would grow.”* The seedling is now a magnificent reality seen in the many social projects that have been pioneered by Kianda Foundation, a not for profit organization, of which she was among the founding trustees.

With the passing of time, Kianda Secretarial College evolved into Kianda Secondary School (1977) and the Primary Section (1989). Faida Girls' Centre for Secondary School students started in 1977 and in 1987, Fanusi Study Centre for university students, at the University of Nairobi Campus. Meanwhile, Kianda Secretarial College merged with Strathmore College in 1993, eventually growing to a fully fledged

University in 2002. Other projects by Kianda Foundation include Tewa Training College in Kilifi, and Kimlea College in Limuru. From it, similar foundations at the service of women have been established in Uganda, South Africa and Nigeria. From Kenya too, women have gone to help start The Work in Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Congo, Cameroon, Uganda and South Africa.

We thank God for her example of a life well lived and the courage with which she bore the health challenges she experienced in these last years.

Asante sana Olga!

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