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**69TH GRADUATION
CEREMONY OF THE UCZ
UNIVERSITY**

ON

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2019

GUEST SPEAKER

GOSNELL L. YORKE (PhD)

OF

**THE DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND
CONFLICT STUDIES (DHIPS)**

**THE COPPERBELT
UNIVERSITY**

INTRODUCTION

Madam General Secretary of UCZ, Rev. Dr. Kabonde

The Two Presbytery Bishops here present

The Chancellor, Prof. Dickson Mwansa

The Vice Chancellor, Dr. Kondolo (and his Senior Management Team)

Members of the University Council

Faculty and Staff

Graduating Class of 2019

Supportive Parents, Guardians, Sponsors and Well-wishers

Ladies and Gentlemen

One does not normally invoke the name of Cicero, the great Roman Orator, Jurist, Politician and even Priest and that of William Shakespeare, the famous English Playwright, in the same sentence. But, on auspicious occasions like this, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to submit that a link can readily be established. For Cicero, for example, at the foundation of all virtue is gratitude and, somewhere in his voluminous works, Shakespeare has one of his characters declare that, “sharper than a serpent’s tooth is a thankless child.” Essentially, what both good gentlemen are saying is that it is a good thing to be thankful.

And thankful indeed I am today for the kind invitation which was extended to me by the Vice Chancellor and his Senior Management Team to serve as your Guest of Honour at this, the 69th Graduation Ceremony of UCZ University here in Kitwe.

QUERY: what can I possibly say to you as Graduands, the Graduating Class of 2019, who are about to leave UCZ University whose Mission is: “to seek and impart knowledge that transforms the society through selfless service and values that promote the wellbeing of all God’s creation?” Or whose Vision is: “to be a premier Christian University of excellence in pursuit of knowledge that is empowering, upholds the dignity of all creation and brings the fullness of life?”---“fullness of life” as language which echoes those of the Aramaic-speaking Jesus as translated into Hellenistic Greek, the *lingua franca* of His day, namely (and as transliterated): “*ego elthon hina zoen echosin kai perisson echosin*” (I have come that they may have life and have it in all its fullness)?

Well, for the few minutes at my disposal, kindly allow me to attempt to address you as a “trinity” of sorts – not as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of course, but in my three-fold capacity as: 1) Lecturer in, and Coordinator of, the PhD Programme in DHIPS at CBU; 2) A Trained Bible Translation Consultant, serving here in Zambia and elsewhere in Africa; and 3) As one who was born in, and hails from, the African Diaspora.

I. DHIPS

Named after Dr. Dag Hammarskjöld, the Swedish Second Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) who, under somewhat mysterious circumstances, lost his life in September 1961 in Ndola while on one of his UN Peace Missions to next-door Congo (as it then was) but the DRC (as it now is), DHIPS is fully endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Zambia and, in some sense, is the brain-child of H.E. Dr. Kenneth

Kaunda, Father of the Nation as the First President of the Republic – a Nation, as we all know, which celebrated its 55th Anniversary of Independence only a day ago and a Nation, as per the current Preamble to the 2016 Amendment to the 1991 Constitution, prides and promotes itself as a “Christian Nation”, as contentions as that self-designation might be in some quarters. It’s a “Christian Nation” Agenda whose task it is for the Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (as created in August 2016) to actively promote. Of course, we are all also mindful of the fact that it was exactly one week ago (October 18th) that we celebrated what has now become an annual Day of Prayer, Fasting and National Reconciliation.

As an Institute, DHIPS seeks to promote peace and to manage and/or mitigate conflict of all sorts—be it interpersonal, inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-denominational, international or gender-based conflict. DHIPS is also committed not only to the socio-economic and political development of the Nation (and Region) but, in the language of one of the core values of UCZ University, to: “upholding the dignity of human life.”

And with that said – and before my allotted time runs out, ladies and gentlemen--allow me to direct your attention to the second part of my tripartite presentation, namely, that of my current role as a trained Bible Translation Consultant, serving here in Zambia and elsewhere on the continent. In fact, I just returned from Portuguese-speaking Guinea-Bissau in West Africa where my responsibility there was to mentor and monitor African sisters and brothers in their on-going translation of the Bible from its original languages of Classical Hebrew, Aramaic and Hellenistic Greek into two of their mother-tongues called Balanta and Bijagó. Incidentally, here in Zambia, in addition to the complete Bible or, in some cases, the New Testament, which already exists in Bemba, Chokwe, Kaonde, Lala, Lamba, Lozi, Luvale, Nyanja, Tonga, Soli and others, the Bible Society is currently overseeing the translating of the Bible into Ila, Nkoya and Tumbuka, among others.

In “quizzing” the Dean of Studies of UCZ University on the phone a few days ago, in preparation for my presentation today, I was made to understand that, as a Graduating Class of 2019, you are either in education or in theology/religious studies. That is, you are a Class of Teachers and Preachers.

As a Bible Translation Consultant, my challenge, therefore, to you today is that you should endeavor to make as much use as possible of the indigenous translations of the Bible in your teaching and preaching ministries. The truth is (and both psycho-linguists and socio-linguists would readily confirm this), God speaks most compellingly to us in the language of the heart or the mother-tongue. It is for that reason, for example, that I have already made the recommendation to the Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Zambia that attempts be made to incorporate, more and more, the indigenous translations of the Bible into the various

primary and secondary school curricula—especially in classes which deal with Civic and Religious Education.

As important as English, the Official Language is, as a medium of communication, research has shown consistently that the active promotion or use of the indigenously translated Bible in either classroom or congregation helps not only to boost the self-esteem of its speakers but also to enhance both the academic performance of students in the classroom and a more meaningful engagement with Scripture in the congregation. I am always taken aback by how “illiterate” some of our most brilliant university students—right across the continent-- sound when asked to read a portion of Scripture in their mother-tongue. Invariably, many of them end up fumbling and stumbling over the syllables.

And now to the third and final section of my relatively brief presentation—pointing you to the fact that I was born in, and hail from, the English-speaking Caribbean as an integral part of the vibrant African Diaspora.

II. THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

By the way, ladies and gentlemen, your eyes are not playing tricks on you. You are not experiencing an optical illusion, as it were. You are in fact looking not at a foreigner *per se*, as your Guest of Honour today. Instead, you are looking at a Fellow African in every way. Apart from the fact that my wife is a proud born and bred Zambian (yes, I said ZAMBIAN), I was also born in, and hail from, what the African Union (AU) rightly regards as its 6th Region—encompassing all those of us, at least, who, like me, were born in the African Diaspora. This claim finds its justification in the 2003 amendment to the *Constitutive Act* of the AU (Article 3 [q]). Technically, then, the AU is not only comprised of the “Big Five” Regions covering the continent, namely, the East, the West, the North, the South and the Central Sectors and Sections of it but, to repeat, the AU now encompasses the African Diaspora as its 6th Region as well. That is to say, ladies and gentlemen here assembled, all of us constitute what UNESCO refers to as “Global Africa”. In fact (and, unfortunately, this is one of the best kept secrets) the UN has designated the current decade as the International Decade for People [like you and me] of African Descent—stretching from January 1st, 2015 to December 31st, 2024.

In light of that, allow me, if you will, Graduating Class of 2019, to issue another quick challenge before I “sink into silence”, as it were. And that is: Consistent with one of the Objectives of UCZ University from which you are about to graduate and to which each you will forever be linked as either an alumna or an alumnus, namely, an objective which sought to cultivate in you a spirit of service to the community, may I encourage each of you--especially the Preachers among you—to explore the possibility, at some

appropriate time during your ministry, of not only seeing Zambia as your community to serve faithfully, diligently and well but, further afield, to see the larger community of the African Diaspora as well. I urge you to do what Rev. Elizabeth Chirwa and, perhaps others, have done or are doing. I happen to know that Rev. Chirwa, a dear Friend and Colleague, served, with distinction, in Jamaica for a number of years. Query: Why not consider going and doing likewise? Why not consider going and serving, for a season, in one of the Caribbean Islands – be it in Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis (my own Island Nation of birth), Trinidad and Tobago or elsewhere in the African Diaspora? Again I ask: Why not?

III. CONCLUSION

And with that mission-driven question reverberating within the chambers of your minds, Graduating Class of 2019, allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to now “sink into silence” but not before, once again, thanking the Vice Chancellor and his Senior Management Team for extending their kind invitation to me to serve as your Guest of Honour today.

And so to you, Dr. Kondolo, Vice Chancellor, Sir: Natotela sana/Thank you very much. And to you, Graduating Class of 2019: May God be with you both now and forever or, as the Balanta speakers of Guinea-Bissau would say in translating the word, “forever” (para sempre in Portuguese): *Mbusa mbus*. Amen.