

Not Just a Road but the Epiphany of a University and Humans

(Speech of the Vice Chancellor on the Occasion of the Commissioning of the 12-Kilometre Road linking Emene, Nkwubor, Ugwuomu Nike and Godfrey Okoye University Main Campus by His Excellency, the Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Lawrence Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, on 12 January 2021)

Protocol

On behalf of the staff and students of Godfrey Okoye University and its group of institutions, I heartily welcome each of you to this official commissioning of the twelve-kilometer road linking Emene, Nkwubor, Ugwuomu Nike and Godfrey Okoye University Main Campus.

The famous American writer Walt Whitman has the following beautiful poem on road entitled **“Song of the Open Road”**.

1. *Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.*

*Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.*

*The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,*

I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

*(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)*

2. *You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.*

*Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are
not denied;*

*The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's
stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,*

The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,

*The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the
return back from the town,*

They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none can be interdicted,

None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

I am particularly attracted by the second line in the first stanza “healthy, free, the world before me”. This is the profound meaning and symbolism of this road. It opens the doors and windows of variegated and multifaceted opportunities for human interactions of all shapes and colours: academic, religious, economic, political, cultural and social. This road therefore is more than the long, black, serpentine 12-kilometer line that runs from Adoration Junction to the main gate of Godfrey Okoye University. This is a fact that is echoed in the following lines of this poem:

*You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.*

There is more to this road that meets the human eye. This road is all forms of interactions and human convivialities. It is therefore not just a road but life, defined and redefined, shaped and reshaped. And perhaps life transmogrified.

It is important to say all this, so that you will understand what the Enugu State Government under this loving, caring, deeply religious, indescribably generous, politically sagacious, and unwaveringly focused Governor has done for Emene, Nkwubor, Ugwuomu Nike and Godfrey Okoye University. With this road all levels of human interactions have been smoothed like the beautiful asphalt of the road. With this road the economic life of all the communities will be improved tremendously and blossom incandescently like Flame of the Forest. With this road social life has been transformed into a joyful human experience. With this road religious gatherings and devotions will catch the pentecostal flame and Pauline zeal. With this road an olive branch of invitation as well as a warm embrace has been given by this administration under our beloved Governor to more than 20 European companies that will be domiciled in the GO Uni-European Business Park of Godfrey Okoye University. With this road the development of the main campus of Godfrey Okoye University with the planned best medical faculty in Nigeria will zoom off like Usain Bolt. With this road Enugu State has improved the value of all the landed properties in this beautiful part of our beloved State. With this road our Governor has written his name in gold and in the hearts of the people of Emene, Nkwubor, Ugwuomu Nike and Godfrey Okoye University, and of course in my heart.

One piece of narrative around this road is the beauty of the private sector (in this case a Church institution) - government partnership. This Governor, with the present administration of Enugu State, has never failed to underscore the importance of a friendly handshake of the private sector and the public sector, a handshake that will be mutually beneficial to both. This road is a testimony to the benefits of such a handshake. The Enugu State Government stretched its financial hand and invited Godfrey Okoye University to do this road. Godfrey Okoye University, filled with gratitude and encouraged by such deep trust and goodwill on the part of government, embarked on this project that is worth about one billion five hundred million (N1,500,000,000) Naira and completed it in December last year.

But the beauty of the narrative of this road is not just in its plot that involves the Enugu State Government and our university but also in its theme of sense of ownership and “stakeholder spirit” which this unique plot has brought to this road. This road will be taken care of today and tomorrow because Godfrey Okoye University will always see itself as a stakeholder. Also the communities should never call this road Government road (*uzo Gọọmenti*) but rather “our

road” (*uzo anyi*). On this note, I would like to request the approval of His Excellency for a protective barricade so that tippers and big vehicles will not damage this road for us.

Finally, let me thank His Excellency, Dr. Lawrence Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi (Gburugburu), and his administration for making the completion of this project possible. I would also like to thank the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu for his support and effort to ensure that this project is completed. I thank the Physical Planning Unit of Godfrey Okoye University, the Enugu State Ministry of Works, the Hon. Commissioner for Works and his workers, Eketeson, Williangy, Mr. Nnamani Icheku and his team for doing the asphaltting of the road and also all those who assisted us in different ways to ensure the completion of this project.

To all who use this road, I say to you in the words of Isrealmore Ayivor:

When your drive is moving your purpose, focus must hold the wheels else you might miss the way. And do you know what that means? Avoid crash!!! Stay focused!

God bless you all and bless our road through Christ our Lord!

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke

Vice Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University