

SPEECH OF RECTOR ON ADOPTION DAY – SATURDAY 19TH 03 2022

**Our Chief Guest – Most Rev. John Baptist, Dr. Odama-Archbishop Ordinary-Gulu Archdiocese;
The Formation and Teaching Staff;
The Technical and Support Staff of Alokolum Seminary;
Dear Foster Parents and Your Sons;
The Students’ Council and the Entire Students’ Body of Alokolum Seminary; All Those Whom I should have acknowledged in this Protocol.**

I suppose that all of us gathered here today (inclusive the founding father of the Foster Parents and the entire fraternity of Alokolum family inclusive: the teaching, technical, support staff; the seminarians; the Foster Parents) are indeed *Disciples of Christ*; the Christ who is as well the main reason behind our celebration today.

May I take your permission dear friends to premise my word on a **Biblical tradition**: Talking about the Privileges of Discipleship in Lk. 10: 23- 24 it is said that “Turning to the disciples in private Christ said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

In his vision for the benefit of the Local and Universal Church, the then rector John Baptist Odama and his staff founded the Umbrella Association of the Foster Parents. To the seminarians of first year of the Academic Year 2021/2022 and probably some others, it was their first time on Tuesday 8th March 2022 to listen from the horse mouth the articulation of what the FPA was all about. Thus, to all our formatees and the entire stake holders in the formation of our candidates to the ministerial priesthood, I should like to say we all are and indeed remain blest. We all are blest because we are still living in a time when the person of archbishop Odama is still able to inspire us by his physical presence and life of witness to the Christian values handed to him by the life of the true Church. Time will indeed come because of the contingent nature of physical existents / entities when in reference to this Association of the Foster Parents, some generations will long to see, hear archbishop Odama speak in person and they cannot. We shall for some time also remain witnesses to the words and deeds of archbishop.

Brethren, we are blessed because through His Grace John Baptist Odama, God has planted the Family and communitarian Spirit in this house of formation that has indeed bonded us no longer as foreigners and strangers but as fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household¹. Thus fulfilling the dreams of the Mother Church for the formation of her candidates.

Dear friends, I take your permission to premise my word **on some Teaching Authority of the Catholic Church (Magisterium)**. Talking about the gift of Priestly Vocation on the occasion of his address to the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy (**3 October 2014**), Pope Francis recalled that **Priestly Vocation** (i.e. guarding and fostering vocations, that they may bear mature fruit. They are ‘uncut diamonds’, to be formed both patiently and carefully,

¹ Eph. 2:19 “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household...”

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respecting the conscience of the individual, so that they may shine among the People of God”²) **this priestly vocation** is best discovered and accepted within a **community**. It is formed in the Seminary, in the context of an educating **community**, comprised of various members of the People of God. This community leads the seminarian, through ordination, to become part of the ‘family’ of the presbyterate, at the service of a particular community. Thus with respect to the stake holders of formation (priest formators, the parents, seminarians, etc...) the pope wishes to emphasize that, for the effectiveness of their endeavors, they must consider themselves to be a true formative community. They should act accordingly, sharing a common responsibility, with due regard to the duties and the office entrusted to each member.

Since the priest-disciple comes from the Christian community, and will be sent back to it, to serve it and to guide it as a pastor, formation is clearly missionary in character. Its goal is participation in the one mission entrusted by Christ to His Church that is evangelization, in all its forms.

The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who are ‘in love’ with the Master, shepherds ‘with the smell of the sheep’, who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them. Hence every priest should always feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ.³

Dear Foster Parents, you are blessed therefore because you help the Church form this educative community that should mold our candidates. From you, we come. To you, we go back to minister. You are blest Year ones because in the umbrella Association of the Foster Parents, you have the opportunity for a very balanced formation. We are all blest brethren because God has planted us in the Church with all the opportunities for care. This day is ours, let us rejoice and be glad indeed in it.

We continue to thank God through His gift to us of St. Joseph, the patron of Divine Providence. By his intercessions, may Alokolum Seminary continue to produce shepherds indeed with that smell of the flock. Happy Feast Day of St. Joseph to you all.

In Christ, Mother Mary, St. Joseph

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Fr. Charles Olweny
Rector
Alokolum National Major Seminary-Gulu.

² FRANCIS, *Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for Clergy* (3 October 2014): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 226 (4 October 2014), 8.

³ The Gift of the Priestly Vocation 2016, CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY or **The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis**, L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO, VATICAN CITY, 8 DECEMBER 2016