

WELCOME MESSAGE BY HOST CHAPTER

Gene Agbimson, President, New York Chapter



Good evening distinguished guests, friends, fellow CKC Onitsha alumni, Ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the New York Chapter of Christ the King College Onitsha, Alumni Association in America, Inc. (CKC- AAA), the host of the 2011 Convention of our Association, I welcome you to this evening Banquet and august gathering. On behalf of the students, faculty and staff of our great College, who will benefit from your presence and generosity, I thank you for coming. We have amongst us today many of the past great CKC personalities who have travelled from distant places to join us for this special fund raising event.

My special thanks go to our alumni keynote speaker, **Professor Cyril Enwonwu**, a distinguished research scientist and Professor of Biomedical Sciences, University of Maryland at Baltimore. Professor Enwonwu is a Research America Global Health Ambassador. He was former Director of Nigeria National Institute for Medical Research and former Deputy Vice- Chancellor of the University of Nigeria (Enugu Campus). He was a recipient of Nigeria National Honors- the Order of the Niger (OON) and a Fellow of the Nigeria Academy of Sciences. I also give special Thanks to our Special guests, **Mr. Roland Ewubare**, the Executive Secretary and Head of the Nigeria National Human Rights Commission and **Mr. Ralph A. Perkins** of the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation, Washington DC.

For the sake of those who are in contact with us for the first time, let me briefly introduce Christ the King College Onitsha in the context of this evening's event. In 1933, Catholic Irish missionaries led by the then Catholic Archbishop of Onitsha, His Grace, The Most Rev. Charles Heerey, C.S. Sp established Christ the King College, (CKC) in the town of Onitsha, in the former Eastern Nigeria. Their mission was to educate, and to refine the minds of young males in the region with Catholic moral principles, essential to face the challenges of life with which to successfully lead and serve mankind.

The motto of the College is ***Bonitas, Disciplina, Scientia*** (Goodness, Discipline, and Knowledge) and by applying this dictum, the school flourished as one of the best college preparatory schools in Nigeria thereby fulfilling the axiom: Primus, Inter Pares, which means first among equals. In time, the college produced many of the sharpest and brilliant minds ever in West Africa and beyond. Great Economists, like the late Dr. Pius Okigbo, Mathematicians, like the late Dr. Chike Obi, and legal luminaries, like Justice Chukwudifu Oputa were products of this great school, which has produced world class leaders in sciences, medicine, humanities, politics, business, who now do selfless work for mankind.

Like many Secondary Schools in the former Eastern Nigeria, Christ the King College Onitsha, found its fortunes reversed, during and after the Nigeria civil war 1967- 1970. Most buildings in the School campus, including essential property and equipment were destroyed and in ruins. To make matters worse The State government unilaterally took over the Schools. This move created an unmitigated disaster for Schools in the State. Through negligence, mismanagement, and ineptitude, the plight of the schools gravely deteriorated, as the State's rehabilitation programs soon stalled. The schools were left more or less on their own, without the resources to function or rehabilitate and maintain their facilities. Fast forward four decades later; the situation hasn't very much changed. As ridiculous as it might sound, Nigeria as a country being one of the world's major oil producing nations. It has been the parents and the School's Old Boys Associations such as CKC- AAA that have helped the schools to rehabilitate and function as much as they have, but still nowhere near their pre-war glory days.

Our event this evening has two purposes. To help fund a college endowment Trust fund for the School and to support our ongoing rehabilitation and capital improvement projects as well as our annual operating assistance to the school. With your generosity and support tonight, we hope to make substantial progress on those two endeavors and by and large move closer to restoring our alma mater back to its great original mission as envisioned and propounded by its founding fathers. Once again, we thank you all for coming to help in this humanitarian cause of improving education in Africa; and that is ***being part of the solution***. Primus! [TAG]