

Speech by the Chancellor, Dr Blasious Ruguri, President, East-Central Africa Division of the SDA Church

Distinguished guests, faculty, deans, Vice Chancellor, Dr. Onongha, and of course, to our graduating students from this year, 2021, I bring you warm greetings for this august occasion.

As the Chancellor of the Adventist University of Central Africa, I wish to congratulate our graduates for reaching this very high mark of achievement.

Today, you may think that I am congratulating you only for having reached the moment of your graduation. But the truth is that the diploma which you will receive today is only evidence that you have been working on a much greater achievement throughout your time at this university. The achievement of which I speak is the result of many important decisions that you have made to facilitate this moment we have arrived at today.

I hope that every single one of you have made the choice to dedicate your future and your heart to Jesus Christ. That is the most important decision, and no matter what other factors have played a role in your decision to attend this university, you need to know that it was God who has led you here and invested in you throughout your studies. And because God was leading in His various ways, you made AUCA your choice to improve yourselves so that you can be of greater service to your communities, to God and to humanity. That choice was like a precious seed which was watered by hard work, financial sacrifices and even tears, for some of you. And today, those seeds have resulted in a powerful harvest of leaders in Education, Information Technology, Nursing, Business and Theology. There are many sources which could have provided the information which appeared in your textbooks. But it is the process of development under the careful guidance of Jesus Christ Himself that has brought you to the AUCA standard of leadership which you have achieved today.

So today, I congratulate you on the choices that you have made. You chose to attend one of the most prestigious universities in Rwanda and in Africa itself. Today, you join thousands of alumni who have taken their places in many of the highest offices in corporations and in Government not only here in Rwanda but globally. Today, I congratulate you for never giving up when difficulties presented themselves which could have kept you from delivering your very best effort. Instead of settling for mediocrity, and a standard of being merely “good enough” during your time here, you chose to rise to the AUCA standard. You are to be congratulated on that choice!

The AUCA standard is incredibly unique. You are among those who are also graduating from prestigious universities during this year, and I can safely tell you as Chancellor of this university, that there is no university in the world which represents a higher standard than the AUCA standard.

This is the reason that AUCA has such a strong reputation. In only the past 6 years AUCA has supplied the nation with over 3,000 leaders who are serving at the highest levels in many

capacities in government, business, education, technology, medicine and the church. AUCA graduates are known to be performers of the highest quality in the Government of Rwanda, including several members of parliament. AUCA graduates are holding the highest responsibilities in maintaining the technology infrastructure in what has become one of the most technologically sophisticated nations on the continent.

AUCA graduates are excelling in business with graduates leading in banks and as entrepreneurs. Even within the church across the region, there are AUCA graduates serving as presidents of unions and even a division of our Seventh-day Adventist world leadership with responsibilities to lead hundreds of thousands of believers.

There is much more that I can say regarding the impact that has resulted from the history of excellence that always exists among the graduates from this school. While many universities call their students to rise to the level of academic excellence, the AUCA standard produces leaders who go to even greater heights.

At AUCA we agree that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. If you will not seek excellence in whatever you are doing, then you had better just leave it, and find your excellence wherever you can decide to put forth your very best effort with the skills that God has given to you. A life which is lived under the standards of mediocrity is a life which is only half lived, or even something less than that!

The thousands of AUCA graduates who have gone before you worked hard to succeed in the positions of trust that they have earned. Thousands of people will be entrusting their lives to the skill and intelligence of our nurses.

Communities and nations will depend on the creativity and insight of our business leaders and IT leaders.

Thousands of families will choose to trust their futures in the compassionate hands of our educators, and perhaps even millions will find hope for eternity as our theologians teach them to place their trust in God. Those who graduate from AUCA understand that the standards are high because the stakes are high. This is why AUCA offers nothing less than excellence in its graduates.

Even so, I want you all to know that AUCA is a university which stands for much more than academic excellence. You see, as graduates of AUCA, you are also part of God's plan for growth, healing and redemption in this world.

AUCA graduates are working in high offices in business, education and government, building Rwanda into a strong leader, not just on the African continent but around the world. Students come here not only to seek excellence for themselves, but to be a part of how God is raising up Rwanda and the rest of the continent to a standard which surprises the world! Today, what the world needs is not mere academic and technical excellence, but it is in need of redemption.

AUCA graduates are leaders. AUCA graduates are highly competent and God has equipped you also to provide redemptive hope wherever you may go. Today, you are being initiated into a great heritage of leadership which will bring forth a better tomorrow for Rwanda and for the world!

I have mentioned that the AUCA standard includes academic excellence, as well as the ability to be a leader who can redeem things and make them better than they ever were before.

Both of these aspects are very important, but the world is full of people who have both of them. By themselves they tell an impressive story of high standards. But the AUCA standard requires yet another level of leadership, which I will describe from the story of David which is found in the Book of 1 Samuel, chapters 16 and 17. David was a young man of intelligence, and, through his experience as a shepherd, it was clear that he was a creative leader who knew how to take care of, and even improve the things which he was responsible for. David never lost his sheep. Even if he had to fight a lion or a bear, David was able to redeem everything that was placed into his hand.

But even with those qualities, no one expected much from him beyond the ordinary future of anyone else. Even his brothers and his father seemed to be convinced that he would never do anything that could matter. Some of you may have people in your life who are not expecting anything out of the ordinary from you.

They are expecting you to work and earn a good living, perhaps, and that is indeed something to be proud of. But God's destiny for David involved something that most people are unwilling to claim because they are not committed to the standard of excellence of character that is required. It is the courageous commitment to extraordinary service.

This is the third element of the AUCA standard. The greatness of the degree is not the final measure of the greatness of your destiny. Your greatness is revealed in the way that you serve the world after today the degree is placed into your hands. David was anointed to be a king at a time when no one but God could see his true potential. Today, your degrees are a kind of anointing which are inviting you to join the ranks of those who are leading this nation to heights of greatness. But David did not try to take the easy path to success even though he was anointed to be the next king. He did not wait for anyone to give him an opportunity that he had not yet proven that he could earn.

In Chapter 17, we see David taking simple opportunities to serve others rather than seeking to be served himself. While David was bringing supplies to his brothers who were soldiers in the army of the Israelites, he heard the threats of a giant named Goliath against the people of God.

David could have let the giant to those who were supposed to be responsible to fight. But where others were afraid, David saw an irresistible opportunity to serve his God and his people at a higher level. David understood that his destiny of greatness was not to be found in his title, but in his trust in God and his willingness to serve.

Rising to the AUCA standard means weighing each moment not for the ease, comfort, and prestige that it can bring to you, but for the extraordinary level of excellence with which you can serve, even in difficult circumstances. The standard is about a desire to demonstrate courage rather than to seek comfort. Instead of running away from challenges, AUCA leaders run toward them, confident that in them they will find the secrets of a life that is truly extraordinary.

Even among the most well-educated, this level of courage is not guaranteed. AUCA has provided you a heritage which will be an advantage as you seek to fulfill your destiny to become an extraordinary leader. But the courage that you will need to face the giants that are breathing

out threats against you and your world can only be found through a trust that is greater than your fear. It is a trust that is inspired by love for God, and love for your fellow man.

Today, I challenge you to find your destiny among those who have made the choice to never settle for less than the extraordinary. Live your life to the AUCA standard. An ancient Hebrew proverb tells us in Proverbs 3:5 to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not trust in your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.” You have followed an excellent path, and today we honor your achievement.

I call on you to fulfill your AUCA heritage by going beyond the standard of excellence, to take on the greatest challenges so that with God’s help, you can be proven to be a leader who is truly extraordinary.

That is the AUCA standard and may the degree which you receive today be a constant reminder of the extraordinary destiny that awaits you!

May God bless you all!