

# **The Rare Rose in the Wind – Farewell Prof. Mary Gloria Njoku**

*(The Funeral Oration of the Vice Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University)*



Song: Anyi ga-ezuko n' ulo nke Chukwu (twice) n'akpo ubo (ubo). Anyi ga-ezuko n'ulo nke Chukwu...

I am not a wordsmith. But I have always felt that one thing is certainly not part of my existential limitedness: finding the appropriate word to express my feelings or thoughts. But today I see the illusion of my trust in my linguistic power and verbal weaponry. Today I must confess that my stream of words has dried up! If tears could be translated into words, I would be helped by my over-flooded stream of tears. If sighs could be translated into balls of human language, an appropriate word to express this situation would reveal its face somewhere in the indescribable landscape of my mind. If prayers could take the wings of human words, I would most certainly have found the most befitting word or expression for you Gloria and this situation. But today, today I, like a disarmed warrior, stand shivering, my verbal wings clipped and poetic arms seemingly irredeemably amputated. I have found myself in throes of panic like a student sitting in a heavily guarded hall full of hawkish supervisors to write a most difficult examination. In my panic and confusion the only phrase that entered my brain was: **The Rare Rose in the Wind!**

At the moment of the birth of this phrase I did not know its origin; neither do I know why it could be linguistically connected to you my dearest daughter Gloria and this situation. I knew I needed some monkish hermitage to be able to feel the word, smell it, taste it and listen to its heartbeat. As I rolled the expression in my mouth with my tongue and tasted it, I got it. I cracked its shell and tasted its yoke of meaning. I understood it and nodded my

head in the fashion of philosophical triumphalism. I saw why I could comfortably use it to paint your rare personality and express this situation.

The imagery of a rare rose in the wind evokes fragility, rarity and beauty at the same time. This captures your personality and helps me to arrest it in a spider nest of words, such a personality that defies human definitions.

Looking at you as you raced through our university as the pioneer Director of Academic Planning, Co-ordinator of the Psychology programme, Dean of Management and Social Sciences, pioneer Dean of Godfrey Okoye University School of Postgraduate Studies, initiator and promoter of GO University Peace Conference, designer and promoter of our radio programme 'The Psychology Hour', mentor of many students, guidance counsellor, clinical psychologist, editor and author of many books and over one hundred journal articles, teacher of catechism classes and marriage courses, etc., one would think you could break in two. One's fascination in any encounter with you is always about how such a small body and frugality of flesh could exude such atomic-bomb energy. It is difficult to comprehend that in so small a body a tsunami of power, spiritual and physical, resides. In all, my dearest daughter, you evoke the image of a rare rose in the wind, fragile but hard and incandescently beautiful.

But this rose is so rare. It defies human definitions. Its elusiveness ridicules human linguistic capabilities. Which language can describe you my sweet rare rose in the wind? Which word can reveal the depth of your spirituality? Will the expression 'Virgin Professor' do justice to the description of a soul with such unfathomable spiritual depth? Can it express that depth of a soul so connected with Christ that already in infancy it desired earnestly to have a share in the sufferings of Christ? Can this expression paint the picture of a professor who would kneel at the centre of a major road to plead with drivers to stop quarreling so that the traffic jam would be cleared? Can this expression scratch the surface of meaning of a spirituality that makes one deny oneself of food and clothing to pay the fees of indigent students and feed the wretched of the earth? Can it express a spirituality of self-emptying, self-annihilation, self-immolation and complete identification with the suffering Lamb of God?

As a rare rose in the wind you spread your aroma in every nook and cranny of our world. Your fragrance was everywhere at Godfrey Okoye University. Every student and staff smelled it. It was impossible to be at Godfrey Okoye University and not have the waft of the irresistible fragrance of the sweet rare rose in the wind. But your rich scent went beyond GO Uni. For you indeed were a rare rose in the wind. NUC knew you! Priests and religious smelled you! Many parishes and Catholics perceived your aroma. Academia knew Sr. Prof. Gloria Njoku. United States of America, Austria, German, all breathed your fragrance! You were everywhere! For you indeed are the rare rose in the wind.

You gave me strength. Your infectious spirituality, your intellectual acuity, your bottomless analytical mind, your unmatched assiduousness, your eagle-eyed discerning spirit, all that was the marble pillar on which I leaned all these years. Now that pillar is gone! Now my arms have been amputated. It is night here! Everywhere! It is difficult to understand this! I can't believe that all these people are here to say goodbye to you! A goodbye without any hope of seeing Sr. Professor Gloria Njoku again here on earth? Could this be a dream?

Now I throw up my arms in resignation to the will of God! Now I stand here watching you my sweet rare rose in the wind, and watching with faith and hope that you may stop at some point where my eyes will not need to search for you! Go in peace my dearest daughter, my rare rose in the wind! Godfrey Okoye University and Its Group of Institutions will remain indebted to you! You will be immortalized! My thoughts and prayers are with you today and forever!

My Lords, my brother priests, beloved daughters of divine love sisters, reverend sisters of other congregations, my dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for your kind words and prayers in the most trying moment of our life. God bless you!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke  
Vice Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University