Columns
Arts and Media



Sr. Adelaide Ndilu at Radio Waumini in Nairobi, Kenya (Courtesy of Adelaide Ndilu)



by Adelaide Ndilu

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Being a journalist in a media house was a dream since my teenage years, as was my desire to become a religious sister. Sr. Peter Anyango, whom I admired during my primary education, influenced me greatly. Her infectious laughter and mannerisms inspired me to be like her. Sister Peter, the headmistress of Holy Rosary Primary School where I studied for four years, embodied qualities I admired, fueling my desire to become a religious sister.

Simultaneously, I wanted to spread the Gospel of Jesus to the world. However, the prevailing notion at the time was that one couldn't be both a religious sister and a journalist. The traditional roles of sisters were nurses, teachers or catechists, not journalists. The internal conflict led me to ponder: "Which path should I choose?"

Growing up, my father's small radio introduced me to educational and entertaining programs, with religious content and choir music being particularly captivating. This exposure sparked my love for media at a young age, and I familiarized myself with radio presenters and news anchors, associating every voice on air with a name. This early exposure laid the foundation for my passion for the media industry.

Upon completing my secondary education, I faced the decision of following in Sister Peter's footsteps or pursuing a career like the female radio presenters I admired. Ultimately, my inclination towards becoming a religious sister led me to join the convent, setting off on the path to sisterhood. However, I always held onto a whispered promise to God that one day I would combine my calling as a journalist with spreading his word through broadcast media.

Today, I share my journey working at a radio station.

The road to becoming a journalist was not without challenges. My superiors were skeptical when I expressed my desire to study journalism, an unconventional choice within the convent walls. Despite the need to wait for the right opportunity, I persevered, trusting in God's timing. The fulfillment of pursuing my dream was worth the wait. Upon completing my bachelor of arts in mass communication, I landed a role at Radio Waumini, a Catholic radio station in Kenya.

Stepping through the station's doors on my first day, I felt a sense of relief and excitement, knowing I was embarking on the path I had always longed for.

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One of the things that I liked and stood out to me the most was the sense of solidarity among the on-air crew. Everyone was so passionate about their work, and it was infectious. For my part, I felt heavenly. I felt a certain fulfillment and satisfaction under the mic, handling editing, mixing audios and blending music with discussions. My enthusiasm and that of the listeners highlighted the impact of broadcasting. They listened actively, sought clarifications and asked for a repeat of topics they felt were important and not very well understood.

One of the highlights of my time at the radio station was getting to meet and interview some incredible personalities. I interviewed apostolic nuncios, bishops, superiors general of religious institutes, sisters, women and young people. I was at home doing what I had always wanted to do.

I produced and presented several programs, including "Morning Reflections" Monday to Friday; "Voice of the Shepherd" on Sunday; and "Church Round-up" and "Gender Issues." The most impactful and most loved of these programs was "Morning Reflections." The show had its own clientele among clergy, sisters and devout churchgoing Catholics. Through this program, I recognized the influence of the microphone and the various demographics reached by the radio

From what my listeners would say to me, I understood God was using me to reach and inspire his people who, at times, are wounded and heartbroken due to so many worries and cares of our world. The positive feedback I received inspired me to keep researching topics of discussion on air in order to remain relevant.

As all these praises continued to pour in, I recalled my prayer during my early years when I wanted to be a sister and a journalist. This truly was a prayer come true. God really answers our petitions — innocent and naive as they may be.

"Sister, your reflections are so insightful. Did you study theology?" the priests would ask. "Are you Sr. Adelaide of Radio Waumini?" The smiles, handshakes and indescribable excitement said it all. Some would come literally to ask for an audio recording of a topic I had reflected upon. I felt so humbled and yet grateful to God for using me as his instrument to reach and touch souls.

One evening, a gentleman arrived at the studio and said he had been listening to the program while taking public transportation to work. Unfortunately, he arrived at his destination before the program ended, so he had come to request the audio.

On another occasion, two ladies were driving in the streets of Nairobi and spotted me walking along the streets. They stopped the car and inquired if I was Sr. Adelaide. I remember that week I had been discussing the topic of the seven sacraments and that day I had talked about the sacrament of penance. One of the ladies remarked, "Sister, it had been years since I went for confession, but listening to you this morning and how passionately you spoke about the sacrament, I couldn't let the day pass without going to confession." Then they suggested, "Sister, why don't you think of selling these reflections on cassettes?" But, how could I start making money from a talent given to me freely? No, I couldn't.

All of us at the radio found great satisfaction in connecting with listeners and receiving feedback on the shows and music we aired. It was so rewarding to hear how we were making a positive impact on people's lives through our programming.

Overall, my experience working at a radio station was incredibly rewarding and fulfilling. I learned a great deal about the industry and gained valuable skills that will serve me throughout my career. I will always look back on my time at the radio station with fond memories and gratitude because becoming a sister and a journalist was a prayer truly answered.