

ARE WE BUILDING THIS HOUSE ON ROCK?

Sixth Foundation Day Speech of the Vice Chancellor

Protocol

Six years ago the late President Umaru Yar'adua signed our provisional licence, bringing Godfrey Okoye University into existence. The signing of our licence is a singular act of trust which this nation placed in us through the supervising agency, the National Universities Commission. The trust is premised on our well articulated agreement to build a university on the solid foundation of research and teaching. It is premised on the promise of playing according to the rules of the game as stipulated by the National Universities Commission. The trust is premised on our unambiguous declaration of a philosophy of dialogue which reveals our understanding of education and how we ought to do our work in a new university. In my first matriculation address I cried out the following words like a hunter very close to his target game: "This is our chance: Godfrey Okoye University". I saw the university as our chance to deliver on our promises to Nigerians and the world. I saw it as our opportunity to translate our philosophy, vision and mission into measurable realities. I saw it as our opportunity to make our own statement in the wide field of university education.

Today, as we celebrate our 6th year of existence my question is: Are we building this university on the rock of serious academic research and teaching? Are we building on the foundation of our philosophy, mission and vision? Are we building within the spiritual space of the dreams of the founding fathers of our university?

A university exists to do two major things: research and teaching. The solidity of its foundation depends on the robustness of its research and creativity in teaching. If you traced the history of the university, you would see that neither the first universities nor their precursors, the ancient academies and monastic schools, depended on physical infrastructure to announce their identity to the world. In fact, the first university in the western world, the 11th century

University of Bologna had just one building where teachers who did not receive salaries but rather "collectio" (donations from students) taught their students and carried their research pedantically. Today western universities, and indeed all modern universities, are not judged by the beauty of their buildings but rather by the solidity of their research and teaching. These universities will proudly show the products of their research and the number of nobel laureates they have produced. On the heavy stone of research rests the life of a university.

Already we have seen signs of serious research in our university. We have noted with keen interest research activities and successes recorded in the biological and physical sciences. We have seen signs of serious research in Psychology, History and some other social sciences. This university must encourage all such research activities and effort. Scholars of this university must write grants and attract funds for research into the university. Our university must in fact pursue a policy of grant as a desideratum for academic success. We must make attracting research grants the "condicio sine qua non" for appointments and promotions of senior members of the academic staff.

Furthermore, our university must be promoting all activities that support research within its four walls. I felt particularly honoured when participants at the recently held conference on the literary achievements of Chinua Achebe passed a resolution that our university should establish an institute of Achebe studies. The Senate of this university has since endorsed the resolution, which will be forwarded to the Governing Council for its final approval. With the approval of the Council Godfrey Okoye University will be the first university in the whole world to establish an institute of Chinua Achebe studies. The institute will have as its primary mandate the promotion of new frontiers of research in the life and works of the most famous African writer, Chinua Achebe. It will be a centre of excellence in research on the works of Chinua Achebe. I look forward to having more of such centres of excellence in our university. All hands must therefore be on deck to make this university a point of reference in researches of all shapes and sizes.

Ladies and gentlemen, to whom much is given, much is also expected. Six years ago we started this journey. It all began small and was full of uncertainties. I thank all pioneer members of staff who believed that the university would go places in spite of its small size and toddle. I thank our pioneer students who chose us even when we did not have our courses accredited. Today all our courses are accredited. Today our licence is no longer a provisional licence but a full, permanent university licence. Today we no longer rely on commercial radios alone to send our news across to Nigerians. We now have our own radio. Today Godfrey Okoye University has become the talk of the town. Today this infant prodigy is turning heads wherever it goes. Today our students are involved in all sorts of research and innovations: hand-sanitizer from local herbs, locally manufactured excavator, solar-powered tricycle, solar panels, etc. The eagle is moving with an Icarian speed. May it continue to soar higher and higher!

Finally, our university has a lot of collaborations with organisations, institutions and universities within and outside our territorial space. The target of all these collaborative activities is to give our students and members of staff as much exposure as possible so that they can pursue their research with academic rigor and confidence. Our students are expected to travel outside the country before their graduation. Thirteen students of our university who came back recently from the UK are full of interesting stories about their experience. It will be my joy to see all my students travel outside this country, travel to Europe, America, Asia and other African countries. I would like to see students and members of staff get exposed to the best academic practices in the world. This is the only way we can guarantee solid research in this university. This is the only way we can build this university on the solid rock of research and impeccable teaching. On this rock rests our future as a university!

Ladies and gentlemen, this country has placed so much trust in us. We cannot fail. We will not fail because our Lord has never failed. (I have a Father who never fails...). God bless you! God bless all our friends! God bless Godfrey Okoye University!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke
Pioneer Vice Chancellor