

Your Lordship Monsignor Javier Echevarria, the Bishop Prelate of Opus Dei and the Chancellor of Strathmore University, all our honourable guests, faculty, staff and students,

Today's occasion marks the second congregation at which Strathmore University awards degrees, diploma and certificates to the students who completed their studies during the academic year 2005/2006.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you who are graduating today. In this special day, I wish to acknowledge the selfless contribution of your parents, guardians and sponsors towards the achievements and accomplishments we are celebrating together. Your own hard work and the academic guidance and mentoring provided by your lecturers must also be applauded.

This year's graduation is truly special, because the Chancellor of our University is present here with us and is going to confer the degrees and diplomas, which you have so deservedly merited. To have the Chancellor physically present here and experience his paternal affection so closely and warmly is for us a special cause of encouragement and joy.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely your Lordship the Chancellor for deciding to visit the University and preside over today's graduation ceremony. We give thanks to God for enabling us to celebrate this important day in our academic calendar in this special and memorable way.

Your Lordship the Chancellor, here in the University we follow the educational philosophy held by Saint Josemaria by trying to form competent men and women who can serve our country with personal integrity, honesty and accountability, thus contributing to human progress. People who can influence the affairs of the world through their professional work and a spirit of service and a sense of justice.

You who are graduating today are joining hundreds of illustrious men and women who now form part of the Strathmore Alumni, and who have served our nation with distinction. Like those earlier Strathmorians, we expect you to be the bearer and stewards of the values Strathmore has imparted to you during your time here. Only then will you earn the respect of your fellow colleagues, and indeed, make truly valuable contribution to society.

Your Lordship, the Chancellor, Strathmore University continues to lay emphasis on staff development by promoting and supporting studies for higher degrees, professional development and human formation. Many of our young lecturers have enrolled for higher degrees here in Strathmore and in other Universities. We have a Certificate Course in Lectureship for all our lecturers and a course for all the Student Mentors, to prepare them for mentoring our students and help them grow in human virtues.

The past academic year has seen substantial growth in research activity of our staff. In this regard the University sets aside every year a sizeable portion of its operating budget towards, research, publications and attendance at scientific conferences by our staff. It is gratifying to note that our staff are taking full advantage of this facility to enhance their research productivity. To promote the spirit of scientific inquiry and intellectual dialogue in the University, we have instituted an Annual Ethics Conference which has been taking place each year since the year 2003.

In terms of growth in academic programs, this academic year has seen the launching of four masters degree programmes and one postgraduate diploma. Recruitment of students into these programmes has started in earnest and a number of them are starting next month! We have established two new schools: the Strathmore Business School, to be the center of excellence for executive business education; and the School of Graduate Studies to co-ordinate graduate studies in the University.

These academic developments are part of the overall university vision of becoming a leading private university in this region. Integrated into this vision is the goal to be an IT leader in Kenya and the East African Region. Significant developments are taking place in this direction as well.

We have just completed installing and commissioning an advanced Academic Management System with support from the University of Navarre. We have also installed and commissioned an advanced Library System. These developments apart from enhancing our capability to offer quality academic services, to our students, will greatly improve our support services. How else would we hope to position ourselves as a leading university in the increasingly competitive academic market place?

Strathmore has embraced an entrepreneurial response to the challenges it faces as it seeks to become a center of excellence. We have developed and

continue to cultivate mutual beneficial partnerships with good universities both locally and abroad, as well as with local industry. It suffices to mention here our close working relationships with the University of Navarre, MIT and a number of other Universities in the USA and South Africa. The Strathmore Business School works in partnership with IESE Business School, a top Business School in the World, and with Lagos Business, one of the top schools in Africa.

The University encourages all the schools to invite important personalities in the private sector to sit in their Advisory Boards. In this way, the University nurtures and promotes its cooperation and collaboration with industry in all areas of mutual interest. For an entrepreneurial university partnering with industry is not an option but a necessity.! One concrete manifestation of partnerships with industry is the Diploma in Micro finance, programme, whose first graduating class is receiving their diplomas today. This programme was developed through a tripartite collaborative venture between Strathmore University, SwissContact and the Association of Micro finance Institutions.

Your Lordship, the Chancellor, our University encourages its staff and students to initiate and participate in activities aimed at serving the community around the University and the Kenya society at large. In this regard there are three initiatives currently going on.

First is the Teacher Enhancement Programme whose goal is to give back the Kenyan educator his or her sense of identity as a major contributor to the moral fibre of the nation.

Second, the Prisons project that trains prisons inmates, warders and wardresses in accountancy courses offered by our Distance Learning Centre. Your Lordship, the Chancellor, this Project has benefited from the Harambee 2002 fund that was initiated under your guidance on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Josemaria.

The third initiative is the Community Outreach Programme which was initially started to enable our students, staff and alumni to carry out volunteer service to the less advantaged communities living around the university and beyond. Our Community Outreach Office is at present working in partnership with many organizations with similar aims such as Kenya Business Youth Trust, Mukuru Slums Development Project, Kwetu Home of Peace, just to mention a few.

The University places great emphasis on sports and club activities for our students. This is essential in order to provide our students with an all round education. The University sports teams are affiliated to various federations and unions charged with running sports at national and regional levels. This provides our students with opportunities to participate in competitive tournaments at national and regional levels, at which they perform very well, most times winning top awards.

Clubs and Societies provide our students with opportunities for recreation and for exploring and developing their leadership skills. Our students, through their clubs and societies, participate actively in many international and national forums and concerts.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned at the beginning that this is a special and memorable occasion for both the graduating students and the entire Strathmore University and its members. To mark this occasion in a fitting manner the University has decided to confer on his Lordship the Chancellor, the first ever honorary doctorate: Doctor of Letters (*Honoris Causa*) of Strathmore University.

An honorary doctorate is conferred by a good University on persons who through their professional activity and personal example have rendered distinguished service to society.

In a short while we shall read to you the Citation for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Letters (*Honoris Causa*) on the Chancellor. The Citation gives a brief profile of the person of the Chancellor and a summary of the concrete ways in which by the example of his ordinary work and personal life he has influenced the events of the world in the service of the church and in the promotion of Justice and charity among all peoples.

In concluding my remarks, I wish all our graduating students a bright future marked with a culture of continuous improvement. Make your work an effective service of others and an instrument of promoting justice and social equity.

Thank you!