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Good News Theological Seminary holds 19th graduation; calls on pastors to 'flee' from 'materialism'



A group photo of graduates of the Good News Theological Seminary

Good News Theological Seminary (GNTS) has held its 19th Graduation ceremony with a call on the graduates to distinguish themselves among the "lost preachers", uphold the principles of the "sound doctrine" and resist the temptation of "materialism".

Dr. Nicoletta Gatti, lecturer at the Department for the Study of Religions at University of Ghana in her key note address, reiterated the belief that Ghana is a religious country blessed with many precious natural resources and peace.

But she was quick to observe how Ghana like many other countries, is wallowing in corruption in the midst of several churches and pastors.

"... Ghana has been affected by what Jesus indicated as the two viruses, able to corrupt human heart and the world: love of money ('mammon') and love of power. The just desire of a dignified life is now transformed in a craving for 'quick money,' greed and exploitation. The consequences are before us; our mother earth is destroyed; our forests, oceans, rivers are polluted for short term development and blind enrichment of a few. Relationship among people are distorted by the game of money and power; even funerals are transformed in money-making exercises," she indicated.

She decried the incessant craze for wealth among "modern day" Ministers of the Gospel and their silence on social injustice which she blames for the imbalance in society and the surge in corrupt activities.

According to Dr. Nicoletta Gatti, "Corruption and nepotism are sicknesses that affect the life of all, but in a very special way, the life of the youth - your life. Few are becoming richer and many poorer; the social unbalance is creating a more violent and unsecured society: we need to start listening to the cry of the earth and to the cry of the poor!"

"Unfortunately, even our churches called to be the conscience of our country and the voice of the voiceless, not only are unable to stand up against 'craving for materialism' but have created a 'theology' to justify materialism. I am referring to prosperity gospel," she bemoaned.

Dr. Gatti, therefore, advised the graduates of the Good News Theological Seminary against using illegitimate means to pull crowd to their churches in the bid to grow the numbers, enrich themselves and become famous.

She further advised them to preach the truth, be the voice for the voiceless, stand up against greed and corruption and above all, transform their various communities which is one of the mandates of a theologian.

President of the GNTS, Reverend Professor Thomas A. Oduro, congratulated the outgoing students and commended them for going through their programmes successfully.

He urged them to be servant leaders in all aspects of life and be worthy ambassadors of Christ.

Rev. Prof Oduro touted the GNTS as one of the best colleges where true pastors and church workers are trained and called on Ministers of God to invest in upgrading their knowledge.

He said, "The seminary has been a centre for creating understanding and mutual respect for the body of Christ. Therefore, pastors and church workers from many Christian backgrounds and persuasions study, pray, worship, play and interact together. The inter-denominational composition of the Faculty, staff and learners has been a learning tool since the uniqueness and giftedness of each person are blended beautifully to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ in a servant-leadership manner."

He disclosed that apart from programmes being offered on its main campus at Oyibi, the GNTS has begun a Church leadership training in the Volta Region to train church leaders to be agents of positive change in their communities.

As part of efforts to empower church leaders skills-wise to enable them improve their economic lives through genuine money making activities, "Skills Development Centres have been opened by the Seminary at Ziope, Wudzedeke and Dramave (in Agotime District/Ziope District), also at Sremanu in Akatsi District all in the Volta region, and at Akyem Breaman in the Eastern region. 50 acres of land has been bought by the Seminary to serve as Demonstration farms. Twenty (20) acres at Triboni and Thirty acres (30 acres) at Wugladza," he revealed.

"The Skills Development Centres serve close to 200 people – including pastors, church members, traditional leaders and Muslims. Learners are equipped to know how to do improved farming technology with the help of Agricultural Extension Officers, bake bread, weave Kente, do various kinds of garri, Batik and tie and dye making. The Seminary has also opened an ICT centre at Ziope where over 50 people have been trained," he added.

Prof. Oduro said the seminary has plans of training Lay persons to assist the clergy in different capacities so as to meet the current and future demands of the church of Christ.

He said, the Center for Excellence in Leadership and Development is almost completed and the much-

needed courses in human resource management activities, needed by the Church especially, will be organised there to hone the skills of pastors and anyone who deigns to study to better their lives.

He explained that, "People who are targeted to benefit from the courses that would be offered at the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and Development are residents from Frafaha to Dodowa who are single mothers, JHS graduates, widows and widowers and all who desire to attain one form of skill or the other to live self-dependent lives. We are preparing to give both incoming and continuing student Pastors special skills to enable them earn some funds."

Prof Oduro extended his gratitude to Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Mennonite Mission Network and other foreign partners who have been supporting the GNTS in diverse ways since its establishment.

"We are also grateful to Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture for mentoring us to grow into educational maturity, fine-tuning the quality of our programmes and providing educational scholarship. We are grateful to our beloved Council members who represent the owners of the seminary for their guidance, the alumni association and to all who support the seminary," he stated.

About the Good News Theological Seminary (GNTS)

Good News Theological Seminary is an interdenominational seminary established in 1971 to provide sound Christ-centred education to the Church and Society, fully equipping both men and women with character, knowledge and skills for servant leadership in the African context. It is a seminary that is fully owned by African Instituted Churches.

In pursuance of the mission of the Seminary, only lecturers with a minimum academic degree of a Master's degree in a specified academic field are employed. Besides, both staff and faculty upgrade their knowledge to be abreast with the current academic trends.

There are three levels of educational programmes – Certificate programme, Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and Bachelor of Theology. The Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and Bachelor of Theology programmes have been accredited by the National Accreditation Board since 2008. The seminary has enjoyed being affiliated to and mentored by the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture. The Certificate programmes are tailor-made courses to suit the challenges of ministering in the 21st century.

The 19th batch of students graduated with Certificates in Pastoral Ministry, Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and the Bachelor of Theology programmes.

They have been taught the Scriptures, Pastoral Ministry, Homiletics, Hermeneutics, Christian theology and beliefs, History of Christianity, Christian Spirituality, Christian Mission and Ministry, Religions, Computer literacy, Mother tongue skills, Philosophy, Anthropology, Psychology, English language, Church and society, biblical languages and Evangelism.