

As I Celebrate Your Birthday...

The Foundation Day Speech of the Vice Chancellor on the 7th Foundation Day of Godfrey Okoye University

Protocol

I welcome each of you to the celebration of the 7th Foundation Day of our university. I welcome particularly Professor Chidi Onyia who, in spite of a mountain of papers on his table, accepted to deliver today's Foundation Day Lecture. Please permit me to deviate from the traditional way of speech delivery on an occasion like this to address my speech directly to the birthday child, Godfrey Okoye University.

My dear Godfrey Okoye University,

As I celebrate your birthday today, words of all shapes and colours compete with each other as they struggle for the most vantage position on the landscape of my mind. Sometimes I shudder or shake or shiver or smile as each word presents pictures of incalculable sacrifices, failures, triumphs or frustrations. As every mother, I have known you at every stage of your life from conception to this 7th birthday.

Today our lovely song for you keeps ringing in my ears:

Here stands the ivory tower

Godfrey Okoye University

Whose birth has signalled

Reincarnation of intellectual vitality.

Hail! God's own university

Champion of love and friendship

Rich in intercultural thinking

Sound in moral religious dialogue

Committed to unity of knowledge

Asking: Where's the evidence?

Bravo! Bravo!

Hail! GO University

Footprints of a great achiever

The Heart of Excellence

Lavishly endowed in Science and Arts.

This song captures our deepest expectations and desires as we watch you grow and continue your earthly journey.

You are indeed the ivory tower, standing tall among your peers in the wide field of academia. We have called you 'infant prodigy' because of your speedy and breath-taking progress. When your peers and older siblings were still struggling to have their courses accredited, you had already started looking for new areas of academic adventures, beaming with smiles of success as the NUC gave you a permanent licence and confirmed your unmatched success story. You are indeed the ivory tower of our time, a colossus bestriding the academic space of our time and place. Your birth holds a great promise for our people. You have become the first choice of scholars in search of the Forest of Arden of academic solace in a world where universities present a shockingly grotesque picture of academia. As I looked at you during the matriculation of your first fruits, I cried 'This is our chance'. I knew then you were our chance to write a new story in the history book of universities. Godfrey Okoye University, you will remain the hope of our people!

It is only appropriate that we shout 'Hail! God's own University'. You are indeed the Champion of love and friendship. You have brought young people together from every nook and cranny of our nation, from north and south, east and west, from every tribe and tongue. And you have patiently taught them to live together, pray together, eat together, laugh together and share the tears and smiles of daily human struggles in the inseparable collectivity of human experience. During our unity week, you have indeed proved to be rich in intercultural thinking. Cultural dialogue for you is not an academic paper delivered in national and international conferences by some white-haired, bespectacled professors. It is an unforgettable experience of our cultural diversity and variegated cultural experience as revealed by our unity week. The great opportunity you give students to learn and appreciate other cultures has made our students the most culturally intelligent students in Nigeria.

Apart from providing a setting for cultural dialogue, you have given our students sound spiritual space for religious dialogue. Our prayer book is called the Golden

Moment. We have a golden moment of an encounter with our God in the course of studies. You have given us a setting with a ladder that stretches to heaven, so that we can transcend our mundane world and venture into the world of eternal truths during our studies. You have given us a crushing missile to annihilate the Frankenstein monster of religious intolerance and Bokoharamism by planting the seed of religious tolerance in us. Our students will certainly become ambassadors of peace in their world. Hail God's own university!

As I celebrate you today, I see the tattooed writing on your body 'unity of knowledge'. You have drawn our attention to the unity of human knowledge. This is very important in a world of sickening epistemological fragmentation. Our researches will continue to reveal our understanding of the unity of human knowledge as our best scholars continue to work on common themes that offer a great opportunity for collaboration of many scholars in search of solutions to myriads of human problems.

As I celebrate you today, I see the faces of over 500 persons you have offered the opportunity to work and earn their living. I am overjoyed because you have offered our workers in the university the opportunity to work and earn their living as well as to be part of a meaningful human project.

As I celebrate you today, I see written all over your walls 'where is the evidence?' This underscores our passion for research and sound logic in the presentation of the products of research. Your scholars will stand tall in the world of research and share in your quality as the ivory tower of our time.

So, standing together as brothers and sisters, as friends and colleagues, as students and scholars, we raise our collective voices to hail you Godfrey Okoye University. You are indeed God's Own University. You are my hero, my passion, my life and my story. And I say happy birthday to you!

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