

AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY, OYO
1ST CONVOCATION CEREMONY HELD ON 30TH
NOVEMBER, 2009

CONVOCATION ADDRESS OF THE CHANCELLOR, HIS GRACE
THE MOST REVD PETER J. AKINOLA, DD, CON THE
ARCHBISHOP METROPOLITAN PRIMATE OF ALL NIGERIA
[ANGLICAN COMMONION]

To the LORD our God be all praise and glory for the wonderful privilege and special honour to be here today to participate in the first ever graduation ceremony of this bound to be great citadel of learning – Ajayi Crowther University.

I am immensely grateful to all the founding fathers and all others who have allowed God to work through them to bring the institution into being. We appreciate the tremendous services and contribution of the sponsoring Dioceses, Board, Faculty and Staff. We remain ever grateful to individual small and great donors of invaluable resources for the well-being and on-going life of the University.

We rejoice with the graduating students. We congratulate you not only for what you have achieved intellectually but also for being the pioneers. You have weathered the storm, and by the grace of God, landed safely.

This university identifies itself in a very special way with the first black man on earth to be bishop in the church of God. The man, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther was himself a great pioneer in many fields. A keen evangelist, this great man of God became a distinguished missionary who played a dominant role in the evangelization of the Niger

Delta area and several other sections in what we now call Nigeria. His literary career blossomed in the development and publication of works in local African languages, notably Yoruba and Igbo. The most traveled missionary Africa has ever known, Bishop Crowther was the pioneer, architect and builder of formal education having opened the first school for girls in Onisha in 1856 and later introduced primary and secondary school education where his Agency – the Church Missionary Society established a presence.

Undoubtedly, the untiring and godly disposition of these schools resulted in the production of genuinely educated ‘Nigerians’ some of whom with time became eminent scholars e.g. Prof. Kenneth Dike, patriotic politicians e.g. Crowther’s grandson, Herbert Macaulay, who championed the struggle for Nigeria’s independence. There were of course, numerous others as teachers, technicians, civil servants and leaders in key sectors of the country.

The Bankruptcy in Nigeria’s Education Section

Soon after independence, a new generation of political leaders began to toy with the educational system. Things began to fall apart. The decline we suffer today in our educational sector actually began in the 1970’s following the federal government’s unilateral and forceful takeover of mission schools which ostensibly was ‘to make things better.’ We began to see corruption in high and low places. Selfishness, wickedness and value inversion, which unfortunately have become societal norms particularly in politics, also began to take their heavy tolls on education. There has been manifest lack of

commitment, selflessness, and sincerity on the part of most of those in charge of the system.

Although on paper the percentages of the national (not the states) budgets for education all through the years e.g. 1990 – 2002 ranged between as much as 5.45% and 11% what was disbursed and actually expended on our schools was a far cry from those high figures. This speaks volumes of the importance, attached to it.

One of the consequences of this evil is that the education system has come to be marked with strikes, extortions, “Celebration of laziness”, and anything but scholarship and determined human development. The standard of education has so fallen that we produce largely, unemployable graduates as many of them can hardly defend their certificates. We watch helplessly as those who can afford the alternative, opt out of state educational institutions. But the irony of the matter is that it is those who are responsible for the bankruptcy in our system that take the lead in the desertion of State institutions, not just to local private ones but more painfully, using taxpayers money to overseas where patriotic leaders have labored to establish reputable and sound educational institutions.

Sadly, the situation in Nigeria today is that the vision, the sacrifice, and “the labours of our heroes past” are now virtually in vain. A writer, Prof. A. Ekwunife, attributes it to what he calls “truncated, vitiated and dualistic leadership value systems in Nigeria.”

Why we established Ajayi Crowther University

Our Church indisputably pioneered formal education in Nigeria. Successive political leadership has systematically failed to do as much as sustain that which they inherited. They have ruined our educational heritage. Now that the government has realized that it needed to partner with the private sector in the all important area of education, and has so invited all Nigerians to his onerous task; the establishment of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo and St. Paul's University, Awka, is in part the Church's response to that call and to help rescue Nigeria's educational system. It is an attempt to restore the lost glory of sound and godly education in our society. We are poised once again to demonstrate the love of God in action.

Our expectations:

“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.”
(2Cor. 3:2).

The hard test of what this institution has made of you in the last four years is out there in the real world of wickedness and corruption, a world that is opposed to God, sound morality and righteousness. Would you survive it?

As an institution built on godly virtues which include integrity and discipline, we have sought to make you our 'letters' to a world whose wheel of life is constantly and rapidly moving towards self destruction. The society will certainly look up to you as role models in this world of confusion. We certainly expect you to be light to the world of darkness

and salt to this decaying society. We sincerely hope that in all that you do you will uphold the Biblical standards. People will look at you as our “letters” and see faith, hope, love, justice and righteousness. It’s your bounden duty to radiate to the world truth, faithfulness, beneficence, and respect for the dignity of persons who like yourselves were made in the image of God.

We send you out today with much prayer as people transformed by God. Don’t be a disappointment.

To those of you returning at the beginning of next semester, I urge you in the name of God; choose to be godly and pious in all your dealings with fellow students and the authorities. Live and conduct your business without partnership with the devil. As young adults, you are free, but in your own best interest exercise your freedom within the context of the rule of law. Never allow your freedom become permissiveness.

My dear people of God here gathered; let us all live in fear of the living God. Let us all be worthy ambassadors of the Church to the world around us. Let us work little harder not only to regain lost glories, but to break new grounds and excel for the Lord. Let us imitate the selfless service of our heroes and be more patriotic. By our baptismal covenant with God, we are a unique set of people. Therefore be proud to be different. Don’t get carried away by the sinful attractions of our time.

This university was established to meet particular needs. Crowther Graduates and all of us should prove our mettle and be relevant in the service and development of the society. Above all, let us all be conscious of the fact that “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy one is understanding (Prov. 9:10).

+Peter Abuja

Feast of Saint Andrew, 2009