

MUSA'S QUESTION

A REFLECTION FOR LENT BY MUTHIGA MAURICE OF L'ARCHE, KENYA



It was in January 2009, when L'Arche Kenya welcomed its first core members with learning difficulties. There were four of them: Paul, Samuel, Susan and Musa. Among the four, I felt particularly close to Musa, partly because he spoke my mother tongue and was very outgoing. At that time, I spent a large part of the day with him.

One evening, just before dinner, he invited me to sit by him. Right in front of us, across the dining table, there was a crucifix hanging on the wall. In the middle of our conversation, all of a sudden, Musa looked up the crucifix, pointed his finger at it and then asked me: "*Maurice, do you know the man hanging there?*"

I confidently answered: "*Yes*". He went on and asked: "*Who is he?*" And I answered: "*Jesus*". Then he said: "*Do you know he saves people?*" and I answered: "*Yes of course*" Then he asked me: "*How does he save people?*"

For a moment, I was confused by Musa's question. Throughout my adult life, I had always heard people confess how Jesus is their Lord and Saviour, but I hadn't really spent time to reflect on the question of how Jesus actually saves people. How does he do that, technically speaking? I spent about two minutes in silence, and I could see from his face that Musa was still waiting for an answer from me. He probably noticed that I was struggling to find a response to his question, and tactfully went back to the story he was telling me before. The one about his foster parents: those who took him in after his biological mum allegedly abandoned him in a dustbin, only a few days after he was born.

He then told me: "*You know, Jesus saved me through my Uncle.*" Only then did I understand the previous question of Musa, "*How does Jesus save?*". In his eyes, Jesus saved him through his "Uncle", the foster father.

Thanks to Musa's testimony, I ended up understanding that I, too, could experience Jesus in the people I meet day after day. And, even more extraordinary, I, too, could become, for the people I meet, an instrument of the love and compassion of Jesus.

During the 14 years I spent at L'Arche Kenya, I remained very close to Musa. In all these years, I never heard Musa lamenting over his abandonment by his biological mum. Not once. Whenever he spoke about his past, he always expressed gratitude to his foster father, who took him in. He talked to everyone about his foster father's generosity. A hard-working man of limited means, yet full of love.

In a special and very simple way, Musa has taught me to welcome my reality: to mourn less over the things I lacked, and to appreciate more all that I have received. He has taught me to dance to life!