



The arrival of Joel and our mission of transformative education



Joël Tshilumbu Kanyinda, a sixteen-year-old Congolese boy, arrived in Spain in the first quarter of the 2017-2018 school year. He came prepared to live an educational, social and sporting experience in the city of Ponferrada.

Coming from Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Joël entered a project led by the Community of Castile and León, the purpose being to live together, exchange, and educate, in the Assumption School of Ponferrada, and to play in the basketball sports club in this region.

The Religious of the Assumption have always been closely linked to Africa, participating in numerous educational and social projects, with different houses and missions. Several of the nuns who currently make up the community have been missionaries in Africa and Claudina spent several years in Kinshasa, the home town of Joel.

Joël arrived in Ponferrada alone, with health problems and without knowing a word of Spanish. Faced with this situation, we reflected: What can we do to make Joel happy and see his dreams come true?

We discerned this with the community of sisters and decided that they could indeed be the best support to help him get to know the language and thus be able to attend classes. A teacher from the school, invited him into his home, and took care of his health. All the teachers gave their time freely, so that he could succeed in his studies. His classmates received him in an extraordinary way and he was happily integrated into their sports and parties.

Thanks to the commitment of the entire educational community, it was possible for Joël to master the language, as well as revealing his talents for design, painting and music, and especially for sport.

This adventure, initially for one school year, was so satisfactory that it one was extended to two, allowing Joël to obtain the fourth level of the ESO (Spanish school system= GCSE in England) and gain his Secondary Education Certificate. It has been a great pleasure to share this time with Joël, involving much effort, dedication and generosity. However, it has only confirmed for us our belief in education as transformative for life.

