

The Professor and The Professor of Godfrey Okoye University: A Speech of the Vice Chancellor on the Occasion of the First Professorial Investiture of Godfrey Okoye University 8 December 2020

Protocol

On behalf of the staff and students of Godfrey Okoye University, I welcome you to this occasion of the investiture of the new professors of Godfrey Okoye University. I welcome family members and friends of our fresh professors who have come from every nook and cranny of our country and other countries of the world to be part of this memorable ceremony.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the uniqueness of this occasion lies not only in its being the first of its kind in any Nigerian university but also in the singularity of the professorial chair and professor of Godfrey Okoye University. As many of us know, the history of university professorship dates back to medieval Europe. The **Oxford English Dictionary** (OED) defines the word ‘professor’ in the fashion of its historical evolution:

The right originally possessed by any Master or Doctor to teach publicly in the schools of a Faculty was gradually restricted to an inner circle of teachers, and the term professor came eventually to be confined to the holders of salaried or endowed teaching offices, or to the highest class of these, such titles as reader, lecturer, instructor, tutor, etc., being given to teachers of lower rank.

What this implies is that the word “professor” is a new designation for a special class of teachers who used to go by the title “magister” or “doctor”. Professors are therefore a special class of teachers, and represent the highest class of the teaching profession. There is no higher class of teachers than the professorial class.

Ladies and gentlemen, the uniqueness of this occasion lies as well in the elevated status of professor as in this singular recognition called professorial investiture. Its peculiarity is also underscored and heightened by its being the first of its kind in our country.

My dear professors, each of you now shares in the highest academic rank called “professor”. I would like to draw your attention to a very important phrase: the professor. The phrase “the professor” is not any particular professor, as the definite determiner “the” suggests. The professor is any professor who embodies the highest epistemic, academic and ethical standards as well as ideals of their field of research and studies. On the contrary, a professor is someone who has been formally recognized by an accredited and licensed university as professor of the university. There is no such title as “professor in view”, as some epistemically and academically benighted Nigerians think. You are a professor of the university that has given you its formal approval to use the title “professor”. To be “a professor” is one thing, but to be “the professor” is another. If you have not grown to embody the best and the latest epistemic developments in your field, then you may not be “the professor”. Of course there is no such title as “the professor” (as you have among the Catholic clergy: Rev. Father and Very Reverend

Father). However, it is something of an ideal, a target to reach, even after being recognized as the highest teacher in a university.

It is my expectation that you metamorphose from the wide professorial road of many professors to become the professor in your field of research and studies. The professor is not a master of all fields of studies (as he or she cannot do research in all fields). The professor embodies both the gamut of knowledge, history and new epistemic trends in their area of research and calls the shots in that area. This investiture today, therefore, is a call to be the professor in your area of research and teaching.

In addition, the uniqueness of this ceremony also lies in your being “professor of Godfrey Okoye University.” Here again you must strive to pass through seven rivers and seven farmlands in your research adventures to be the professor of Godfrey Okoye University. The professor of Godfrey Okoye University is someone who is formally recognized as professor of Godfrey Okoye University, embodies the whole knowledge, history and epistemic trends in their field of research as well as the philosophy, mission and vision of Godfrey Okoye University. As you can see, there are three components in this definition:

- formal recognition as professor of Godfrey Okoye University
- embodiment of the whole knowledge, history and epistemic trends in their field of research
- embodiment of the philosophy, mission and vision of Godfrey Okoye University

The first two components of the definition apply to all professors. But the third component is the unique identity of the professor of Godfrey Okoye University. Being professor of another university, therefore, does not make you professor of Godfrey Okoye University. Similarly being “the professor” does not necessarily make you the professor of Godfrey Okoye University. To be a professor or the professor of Godfrey Okoye University, you must drink from the fountain of the third component of our professorial identity: the philosophy, mission and vision of Godfrey Okoye University.

My dear fresh professors, you must strive to be the professor of Godfrey Okoye University. This is the meaning of the specially designed academic gown that you will receive today. This gown must be a symbol of what you ought to be: The Professor of Godfrey Okoye University. Your life, your breath, your dream, your food, your drink, your love, your aspiration, your weltanschauung, your research, your prayers, your language must be Godfrey Okoye University. Today our university stamps its identity on you not only physically in the gown but also metaphysically on the tablet of your souls. During your inaugural lecture, you will be given a special ring of the university as a sign of a special relationship you have with this university, which must never be broken by you. I congratulate you! God bless you!

As we celebrate you today, we remember someone who should have been among you but who is celebrating with us today spiritually, Prof. Innocent Uzoechi. May we rise to observe a minute’s silence in his honor. May the soul of Prof. Innocent Uzoechi and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace!

Today also we celebrate someone who served this university with incredible sense of commitment and dedication to duty, Prof. Mark Chijioke. Prof. Mark Chijioke has been named the first emeritus professor of our university after serving this university and

retiring with unblemished dignity. Prof. Mark Chijioke has become our role model as professor, a model of commitment to research and duty, teaching, mentorship, epistemic soundness and ethical impeccability. As professor, his administrative and academic records have remained as pure as a virgin. If I had a say in the making of saints, I would definitely nominate Prof. Mark Chijioke as Saint- Prof. Mark Chijioke. Today we celebrate him and thank him profusely for accepting to be the first Emeritus Professor of Godfrey Okoye University.

Furthermore, let me thank Monsignor Patrick Muo for his services in the Institute of Ecumenical Education. He has officially retired from service in the Institute and today we would like to express our profound gratitude to him. May God bless Monsignor Patrick Muo for his tremendous contributions to the growth of the Institute of Ecumenical Education.

Finally, let me thank all of you for honouring our invitation today. I congratulate once more our fresh professors. My dear professors, please always remember this Chinese proverb: *“If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.”*

God bless you all!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke
Vice Chancellor