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Similar and different from the stone abbeys of Europe

by Christina S.N. Lewis

The convent of the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary is both similar and very different from the stone abbeys of Europe. The sisters have a large compound in Ongata Rongai. It is, like the abbeys of old, an oasis of greenery and calm, that seems removed from its surroundings a bustling suburb, located just outside the Nairobi border.

But the compound is intimately connected with the local populace, not only that but its poorest and most vulnerable. There is a maternity hospital, a senior citizen's home, a nursery, elementary and secondary school, as well as classrooms for vocational and community outreach training, an acre of vegetable garden (mostly kale, including some plants over six-feet-high) and dozens of pigs, cows, sheep, rabbits and chickens, all cared for by the sisters, novitiates and some staff.

I don't know about you, but I don't associate Catholic sisters with pig farming, yet that's what I am seeing here in Kenya. While the order's mission appears to be proselytization I did not see much evidence of that, as of yet.



In this photo,

the beautiful grounds, stands in the sheep pen. I will

meet the compound's executive director Sister Mary, later during my trip. I plan to spend a few nights at this convent as well.

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