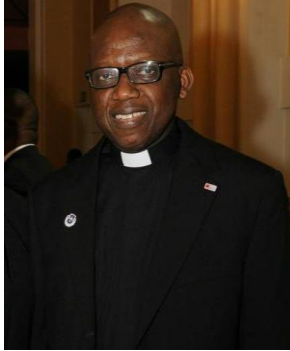


Sierra Leone Grammar School Old Boys Association UK Branch.

Annual Thanksgiving 24th March 2013

Sermon: Building a Solid Foundation

1. Opening courtesies.



Thanks first of all to God our maker who had called me and ordained me to be his Servant and Preacher of his word. The privilege and Honour to stand before my Alma mater to deliver this year's sermon to my fellow Ministers, Executive and members of the Grammar School OBA, and to all attendees, it is also by God's good grace and mercy that I will be able to speak to you through and by his HOLY SPIRIT POWER AND ANIONTING.

Foundation is one of the most important sections of any building. Life is about building a solid foundation from which we set off on our individual journey of life. Therefore anything we do as a group and as individuals must be based on a solid platform indeed a solid foundation. But if we consider this word deeply, philosophically, and spiritually, we see how loaded it is. Added to this word for our theme today is another word, Building which connotes developing, expansion, magnifying, extending and of course multiplying.

3. Strong foundations aren't intended for small buildings. The same is true in the Christian life. Jesus Christ is the solid foundation on which we must build our lives, but what are we building on that foundation? Is it a palace worthy of Him?

Fellow Regentonians, 168 years ago our founding fathers and benefactors, where given the command, a gift and indeed the opportunity to be skilled Master builders, on which they built a solid foundation. Their Legacy was to ensure and to let others build upon it.

And on what foundation our we building on?

Progress always implies continuous movement. However meaningful progress often demands taking a break for contemplation, planning, reassessing and meditation. As skilled master builders with a responsibility to build on that special and solid foundation, we cannot build blindly without stopping to assess our actions.

It is at such times we call on the Rock on which we stand which is Jesus. Also when we contemplate we revisit the Foundations we are charged to build on, those eternal Jewels we have in our armory which are Integrity, Faith and trust, commitment, Loyalty to the School and loyalty to our teachers and God. But also the remarkable stories of pupils who became household names and Inspiration not to just Regentonians but all and Sundry.

Fellow Regentonians Christian friends, we must look back into the past in order to move forward, this might sound a contradiction, and totally in contrast to our Motto. But a grasp of history enables us to be better positioned to deal with the present and be more competent architects of the future.

Ad Lib.

“Holy Johnson, James Johnson, A pioneer Of African Nationalism, 1838-1917. And Old Boy. “It was a matter of luck and because of his Character that he was given a place at the only Grammar school in the colony. At the Grammar School, James had the opportunity to widen his horizon, by the instructions he received in English Grammar and Composition, Greek, Mathematics, Geography, with the use of Globe and Mapping, Bible history, Writing, Bible and English History, Astronomy, The Thirty-Nine articles, Recreation and Music”. It is no surprise that James or Holy Johnson became the first Product of the Grammar school to achieve the status of assistant Bishop.



As we strive forward, let us go back and examine our past, those solid foundations of our school’s past. Thankfully (well I hope) we will not uncover horrid stories, but more of the Holy Johnson’s, whose wisdom, vision and integrity we hope to build on as we celebrate today.

By the same token there are bound to be mistakes and missteps that we need to identify to help us deal with the present and better plan for the future. Conversely, we may want to seek inspiration from the productive past to remind us of our responsibility to repair the foundations that were laid for us by dedicated men, women and Boys. The mere fact that we have an Alumina association here in the UK underscores the significance of looking back to move forward. We are grateful of how our school has shaped us and, invoking that past, we must work together to maintain those high standards.

The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. It is okay to pause, stand still, as long as we are poised to move forward. Such a focused stand is hardly a position of weakness. Year after year we stand still not in fear of resignation (certainly not in our creed), but in deliberate reflection. Our resolve notwithstanding, we should not be carried away into believing that our standing still is a demonstration solely of our confidence and resilience. More accurately, we stand still and Pause because we are assured of a Solid foundation in Christ, through which we are assured of who God is and what he has done and continues to do for us.

Every building has several players, and to make it sustainable you need expert craftsmen and women. It would be remiss of me to complete this address without paying much deserved respect to our teachers. As a teacher in a secondary school now myself, I can only imagine what you went through. But you stood your ground; you were very professional and inspiring the very best ingredients of a good teacher. You stood the tests posed by both talented and extremely brilliant pupils as well as the very challenging and

hard core men. To name a few: Bra Wise, Miss Godwin, Mr Meaux, Miss Wilson, Mrs Yvette Robin –Coker, Mr Tungie Lightfoot- Taylor, Mrs. Gladys Sumner and of course Pa BK.(Rev Coker)

The foundations you set for us are still shining beacons in our Lives. This is made clear by the thousands of prominent and successful Regentonians worldwide.

Why are building? Why do we expand? Why do we develop?

No matter how solid a foundation is, it will from time to time need strengthening, it might lose some of its solidity, and it might face threats of destruction and wear and tear.

When the church at Corinth started, it faced all manner of problems which threatened its foundation and survival. Problems of division, leadership, favoritism, immaturity, indiscipline, drunkenness, sin and apostasy etc. But St Paul warned them that unless they turned to Christ and build their Church on the foundation of Christ as their cornerstone they were doomed.

A solid foundation doesn't guarantee that a palace will be erected upon it. The church in Corinth is proof of this. The beginning of the Corinthian church is recorded in Acts.

Indeed the school has faced its share amount of problems and tests over the years. The ever growing hardship and lack of an astute governmental leadership, lack of adequate staff incentives and low morale poor infrastructure etc. There was also the now infamous attempt to illegally seize the school land. There were uncertainties and doubt at the change to an independent or private school.

But we thank God that because this school is built on a solid foundation based on truth and faith and Christ as our corner stone, we survived. Indeed a spiritual foundation.

SLGS UK is a flourishing and well run association, because of our unity and strong sense of purpose.

No time for indiscipline, no time for fruitless meetings. This is because we are on a mission. As Ambassadors of the school our duty is built on the very foundation we were privileged to experience, to undertake projects aimed at sustaining the present and even more so the future pupils of the school, and maybe a little bit of Jack Daniels now and again.

Command - but let every man take heed how He builds. We are all builders according to our measure of faith and skills and talents. Do we have a personal knowledge of the God we serve, do we have a relationship with his son Jesus our Rock, protector and deliverer and our Foundation Stone on which we are made to build on?

Pope Francis in his very first Papal mass, warned cardinals that the Church would fall apart "like a sand castle" if it did not have a solid spiritual foundation and urged them to share their wisdom -- "good wine that gets better over the years" -- with young people. And so we have a duty not just here in the UK but all around the world.

Talking about leadership, In the not too distant future, the board of Governors will be replacing Mr. Lasite. What a daunting task, after 28years at the helm. A strong institution like the grammar school surely grounded on such remarkable and enviable foundation, and with such renowned history and tradition needs a Solid leader, a man or Woman of great integrity, selfless, A great teacher and administrator, a strong calling and vocation and of course wisdom and a strong faith. I say this because this is what Mr Lasite is and has each of them in abundance. Not least the gift of knowing each and every pupil by name. Well who knows? All I can say is that there are Regentonians out there or even in here, and he or she will be found by the grace of God. We have a very firm belief on the Board and selection panel and as they have done in the past we are confident that they will make the right choice.

So in conclusion fellow Regentonians we have a duty, a challenge and a responsibility, God has given us the opportunity to be "skilled master builders" to lay the foundation and let others build upon it (1 Cor 3:10). Like our fore fathers and benefactors did 168 years ago. We are to go out with fervency, pride, commitment and a strong faith to propagate the Ethos, Integrity and wisdom instilled on us.

While we do so, let us be aware that there will be pit falls, the storms of life will be there to test us, but we have Christ as our corner stone and the legacy of our founding fathers. We must not be tempted to build on shallow or sandy soils, but on that sure hope of Christ and nothing else.

As old boys we will rally round the present and tell them of what has been, Let us urge them to more study.

And to our well-loved Alma Mater, we every one shall cling

And year by year in deeper tones; more fervently shall sing.
Sundered Never and Falter Never.

May God Bless our Grammar School?