

The Fourth Convocation of Godfrey Okoye University

GODFREY OKOYE: A University at the Service of Its Community



**Convocation Address of the
Vice Chancellor,
REV. FR. PROF. CHRISTIAN ANIEKE
*Saturday, 25 February 2017***

- Your Excellency the Rt. Hon. Chief Ifeanyichukwu Ugwuanyi
Executive Governor of Enugu State
- Your Excellency the Hon. Barrister (Mrs.) Cecilia Ezeilo
Deputy Governor of Enugu State
- Your Excellency the Most Rev. Dr. C.V.C. Onaga
Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu and Promoter of Godfrey Okoye University
- Your Excellency the Most Rev. Dr. Anthony O. Gbuji
Bishop Emeritus of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu
- The Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission
Professor Adamu Abubakar Rasheed, mni, MFR (or his representative)
- Your Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama
Catholic Archbishop of Jos and Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University
- The Board of Trustees Chairman
Professor Dr. Bartho Okolo
- The ProChancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of Godfrey Okoye University
Professor Dr. Christian Nwachukwu Okeke
- Principal Officers of Godfrey Okoye University
- The Hon. Commissioner for Education for Enugu State
Professor Dr. Uche Eze
- Professors of Godfrey Okoye University and other Universities here present
- Members of the Academic and Administrative Staff of Godfrey Okoye University
- The Commissioner of Police, Enugu State Command (or his representative)
- Your Royal Highness, Igwe Lawrence Agubuzo
Chairman of Enugu State Traditional Rulers Council
- Other Royal Highnesses here present
- Special Guests and friends of Godfrey Okoye University
- My dear graduating students and other students of Godfrey Okoye University

Every university orbits in a spatio-temporal context. This context, on the one hand, shapes the social and academic colours of a university. On the other hand, the setting of a university is influenced by a myriad of its activities. A good university must be looking at the face of its context, no matter how craggy or wrinkled it appears, and must be working very hard to give it a desirable pattern. It is the consciousness of this unavoidable relationship between a university and its context that inspired our understanding of education as a dialogical process. It is also the awareness of this relationship that influenced the choice of the title

of this convocation address *"Godfrey Okoye University: A University at the Service of Its Community"*. My story of our successes since the last convocation will be centered on what we have done as a university to improve our society and to express our sense of community service.

- **Town-and-Gown Assembly**

The first town-and-gown assembly of our university was a powerful expression of our sense of community service and of the symbiotic relationship between the university and its community. Whereas the community stands for the word "town", the word "gown" represents the university. This phrase has a history almost as long as the history of university education. In our first town-and-gown assembly we brought to this university industrialists, businessmen and businesswomen, technocrats of all categories, civil servants, security officers, clergymen, media workers, politicians, educationists and all types of entrepreneurs. The idea was to get these people to discuss their expectations of university education and university graduates, new trends in their fields, and problems they want the university to address in the training of the students. Also it was an opportunity for the university to listen and to request these employers of labour to be open to assist the university in the education of the students, especially by opening their doors for practical or entrepreneurial experience and employment of the graduates of the university. The experience of that encounter remains fresh in our memories.

- **Clean Up Exercises in Enugu State**

We have also expressed our sense of community service through our well planned cleanup exercises in our state. Every year our university delivers its message of cleanliness in a very eloquent style in Enugu State. Our students and members of staff carry brooms, shovels, sand and stones to clean up the streets of Enugu and fill up the potholes, thus reducing the stench and sickening putrefaction in many streets. We do this because, as one of the cleanest universities in Nigeria, we want to show that the quantity and quality of cleanliness we have achieved in this university is also possible in our state. We carry out this exercise because we want to

impress on our students the need to care for their environment. The need to care for our common heritage, our Mother Earth, has been well articulated by Pope Francis in his famous encyclical "Laudato Si". In the opening lines, quoting St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis writes:

Praise to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs. This sister now cries to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the air, in the water and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor...

My greatest joy is that ESWAMA officials have clearly supported this exercise and continuously expressed gratitude to our university for the efficacious and commendable action.

- **Testing of Water in Enugu State**

We have also demonstrated our sense of community service in the selfless project of continuously analyzing drinking water sold in sachets and bottles in our state. This project under the leadership of Dr. Unegbu of our Chemical Sciences Department is a joint project of Chemical Sciences and Biotechnology and Applied Biology departments. We have also continued to contact the producers of bottled water to inform them of our findings and to suggest ways of improving their water.

- **DNA Sequencing of Tropical Fish and Yam Species**

Under the leadership of our erudite Prof. George Ude, one of the best heads in the field of Biotechnology, our university has a big project of DNA analysis and sequencing of tropical fish, plants and yam species in our community. For the first time a lot of unknown fish types in our

country have been identified, analyzed and entered in the DNA world data bank. This is one service we have rendered to place our country on the world map of fruitful research results. Also the sequencing of various yam species has helped us in separating the sheep from the goat. We have discovered a lot of fake yam flours or adulterated yam flour products with the DNA sequencing tools. We would like to partner with various government agencies and factories in this project. If we really want to achieve a good standard in food production and make agriculture a big foreign exchange earner, as our government desires, then we must address the issue of fake products. Godfrey Okoye University is ready to work with our government agencies in the analysis of farm products to ensure their sanctity and harmlessness. This is what I call community service!

- **Our Farm Projects**

Our main campus at Ugwuomu Nike remains an indescribable cynosure. Its uniqueness lies not only in its amazing landscape with two natural lakes and rivers but also in the fertility of the soil. We have continued the development of the farms. We have planted twenty hectares of cassava from IITA. We are also partnering with IITA in the testing of new cassava species for better yields. We are also experimenting with different types of cows to test the challenges they have in our environment. Already we have a lot of robustly healthy cows parading the university campus, trumpeting loud and clear like the Nigeria Police Force Band. Furthermore, we are exploring our two lakes for crayfish farming and development of other species of fish. In addition, we have continued to develop our palm tree projects for palm oil production. This year we are planning to increase the number of palm trees to 15,000 trees. With this increase we hope to meet partly the demand for palm oil in our state. As you can see, this university is indeed serving our people. I, therefore, once again plead earnestly with the Enugu State Government to give us wings to fly by doing the road that leads to our main campus at Ugwuomu Nike. This will not only open up that part of our university but also hasten the development of the university farms and other farms within the region. May the Ugwuomu road not end up in the waste basket of unfulfilled promises! (In Jesus' name we pray!)

- **Godfrey Okoye University Radio School Project**

In 2015 our university, with its rare sense of community service, embarked on a radio school project, sponsored by MacArthur Foundation and South Saharan Social Development Organisation. The project was designed for all JSS 2 classes with schools in Enugu State and Adamawa State in mind. The lessons were delivered by our teachers, who used Godfrey Okoye University Secondary School for the pilot project. Our highly motivated and experienced teachers under the leadership of Mrs. Virginia Ani, the Station Manager of GO Uni Radio, taught all the lessons, which were recorded by the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and GO Uni Radio. With the approval of the Enugu State Commissioner for Education, Prof. Uche Eze, these lessons are now on air. Today children in Enugu State and Adamawa State (but also other states) can listen to the lessons and improve their knowledge of the four subjects taught (English, Mathematics, Basic Science and Civics Education). Today even our children in some IDP camps, whose academic ambitions have been thwarted by the Boko Haram insurgency, can listen and have some education through the Radio School Programme. This is our service to our society.

- **The Use of English on the Radio**

Godfrey Okoye University has identified a good use of the English language as a major challenge among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. To fill up the linguistic potholes in the education of our young people our university senate approved that the Use of English programme would be a three-year programme at Godfrey Okoye University (not a one-year programme as is the case in most universities in Nigeria). But we are also aware of the plight of our young people in other places and institutions. This explains why we have embarked on the teaching of the Use of English on the Radio with our programme 'Get It Right'. The lessons are taught by no other person than Dr. Nzebuchanchi Oji, one of the best grammarians this country has ever produced. I am convinced that many Nigerians will improve their use of English tremendously if only they can listen to this programme.

Similarly, we are also teaching lessons in psychology on the radio. You can also tune in to GO Uni Radio (which is available anywhere in the world through its live-streaming) to listen to the scintillating lectures of Sr. Prof. Gloria Njoku as she delivers inspiring psychology lessons to her students. In addition, we plan to be teaching more courses on the radio. Similarly, our Radio offers a lot of educative programmes: Roundtable with Alex Ogbodo, Hourly News Update, Catch Them Young, Philosophy and Life, Daily Reflections with Emeritus Bishop Anthony Okonkwo Gbuji, and a host of others. This is also one way of opening the boxes of our academic treasures to the public with the hope of improving the epistemic landscape of our society.

- **Godfrey Okoye University Scholarship Schemes**

Godfrey Okoye University recognizes that education is not the exclusive right of the rich. The social teaching of the Church emphasizes strongly "option for the poor". Every institution of the Catholic Church works hard to serve both the poor and the rich. This explains why Godfrey Okoye University has continued to offer scholarships to indigent students from all parts of Nigeria. Apart from the vice chancellor's extensive scholarship programme, the university has offered over fifty scholarships to students since its inception. Also it has continued to offer scholarships to one person from each of the 19 northern states of Nigeria. This is our way of promoting national unity and our unique philosophy of dialogue with all cultures and religions in our geopolitical space!

- **Employment Opportunities**

One of the biggest elements of community service is the employment opportunity we have given to our people. One wonders what could have been the fate of about 1000 persons employed by Godfrey Okoye University with its group of institutions without a job at the university. In addition, more than five thousand persons are indirectly employed by Godfrey Okoye University through the services they are rendering to the university. Besides, these employees of the university are also paying taxes and contributing to the internally generated revenues of our state.

Godfrey Okoye University is therefore one of the greatest employers of labour in Enugu State.

- **Lectures and Conferences**

Our university has continued to place emphasis on conferences, workshops and public lectures. These lectures also reveal our passion for sharing in the life of our community. Since the last convocation many prominent Nigerians have given public lectures in this university. Among them are Prof. Julius Okojie (former executive secretary of the NUC), Chief Justice of Nigeria, rtd., Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohamed, Dr. Donald Duke (the former Governor of Cross River State and our convocation lecturer), the Deputy Governor of Enugu State, Hon. Cecelia Ezeilo, Chief Nnia Nwodo, Prof. Chidi Onyia, and Chief Maduka Samuel Onyishi (CEO of Peace Mass Transport Company), etc. Also two international conferences on Biotechnology and Biosafety took place within the last one year. Besides, very important conferences on Research Ethics, which our university is championing, were also held here. We have also continued to organize a peace conference every year, which has always attracted people from all over the world to our university. Also it has become an avenue to help young people from different countries and places to reflect on peace and to be involved in peace actions and projects by forming peace clubs in their schools. This university has also unceasingly continued to train scholars of other universities in the DNA sequencing of tropical fish and plants, a field in which we are now a leading university in Nigeria. To ensure that we continue to maintain our leadership position in Biotechnology, we are building a DNA Learning Centre, in collaboration with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York, which will not only be the biggest DNA Learning Centre in Africa but also the fourth of such centres in the whole world. The DNA Learning Centre will be commissioned next year.

- **Intervention in Various Schools**

In order to improve the standard of students entering our university and other universities, the senate of our university approved a special programme of intervention in schools within our immediate environment.

This programme involves our assessing the academic needs of these schools and filling up as many epistemic valleys as we can. Many schools have requested us to include them in this project. We may not solve all the problems of our impoverished schools but we can throw our little tributary into the ocean of our headache-causing school system.

- **Educating Employable Graduates with Sound Character**

The greatest expression of sense of community service is the method of educating our students. As a university we have kept an eye on the need of the industry and the civil society. We have continued to polish the tools of curriculum to meet the demands of the endusers of our products. Our university encourages students to see themselves as apprentices who must work assiduously to be abreast with the latest developments in their professional field. Our Mass Communication students, for instance, do not only have the famous GO Uni Radio (the best Campus Radio in 2016) but also the Mass Communication Practice Studio where they receive a preliminary tutelage before being offered adult dishes at the main Radio studio. Also computer science students have, in addition to their elaborate practicals, comprehensive professional trainings to enable them to pass professional computer examinations with ease. Our accounting students also take their professional ICAN examinations in addition to their normal lectures and practicals. One of the fresh graduates of the university, Nancy Onwubu, was the overall best student in ICAN examinations in Enugu in 2016. In addition to this achievement, she also obtained first class honours in Economics. Furthermore, we have opened doors in Austria and Germany for some of our students to do their IT in Europe. Every year we plan to send at least ten students to companies in Austria and Germany. This will not only enhance their competence but also will lead to a crossfertilization of ideas. As you can see, Godfrey Okoye University educates students to excel in their chosen professions!

Furthermore, an educated person is not someone who can regurgitate all the stuff forced into his or her brain by pedantic lecturers but someone with a sound academic life and character. The character component has since been recognized as very important by scholars in the university

system. This explains why a university degree goes with honours. As Booker T. Washington rightly says: "Character, not circumstance, makes the person." Our university has always emphasized the character component of education. This also explains why discipline is boldly written in every nook and cranny of our university. Our students are known to be disciplined and of good manners. One of my happiest days is the day my students of the Economics Department came back from the University of Lagos with an award. Boldly written on the certificate is: "An award for Best Behaved Students". I felt exceedingly happy and proud of my students. Character makes all the difference!

- **The Performance of Graduates**

The university has a tradition of employing its first class graduates as graduate assistants. All the graduate assistants are doing various postgraduate programmes in different universities with tremendous success. Many of our graduates have got scholarships to study in universities outside Nigeria. For instance, one of our graduates, Michael Okoro, won a scholarship worth 50,000 dollars last year to do his postgraduate programme at the University of New York. The reports we are getting about the outstanding performance of our graduates are indeed heart-warming. Besides, many of our graduates have become employers of labour and are successful in their business enterprises. Those who are employed in the media, federal and state ministries and in various establishments have been outstanding in their performance. Every year during the National Youth Service programme graduates of this university have distinguished themselves in orientation camps and in various areas of their posting. As our tradition is, our students go for youth service the same year they graduate. Our graduates have also revealed their social intelligence in their relationship with others especially in their marriages. Those who are married are enjoying a successful married life. Just last year, two of our graduates (the couple were in the same department) who got married after graduation sent us pictures of their angelic twins!

- **GO University: a Catholic University on the Go**

In line with our academic brief, the senate and the council approvals, we have communicated to the NUC our readiness to begin our Faculty of Law and Postgraduate School. We are now awaiting the NUC resource verification visit. As soon as we have the approval we will hit the ground running with our usual GO Uni speed. Our Law Faculty will stress new areas of law like cyber and social media law, telecommunication law, medical law and ecology law. Our law students will from scratch get attached to law chambers and experienced lawyers to mentor them until they graduate. Also courses in English and literary studies will be part of the programme so that our graduates will be learned men and women indeed. Besides, a sound programme of philosophy and logic will help to exorcise the demon of horrifying fallacies in the speech and writings of the law students. In addition, we are ready to begin a postgraduate programme if the NUC approves our request. Scholars involved in the postgraduate school will be those who are indeed computer literate and can work with the students from a distance. The school will be the highest expression of the GO Uni speed and academic soundness!

- **Words to Our Fresh Graduates**

As Ophelia says in Shakespeare's Hamlet: "Lord, we know what we are but know not what we may be.' Yes, you know what you are now: graduates of Godfrey Okoye University with good moral life and sound knowledge in your different fields of studies. Now an open door is before you: the world. You do not know all the promises this world holds for you. But do not be afraid: you are flying on two wings (knowledge and spirituality) and can glide slowly along the path God's primordial plan. As Joanna Fuchs writes:

*There you are in your cap and tassel
Ready to make the world your castle.
It seems just yesterday you were a kid,
Watching everything I/we did.*

*Now we're watching you graduate -
The grown young man/woman we helped
Create!*

*On wings of knowledge you will fly;
Following your vision and rising high,*

*We couldn't be prouder... of you;
We wish you success in all you do.
Remember one thing we want you to know:
Our love is with you wherever you go.*

My dear fresh graduates of GO University, I would like to wrap up my final words to you with the beautiful song of Glen Campbell "Try a Little Kindness".

*If you see your brother standing by the road
With a heavy load from the seeds he sowed
And if you see your sister falling by the way
Just stop and say you're goin' the wrong way
You've got to try a little kindness yes show a little kindness
Yes shine your light for everyone to see
And if you'll try a little kindness and you'll overlook the
blindness
Of the narrow minded people on the narrow minded streets*

*Don't walk around the down and out lend a helping hand
instead of doubt
And the kindness that you show every day will help someone
along their way
You've got to try a little kindness...*

May God bless you all and lead you to fresh rivers of countless successes!

Conclusion

Finally, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this university will be measured not on the number of first class students it has produced, not on the number of beautiful buildings it has, not on the intellectuality of the students and staff. This university will be measured on how well it

has served its community by delivering services that improve the life of members of the community. The university will be measured on how its graduates have helped in improving the life of society. This is the test. This is the measure of our success. Be sure of this: Godfrey Okoye University will not fail our society. God bless you!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke

Vice Chancellor