

The Third
Convocation of
Godfrey Okoye
University:

***GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY
TODAY AND TOMORROW***



**Convocation Address of the
Vice Chancellor,
REV. FR. PROF. CHRISTIAN ANIEKE
*Saturday, 5 December 2015***

Protocol

On behalf of the staff and students of Godfrey Okoye University (God's Own University), I welcome you all to this third convocation ceremony. I welcome particularly our special guests, fresh graduates and their parents or guardians.

1. On 21 October 2015 our university celebrated its **sixth foundation day**. Six years, numerically speaking, is significant in human life because in many countries of the world it marks the beginning of primary or elementary education, which many consider to be the most important level of education. For it is the foundation on which other levels are built. It is the beginning of the process of epistemic enquiry which finds its culmination in university education. For a university, however, six years may appear insignificant (considering the long history of many universities like the University of Bologna, University of Paris, Oxford University or University of Cambridge), but it marks a significant step in the research and teaching activities of an institution. Having gone through a period of tutelage, of mentorship, a university at its sixth year of existence must be strong enough to lay a solid foundation on which its research activities rest. It must be old enough to start preparing itself for all kinds of research activities in its post graduate programmes. The postgraduate programmes will reveal the research orientation of a university and the solidity of its foundation. So today, as we celebrate the graduation of the third set of students, we are looking at the present state of this university and the strength of its foundation as we look forward to a future with new programmes that will be resting on the foundation of the present achievements.

2. Permanent Licence and Accreditation of All Our Programmes

In August this year the National Universities Commission (NUC) announced that Godfrey Okoye university had satisfied all the conditions for the award of a permanent licence. This means that our university is no longer flying on fledgling wings of a provisional licence. **Today we have a permanent licence!** Besides, all our programmes have been successfully accredited by the NUC. On behalf of the staff and students of our university, I would like to thank the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof. Julius Okojie, and the whole Commission

for finding us worthy of a permanent licence. The NUC has been very supportive of our effort in this university. May God bless the Executive Secretary and all the members of staff of the NUC. I would like to assure the NUC that neither this university nor its graduates will ever disappoint the Commission.

3. Academic Activities

Godfrey Okoye University today is a university brimming over with serious academic activities and research. This is a university where students are made to work around the clock. Apart from the normal classroom teaching (here I use the word "teaching" to underscore the point that university teachers must go beyond the narrowness of the lecture method in the classroom), we have a **well-planned mentoring system** that makes use of graduate assistants, brighter students and all members of the University Congregation to improve learning and good moral behaviour among students. Besides, the emphasis here is on **projects and practical or entrepreneurial sides of the theoretical framework of courses offered**. In addition, our insistence that all our students must own their own laptop to enable them to use modern facilities in learning has yielded a lot of fruit. Moreover, we have succeeded in blending face-to-face teaching with virtual, online teaching. Also **our introduction of the Use of English programme from 100 to 300 levels** has resulted in our students being recognized today for their fluency in the English language. There has never been any competition involving GO Uni students where our students have missed the first three positions in language competence and fluency.

Furthermore, to enhance their academic life, our students are encouraged to identify with the professional bodies related to what they are studying. **They are encouraged to join such bodies and take their professional examinations**. Our accounting students, for instance, belong to ICAN and write ICAN examinations while they are studying. Some finish all but the last ICAN examinations before their final examinations in the university.

In addition, one area where Godfrey Okoye University places a lot of emphasis is collaboration with other universities, especially universities in Europe, United States of America, Asia and other African countries. Our students have an open door to these partner universities in the course of their studies here. **We encourage parents and guardians to support our plan of sending our students to one of our partner universities for some weeks or a semester**

before their graduation. All students who have travelled to our partner universities in Europe or America (some of them are among our fresh graduates) have returned with a different, positive attitude to their studies and research. In the light of all these, I have no doubt that these fresh graduates of our university are well prepared to work in different fields. I also have no doubt that we have a crop of young graduates who will not only provide the needed workforce in our society but also will become smart job creators.

4. Vice Chancellor's Debating Club

The Oxford English Dictionary has a slogan “language matters”. Students must be helped to express themselves in varied spatio-temporal contexts. Nothing is as embarrassing as a holder of a university degree using language in such a way that even a fool will realize that a communicative blind alley has been created. In order to ensure that students use the English language with a great sense of its beauty and richness, we have, in addition to our elaborate Use of English programme, introduced the **Vice Chancellor's Debating Club**. This club is open to all our students, especially those students who want to convince the university that they are outstanding in learning and character. Some of our fresh graduates have benefitted immensely from this club and are ready to present their points seamlessly to the world and in a language that is a delight to the human ear and soul.

5. International Conferences

Since our inception as a university we have had a lot of international conferences in the natural sciences, social sciences and arts. These conferences have attracted scholars from other universities, strengthened our research foundation and scope and broadened the intellectual horizon of our staff and students. We at GO University believe that a university justifies its existence if it focuses its research activities, lectures, workshops and conferences on identifying and solving the problems of its society. This explains why all our conferences have addressed various issues which we have identified in our society. Our researches have also continued to identify specific problems of society with a view to finding solutions. For instance, as the Ebola virus was raging like the harmattan bushfire and spreading its heinous tentacles across our continent, researchers from our Biological Sciences worked assiduously to develop **hand-sanitizers made from local herbs** as a way of fighting the disease. Also one of our fresh graduates in Physics worked hard to ameliorate

the challenges of tricycle riders by carrying out an experiment that resulted in producing a **tricycle which uses solar energy** instead of petrol. Another fresh graduate invented an **excavator made from local materials** with the intention of beating down the price of this important instrument of modern work.

6. **Institute of Chinua Achebe Studies**

The senate of this university has approved the establishment of the Institute of Chinua Achebe Studies. It is purely a research institute with a focus on everything written by Chinua Achebe. The institute is expected to define new frontiers of research on Chinua Achebe and his works. It is expected to be the **biggest institute for studying the literary achievements of Chinua Achebe** and their echoes in the intellectual space of the world. When fully established, it will be the first of its kind in the world.

7. **GO Uni Radio 106.9fm**

In my first convocation address, I announced that we had got the approval of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for our campus radio. The NBC has described GO Uni Radio as the fastest growing campus radio and one of the best radio stations in Nigeria. Also, GO Uni Radio, in collaboration with Radio Nigeria, is championing a radio school programme called **The Radio School**, a huge project that will start broadcasting lessons in **English, Mathematics, Basic Science and Civics** in 2016. GO Uni Radio is rich in programmes and its GO Uni Roundtable with Alex Ogbodo has become one of the most popular radio programmes at Enugu and its surroundings. GO Uni Radio is also on live streaming (www.1069gouniradio.com/listenlive).

8. **Cultural Life**

Godfrey Okoye University has become a multicultural, multiethnic setting in the real sense of the word. It has kept its Catholic identity with its universal appeal and openness to all irrespective of religious affiliation or ethnic background. Here we have students from all the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Members of staff and officers of the university are from different zones and states in Nigeria and also from countries outside Nigeria. You can see from the composition of this assembly how variegated our academic and social space is. One of the things we emphasize in our collaborations with our partner universities is our cultural diversity. This underscoring of our cultural diversity has attracted

some foreign students (especially German and Austrian students) to this university. This has also lured a lot of European and American scholars to our university as visiting scholars. (You can see the number of scholars from the United States of America in this convocation.) Our famous **GO University Unity Week** has become an important occasion to celebrate the diversity and richness of our cultural life as an institution. Today Godfrey Okoye University has become the first choice of university for all those from the North or Middle Belt who want to study in the South East. I am convinced that we have given Nigerians fresh graduates who fully understand the meaning of cultural diversity and who could be called 'culturally and socially intelligent graduates'!

9. Physical Infrastructure Development

Since its inception, our university has made giant strides in the development of its infrastructure. There is hardly any part of this Enugu campus of our university that has not seen new buildings or some form of refurbishing. Besides, we develop our university with a deep sense of our philosophy, vision and mission and with an emphasis on our three dialogues: religious, cultural and epistemic dialogues. In any project here the central question is: **How does this project promote our philosophy, mission and vision?** From the Office of the Vice Chancellor to our libraries, hostels and lecture halls, one can discern our focus on these three dialogues. We have built hostels in such a way that students will have a sense of these dialogues. Our libraries and their furniture are built to promote not only epistemic dialogue but also cultural dialogue. As one enters our **ultra-modern e-library**, built by our distinguished senator and honorary doctor of our university, Senator Gil Nnaji, one has the feeling of being immersed in an ocean of world personalities and the cultural heritage of humanity. There is a sense of history and cultural richness of the world that is so captivating as you move into different segments of our e-library.

10. Parents' Forum

The establishment of the Parents' Forum, which I announced during our first convocation, is yielding tremendous fruit. It is a forum for the staff and parents to rub minds on the best ways of promoting research, teaching and learning in our university. The forum has brought the parents of our students closer to the university and created mutual trust between the parents and members of staff of GO University. Besides, **parents have shown solid and palpable support in many activities of this university.** We thank the parents of our students for

being here, especially the parents of our young graduates. May God bless you all!

11. Unity of Godfrey Okoye Group of Institutions

Our philosophy of dialogue is also being lived out in our group of institutions. The philosophy of dialogue of GO University has permeated the academic, cultural and social life of our nursery school, primary school, secondary school and college of education. **We have continued to stress the unity of the philosophy, mission and vision of all our institutions.** Also some lecturers of our university teach at our secondary, primary and nursery schools. In this way, we have not only secured the unity of our institutions but also ensured a high quality of education in all levels of our institutions.

12. Social Responsibility

As a Catholic university, our daily life is defined by prayer and a deep sense of our social responsibility. This is the fundamental motivation behind the annual **GO University Peace Conference**, driven by Rev. Sr. Prof. Gloria Njoku, with the aim of bringing young people together to think peace, live peace and promote peace in their world. This expresses our sense of responsibility to our society, which is continuously being threatened by ethnic and religious conflicts and profoundly thoughtless fundamentalism or barbaric radicalism. **This year's peace conference attracted a lot of young people from Jos.** It was a remarkable celebration of the richness of Nigerian cultures and an unforgettable opportunity for many young people to understand one another. As part of our social responsibility we have also offered **scholarships** to many disadvantaged students and to many of our brothers and sisters from the North. Also we have **been intervening in many schools within our vicinity and locality** to improve the infrastructure and standard of education in the schools. Besides, our students and staff have continued to embark on clean-up exercises at Enugu and its environs.

13. Godfrey Okoye University Tomorrow

In the light of what we have achieved so far, in the light of the speedy progress of this university that is true to its name "GO", you can imagine what the future will look like. In the next five years our whole emphasis will be on the development of the main campus of the university at Ugwuomu Nike. The 217 hectares of land at Ugwuomu Nike with its natural allurements, the two idyllic

GO University lakes, the confluence of two rivers Iyioku and Iyiukwu, primeval forests, thousands of elegant palms waving their green hands to welcome visitors, songs of exotic birds, monastic serenity of an environment untainted by modern barbarism and environmental putrefaction, will be so beautifully developed that it will become a point of reference in aesthetics discourse in this country. Already **we have engaged a team of Austrian architects** (R2 Architekten, Linz) who are working with our Nigerian architects to give the campus a taste of GO University uniqueness. We have also been developing the University Farms at our main campus, under the supervision of an Austrian, Martin Deimbacher. Our Department of Biological Sciences, under Dr Mrs. Miriam Unachukwu and assisted by Bowie State University, has been working hard to **identify all the plants** (so far 85 species of plants have been identified) **at our Ugwuomu Campus** and to place them on the world DNA data bank after proper DNA sequencing of the plants. Also we have started designing the **Achebe village at our main campus**, which will give everybody a sense of life in Umuofia and Umuaro. Perhaps we can invoke that famous mountainous fufu which only allows the view of those on the other side of the food-mountain after the mountain has been demolished. As you enter our main campus at Ugwuomu Nike, you will certainly be greeted by our numerous cows parading the farms with some sense of ownership and legendary dignity. I therefore ask for your prayers and support so that we can give Nigerians an excellent university campus that this blessed country deserves. At this juncture, may I thank profusely **His Excellency Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, CFR**, for his pledge to build a **befitting university auditorium** at Ugwuomu Nike, our main campus. Also I have the assurance of the CWO President, Lady Eunice Oguanya, that the CWO hostel project at our main campus will be completed early next year.

14. Furthermore, I would like to call again on the state government to redeem its pledge of constructing the ten-kilometer road that leads to our main campus with a sense of urgency. This university, with its group of robust institutions, is one of the biggest employers of labour in the private sector in Enugu State (with its **workforce of 920 workers**) and therefore deserves massive support from the state government. Besides, the students we are educating are our children and will provide the manpower needed for the development of our state and nation. We intend to start academic activities at Ugwuomu Nike in 2016/17 academic year. Without the road, our dream of moving there may be

killed.

15. Our Fresh Graduates

You represent the present and the future of our university. You represent the present because in you all our claims will be verified by our society. The spiritual life, cultural life and sound academic life we have exposed you to must be reflected in your daily life. I have no doubt that you will excel in all places of work and studies. Those who have encountered you in debate outings, workshops and studies outside Nigeria have testified to your academic solidity and socio-cultural intelligence. **Also the future of this university will depend on what you are doing in the different settings of human action.** The future depends not so much on our beautiful buildings and scintillating landscape as on you in your multicolored theaters of performance. With Stephen Katona I say to you:

*Imagine a future waiting for you,
Where you will feel quite new.
You will dance without care,
Like leaves blown in the air.
Feel the wind of change,
And welcome the strange.
Allow your eyes to see the beauty of a bumble bee.
Let a smile spread on your face,
And you brighten the place.
I give you a hug,
Kindness is your new drug.
Fill your senses with light,
Choose friends, music and pictures that delight.
In a thousand years your worries will not matter,
So let them just scatter.
Now put away that knife.
Say hello to a new life.*

You can count on my prayers as long as I live. I love you all. May God bless you!

16. Finally, I would like to conclude this speech with an expression of my profound gratitude to the proprietor, Most Rev. Dr. Callistus Valentine Chukwuma Onaga, the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof. Julius Okojie and members of the

Commission who are present on this occasion, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and members of the Board, the Chancellor, the Pro Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council and all members of the Governing Council, our distinguished convocation lecturer, honorary doctor of our university and Governor of Sokoto State, Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, CFR, our own beloved Governor Chief Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi and his deputy Chief Mrs. Cecelia Ezeilo, the distinguished recipient of our honorary doctorate and our beloved friend, **Senator Gil Nnaji**. I thank the Bishop Emeritus of Enugu, our distinguished guests, government officials, my dear friend and Enugu State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Adamu Mohammed, security officers and officials of the Nigerian Customs, traditional rulers and emirs, members of all Catholic organizations and other Christian groups. I also thank our Catholic priests and other priests here present, reverend sisters and all religious congregation members here. My gratitude also goes to the members of the senate of our university, all members of staff and students of our university and its group of institutions and members of the GO Uni Parents' Forum.

As we thank God for what we have achieved, we look to the future with the words of Saint John Paul in mind: "In Christ, you can believe in the future even though you cannot discern its shape. You can hand yourselves over to the Lord of the future, and thus overcome the discouragement at the magnitude of the task and the price to be paid" (World Day of Peace, 1 January 1985). And with the famous American poet Walt Whitman, I sing the song of my soul:

*Afoot and light-hearted, I take to the open road,
Healthy, free and the world before me,
The long brown path before me, leading where I choose.*

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all for being here. May God bless you!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke
Vice Chancellor