THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CUCG, 9TH CONGREGATION AND 17TH MATRICULATION CEREMONY

"CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF GHANA, MEMORY AND PROPHECY".

Fiapre, 9th November, 2013.

INTRODUCTION

From the two hats I wear this morning at this event, namely, as the Chancellor of this University and as an Emeritus Archbishop of Cape Coast who happens to be the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace of the Holy See (the Vatican), let me first bring you greetings and warm felicitations from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and on its behalf, congratulate the Catholic University College of Ghana at Fiapre heartily at the tenth anniversary of its establishment. Then, as the Chancellor of this University College, I bid you all welcome, and say a hearty Ayekoo to all who have helped bring this University Project this far, and wish everybody gathered here great joy and a fulfilling sense of achievement at this celebration.

Invited to share my thoughts with you about this University Project on the 10th anniversary of its foundation and to preside over this Matriculation Ceremony, I wish to reminisce briefly about the birth of this institution and to dream about its future. Thus memory and prophecy are the two guiding ideas of my address. Then, I should have a word of felicitation and encouragement for our new graduates.

MEMORY:

Your Excellency, My dear Friends, in the writings of the prophet Isaiah, God once gave proof of his transforming power to the people of Israel, decimated by the Babylonian exile and rendered diffident of God's power to change their lot, by referring them to their origins: to Abraham and Sarah, and to how he walked with them. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God said to the Israelites: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for he was one when I called him, but blessed him........" (Is.51:1-2).

The metaphors, "rock" and "quarry", with which the prophet describes the relationship between the people of Israel and their parents: Abraham and Sarah, stress, first and foremost, the radical identity and resemblance that must exist between Abraham and Sarah, as parents, and their offspring, the people of Israel. Secondly, and based on this radical identity and resemblance, Abraham and Sarah's experience of God must be the model and guide of the offspring's experience of the same God. The offspring must understand and discover its identity, vocation and mission in the light of those of its parents.

I wish to borrow this imagery today to relate this institution with its founder(s); and to recommend the great usefulness, also in the life of this great institution, every now and then, to
have recourse to and, indeed, never to lose sight of the original vision, motivation and mission of its founder(s).

The Bishops of the Catholic Church, who had accompanied the passage of this country from a Gold Coast British Colony to Ghana, an independent republic, were a mix of Ghanaians and expatriate missionaries; and their evangelization of the social order consisted in providing pastoral care for people, whole and entire: forming minds and characters in educational centers: basic schools, secondary schools, technical schools and Teacher training colleges, and providing for healthcare in clinics and hospitals. Shortly after Ghana became a republic (1960), the Catholic Church celebrated the Vatican Council II. Pope John XXIII, who had convoked the Vatican Council II, explained his decision thus: "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in."1 Pope John XXIII wanted the Church to relate to the world in a new way. And so, when the Council, got around to formulating her relationship with the world, she said: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts." So strong was the conviction that the Church is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.2 Accordingly, the Council recommended dialogue with the world about all its different problems as an eloquent proof of her solidarity with, as well as her respect and love for the entire human family.3

With this recommendation at the back of their heads, the Bishops from Ghana who had participated at the Council: Archbishop Amissah, Bishop Dery, Bishop Bowers, Bishop Esuah, Bishop Konings, Bishop Bertrand and Bishop Champlain, came away resolved to re-position the local Church to be able to dialogue with the world about all its problems, as an expression of her solidarity, love and respect for it. The development of a place of learning and formation, all-encompassing and universal in scope: a universitas alma mater studiorum, a place where all from everywhere are educated about the various concerns and aspirations of life, was perceived as the Church's preferred means of accompanying and dialoguing with this emerging nation about its different problems. There, the idea of a Catholic University in Ghana was born; and it was embraced as a project of the Catholic Church in Ghana by the seven (7) Bishops of the Ghana Episcopal Conference of the 1960s.

As Divine Providence would have it, a conglomerate of several debilitating factors: Kwame Nkrumah's Socialism and its suspicion of the Church, the first coup d'état (1966) and ensuing political intrigues and rivalries, new coup d'états and benign hostilities towards the Church (1980s), all these conspired to postpone indefinitely the Vatican Council II dream of the Bishops' Conference of Ghana.

1 http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/John_XXIII
2 Cf. Gaudium et Spes, §1
3 Cf. Gaudium et Spes, §3
In the early 90s, twenty five years after the conclusion of the Vatican Council II (1965), the number of Bishops had almost doubled (11); and, not only had the physiognomy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana changed enormously, the political atmosphere in the country had also greatly improved. So, the Bishops' Conference, under the presidency of Bishop Francis Lodonu, revisited the university project, and began discussing in earnest how it might be carried out. In 1997, the Archbishop of Cape Coast, succeeded the Bishop of Ho as the president of the Bishops' Conference, inheriting thereby the task of realizing the firm resolve of the Catholic Bishops to develop a university. Catholic professors and lecturers in the three State Universities (Legon, KNUST and Cape Coast) came to the help of the Bishops, constituting themselves into groups to advice about the Site, Areas of study to begin with and the first Rector/Vice Chancellor. Concurrently, a logo designer and a fund-raising group were commissioned.

When word got out that the Catholic Church was about to develop a university, the Bishops received various responses, some of them reproaching, like: "It is about time"! "It is long overdue". The Bishops also received a lot of generous offers of land. When, finally, the University Professors and Lecturers came with their recommendations, Sunyani topped the list for site, and the first Rector/Chancellor was Prof. Benneh. The other Bishops magnanimously accepted the recommendation of the University Dons. So gentlemanly were they; so that, when they congratulated the Bishop of Sunyani, it was not for a trophy he had won. It was for accepting the great task of helping the Bishops' Conference realize its dream.

Bishop Owusu and the Diocese of Sunyani were extremely generous towards the Bishops' Conference, offering their Pastoral Center as the Startup Campus, and negotiating for land for the permanent site of the campus. Prof. Benneh, who had been identified by the project's Search party as the first Rector/Vice Chancellor, was prevented by his failing health to do so. Rev. Fr. Schultheis, an American Jesuit priest, was sought by the Bishops' conferences and invited to be the first Rector of the University Project.

In 2001, the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference made a Trust Deed to establish the Catholic University College of Ghana, beginning with the three programmes: BSc. Economics and Business Administration, BSc. Information Communication Sciences and Technology and BA Religious Studies. In the same year, it obtained the institutional accreditation to do so; and in March 2003, the dream university project of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference took off in the make shift campus of the Pastoral Centre of the Diocese of Sunyani with 50 students. In November 2003, President John Agyekum Kuffuor and the Bishops of Ghana formally inaugurated the university project, and cut the sod on the permanent site of the University College to mark the commencement of the development of permanent structures. This is where we are gathered this morning; and the rest is modern/current history, not for people living far away from home [in exile], like me, to tell!

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, today, however, we need to celebrate the vision and decision of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference to take their contribution to education in this country to the tertiary level. This way, they affirm that knowledge that makes for the
development of the person, whole and entire, must include and be inspired by a sincere dialogue between faith and reason. We must also applaud the great courage and generosity of the Bishop and the faithful of the Diocese of Sunyani for accepting to provide a birth place for this project and for nursing it to its present stature. Then must we also show recognition and appreciation for the help of the Regional Ministers and their Coordinating Councils, the Chiefs, Queen Mothers and the people of Sunyani-Fiapre for their support of the project. Finally, I salute and congratulate those 50 pioneer students, who trusted the Bishops' Conference and decided to commit their destiny into the formational hands of the nascent institution. May you never live to regret your courageous decision.

**PROPHECY:**

**a. A Catholic University Education in the mind of Pope John XXIII:**

Now, if this institution were a person, at 10 years, several priests would hesitate to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to it. They would argue that it is too young for tough doctrine, and needs to mature more. I shall, therefore, not make big demands of and dream big dreams for our university.

However, Pope John XXIII, whose reason for the convocation of Vatican Council II had inspired and set the feet of the Ghanaian Bishops on the path of starting a Catholic university in Ghana, also dropped a few hints about the character of and expectations from Catholic university education. In his Encyclical Letter, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Pope John XXIII wished that an education which is well-rounded and worthy of the name "catholic" should manifest three intertwined dynamics: completeness, contextualization and collaboration.

*Completeness:* Christian education, SAYS Pope John, must be "complete and continuous and imparted in such a way that moral goodness and the cultivation of religious values may keep pace with scientific knowledge and continuously advance technical progress" (*Pacem in Terris*, 153). It should help people to overcome the debilitating separation between faith and life: an unfortunate feature of the lives of many today.

*Contextualization:* All the faithful have the duty to participate actively in public life, to contribute to the political community, and help to realize the common good of the human family. "In the light of Christian faith, and with love as their guide", the encyclical says, they must endeavour "to ensure that every institution, whether economic, social, cultural or political, be such as not to obstruct, but rather to facilitate man's self-betterment, both in the natural and in the supernatural order" (*Pacem in Terris*, 146). For this, it is essential to learn a sound method in order to read and interpret reality, to discern the objective demands of justice in each concrete situation, and to move from socially-
engaged theory to socially-constructive praxis; and it is the duty of the catholic university to facilitate the acquisition of such skills.

Collaboration: The translation of socially-engaged theory to socially-constructive praxis will inevitably require collaboration with people outside the Church, as Blessed John XXIII recognizes. Even where there is doctrinal disagreement, one should never confuse the error with the one who is erring. In the final part of the encyclical, Good Pope John encourages Catholics to cooperate with non-Catholics in the field of economic, social, and political development towards objectives that are authentically promising and good.

Thus, a well-educated Catholic will be

- *Enlightened* by faith and influenced by the desire for goodness.
- intellectually, culturally an scientifically *competent*, and
- Spiritually *integrated* among the personal, professional, political and religious dimensions of life.

"No man is an island," and no catholic university is a cathedral in a desert. Rather, engaged in its surrounding reality, a catholic university should nourish new social, institutional, experiential and religious thinking for its culture and society. The 10th anniversary of the establishment of this university college, therefore, already invites us to consider the relationships between catholic education and the evangelization of the social order. How, then, can catholic universities and other catholic centers of learning help *form a new generation of Catholics and citizens actively participating in the leadership and management of public affairs?* -- *For the common good and betterment of all!*

Catholic universities are first called to promote a *new evangelization* of the social sphere, a call reiterated at the 2012 Synod of Bishops. An evangelization of society entails the *enculturation* of faith, from within and through the power of the Gospel, in different aspects of life: individual consciences, culture, customs and life styles, and criteria for judgment, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life etc. Universities are called to contribute to the understanding and application of the Gospel requirements, by effectively translating them into the languages, symbols and forms of the different cultures around the world. Universities are called to contribute to renewing these cultures from within with the aim of *opening them* to a holistic vision of the

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4 Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, 158-160. Pope Paul VI also spoke on this in *Octogesima Adveniens*: "It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Bishop who holds responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of goodwill, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed." (4).
person, of life and of history, including the transcendent dimension. And, what does this mean?

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the challenges posed by the modern world for which you are preparing your students are manifold. Most fundamentally, they are anthropological and they are ethical. There is a crisis about the sense of the human being: Who and what man/the human person is? Decoupled from his/her divine origins, our world now resorts to court rulings and consensus in parliaments to define the sense of human life. It is into this chaotic and tumultuous public place -- the one world's market place made ever more global by the internet -- that the catholic university student must be missioned as a well-prepared politician, public servant, health-care worker, opinion maker etc. etc. and participant in the great debates of our times. But, he/she may not go alone. He/she will find in the Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church a valuable resource.

b. University Education in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Context

In view of the predominantly Catholic character of university education presented above, the future of catholic university education may have to seriously deal with the increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of education.

Education is not only formally done in institutions. It is also done non-formally in the homes, at gatherings of the community, at shrines (in the various forms of initiation ceremonies), in churches, in mosques and in palaces of chiefs, etc.; and it may be done informally (or incidentally) in homes and in public through example, imitation and the general process of socialization. Although they differ from each other according to the extent to which they are institutionalized, these three forms of doing education are not at all mutually exclusive. In fact, they complement each other very often. Learning by imitation and from examples, characteristics of informal education, easily takes place also in schools and in institutions of formal education. Similarly, the informal educational process of socialization tends to pursue its objectives through the formation of groups, "kuo/kuw", clubs and confraternities.

The media, in all their forms can be used to support all three forms of doing education: handing over manuals of life; and university education does make use of all three form of education in various ways.

Seeing that the sources and the forms of education are so varied, I wish to draw attention briefly to the multi-ethnic and the multi-religious contexts of education, and the challenge that they pose to a Church university, like ours.
In traditional and predominantly mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious societies, the context of education is rather homogenous; and the content of education is relatively simple. However, as the context changes, becoming, for example, globalized and pluralistic (multi-cultural and multi-religious, etc.), education also becomes complex. In the context of an inter-cultural, inter-religious and a pluralistic society, education does not only have academic functions, it also functions as an effective tool for integration: the re-definition and reception of new norms, values, etc. And this is a very crucial function!

The experience of cultural heterogeneity is increasingly becoming the experience of hitherto traditionally homogenous societies, religiously and culturally. New values and norms, new socio-cultural habits and behaviours, new religious faiths and thinking, etc., propagated by the physical presence of people and by the world’s improved means of communication, have not spared Church institutions, societies and nation-states their influences. Efforts may be made to filter the content of internet communications; and measures may be taken and even institutionalized to safeguard religious and institutional identities. But the inter-cultural and the inter-religious challenges and demands of modern societies cannot be wished away. These will continue to knock on the doors of institutions, and even nations and religions, demanding to be reckoned with, as globalization: the compression of space and time, and the making porous of national boundaries, invites institutions, organizations, societies and the world to transform themselves from being an aggregation of disparate and unrelated entities (nations and peoples) into a communion: a world community of related members, bound together by a sense of common origin and common character (human beings) and a common destiny or a calling to make the world and its various institutions the common home of all.

In such a situation, education cannot be differentialist, where the dominant group or religion uses its power, status and privileges to devise a policy which minimizes contact with minorities and restricts their participation in the mainstream life of the society. Education cannot also be assimilationist, seeking to fully incorporate ethnic/cultural/religious minorities into the mainstream religion or society, in the hope that these would abandon their distinctive religious, cultural and social characteristics and take on those of the dominant religion or group. This has never worked, because formal education is not the only form of education available to cultural and religious minorities in any society. Informal education (in the homes, churches or mosques etc.) sometimes consolidates and keeps alive those distinguishing ethnic and religious traits which formal education may seek to melt away. Therefore, universities and policy-makers have opted to encourage the development of harmonious relations between the diverse ethnic and religious groups, and their preferred tool for achieving this has been the same education. So, how does one do education in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious situations?

**Multi-cultural and Multi-religious Education:**
Education of any type in a multi-ethnic/cultural and multi-religious society will have to understand itself as “education in the context of the whole inhabited earth”, and “in the context of the universal family of humankind”. It must be tolerant of multiculturalism, accommodating religious diversity and respectful of every person. After all, that which gives substance, shape and form to diversity is the fact that our differences belong to the plan of God, who wills that each receives what he/she needs from others and that those endowed with particular talents (cultural, religious, ethnic etc.) share the benefits with those who need them. Differences, then, should not lead to division. Rather, they charge the human person to look at the other person as another self.

Our common bonds of humanity demand that we live in harmony and promote what is good for one another. People with Catholic Church upbringing easily believe that, created in the image of God, all human beings irrespective of where they come from, and the cultures and the faiths they belong to, have the same nature and the same origin. They readily believe that Christ's redemption is for all of humankind. As a result, all human beings must enjoy equal dignity and respect, their culture, race and religion included. This divine plan needs to be recognized and carried out through the search for harmonious relationships between individuals and peoples, in a culture where openness to the transcendent, the promotion of the human person and respect for the world of nature are shared by all.

In a multi-religious and a multi-ethnic context of education, it is the recourse to basic anthropology: the sense of the human person, its common character and destiny, and its basic desire for human flourishing, which helps sustains the education enterprise. In this situation, education becomes a communal exercise and an event. It becomes learning for solidarity in recognition of the brotherhood of humankind and the globalized community we have become; and it becomes an expression of our capacity to look beyond cultural and religious boundaries. It is “education for unity in a reconciled diversity which is mutually enriching.”

Changing Form of University Education

Apart from recognizing the increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of university education, an effect of globalization, we need also to consider the impact of the engine of globalization itself, namely, improved and enhanced communication technology, on university education.

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5 EEF-NET, 1/1999, pg. 7.
6 II Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, § 7.
7 Gaudium et Spes, § 29.
8 EEF - NET 1/1999, pp. 7-8.
The University of Cape Coast is one of the universities with a highly developed network of distance education in the country. Its admission statistics for the year 2012-2013 shows that, while 17,000 students were admitted on campus, 33,087 students registered for its distance/virtual learning programme. Its on-line and distance learning students were practically twice the number of those admitted on campus.

Data available easily on the internet about university education around the world support the experience of the University of Cape Coast. Communication technology is fast changing the original and traditional character of the university, where people came different parts of the world to a common location to listen and to learn from the "masters", whether this be Bologna of 1058 or its Hellenic antecedents. So, what pattern of growth will the Catholic University College of Ghana at Fiapre adopt in the future?

**The Matriculating Class and the Graduating Class:**

The lesson of the story, *Acres of Diamond*:

As students, let your formation period in the university be the time for cutting, shaping and polishing you to be the diamonds you are!

**May God richly bless the Catholic University College of Ghana** at ten years of its establishment. May He richly reward all whose generosity, benefaction and sacrifices have nurtured this project to its present stature. And may He forever bless and accompany all who come here to seek the light of knowledge and wisdom which are truly of God. Blessings on you all!