

***Dusting off the
Academic Tool of Mentoring
in our Universities***

Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke

On the Occasion of

***SR. DR. ADAOMA'S
CONVOCATION***

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As I reflect on the need for us scholars to dust off our tool of academic mentoring and get down to work, a lot of questions ceaselessly tug at the monastic cloak of my mind like an inquisitive child. My head turns into one big stadium full of jumping and tumbling questions of all levels of complications. How often have we scholars turned our faces into indescribably grotesque contortions and corrugations as we sit back to watch the seeming theatrical performance of the young in academia? How often have we been deeply tempted to unleash a barrage of contempt in the face of an unforgivable celebration of mediocrity and academic idiocy among the younger generation of upcoming scholars? How often have we wondered whether some of the young people around us should rather not be advised to find their vocation outside the tranquil walls of the university? It is indeed so frustrating to see aging scholars bereaved of younger successors. The thought of disappearing from the academic setting without any younger person to occupy your seat makes your eyes, ears, hands and feet sing discordant tunes. The feeling of an approaching monstrous world devoid of younger colleagues to ensure the continuity of epistemic enquires is indeed horrifying and devastating. The imagination of not finding someone to keep you abreast with the latest developments in your field when your eyes can no longer catch up with insatiable human desire to know is indeed depressing.

As I look at our universities today, I shudder. Over the years I have been wrestling with the Grendels of academia whose battle is targeted at the complete and irreversible annihilation of our serene academic space. The Mother of Grendel has in fact done me a great harm during the nerve-breaking encounters but I have given her and her fiendish son a lasting death-blow with one tool: academic mentoring.

Academic mentoring is one part of academic tradition that guarantees its continuity. Frankly speaking, academic life is not only about reading, research and teaching but also about developing smart solutions that will guarantee the continuity of the scholar's epistemic journey. Universities and academic groups that reveal a robust mentoring system have proved very successful and insured their life against all forms of vagaries in our world.

If you ask me today the root cause of falling standards in our departments and faculties and the reason for an undisguised lack of academic vigour among younger scholars, I will wrestle it down to one point: complete abandonment of the tool of academic mentoring. "Ever since the Greek poet Homer's "faithful and wise" Mentor first advised Odysseus, or Merlyn the young King Arthur, wise men

have counseled, taught, coached, and sponsored the young." And Donald Perkins says it all: "Everyone who succeeds has had a mentor or mentors." The implication is that the failure of young people in academia may be traced to culpable neglect of the academic culture of mentoring. This is certainly a mortal sin which only the pope can forgive. Maybe he can delegate this to the bishops in this jubilee year of mercy.

Mentoring involves a lot of sacrifices and detachment. Where such detachment is compromised on the altar of lascivious intimacy, the quality of mentoring plummets like the oil prices in 2016. It also involves exposure and the desire to let the mentee share in the epistemic visions of the night reserved only for grey-haired or hairless sages and elders.

I am convinced that with proper mentoring, we will restore the contorted and transmogrified face of academia and thus guarantee continuity of a sound academic tradition. **So rise up, pick up and dust off the forgotten tool of academic mentoring. Let us change the tune of the music in our time!** Adaoma's tremendous success sends an unambiguous message to all scholars: with a good mentoring, the young can take the kingdom of academia by storm. Let us therefore give them wings to fly as Bill Monroe writes in the poem "Give Me Wings":

*I've been looking around
There's a whole new world I see
And so many things that I can do
With your strength in me*

*Now I ask you to hear
As I sing of brighter days
For I need to have you very near
Come and find the way
Give me the wings
Of an eagle
I will soar into the sky
Give me strength
to hold a brother's hand
As he's passing by
Give me the eyes
Of tomorrow
Let me see what I can find
If you lead me
I will follow now*

Give me wings to fly

*You've been watching me grow
As you gently lead me on
It's your love and power that I know
Guides and keeps me strong*

With these words I heartily congratulate you, Rev. Sr. Dr. Adaoma Eugenia Sochima Igwedibia, on your great achievement. God bless you!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke
Vice Chancellor
Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu