

# Goodwill message on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Prof. Paul Idornigie, SAN

Life's journey is never a straight line. Like the great river, it often meanders and takes many twists and turns, but its ultimate destination — though unknowable at the start — is certain, as ordained by God. But the individual still must have the hunger and do his part by using the fragments of opportunities that God puts in all our paths. For mere mortals, this is both a challenge and a source of excitement, of foreboding and hopeful expectation as we take each uncertain step. If we knew from birth what our future path would be like, it would be a boring life, the comfort of certainty notwithstanding. The life story of Prof Paul Idornigie is no different in its many twists and turns. I am sure that looking back on his journey so far, he will have every right to be proud of the huge mountains he has scaled and the apparently bolted doors that he opened through hard work and perseverance.

I first met Paul in 1980 when I joined the University of Jos (Unijos) for my National Youth Service Corps as a lecturer in the Department of Economics (I already had a Master's degree at the time). He was the Personal Secretary to the then Vice Chancellor, Prof Emovon. We soon grew very close and Paul's VW Beetle enabled us to explore Jos, making the NYSC year an altogether enjoyable experience. It was not fancy, but it was our 'limousine', and it served us very well. Our friendship expanded to encompass our immediate and extended families, and that is how it has remained ever since. Needless to say, that I have found him to be a totally dependable friend who would always go out of his way to be helpful.

Paul could have chosen to remain where he was: he had a relatively comfortable life by the standards of the time and environment. But he didn't. He soon took advantage of the staff development programme offered by the University to acquire a professional qualification as a Chartered Secretary at Chelmsford, Essex UK. This was followed by a Law degree from Unijos, acquired through a part-time programme, followed by an LLM and eventually a PhD. I remember the group study sessions that Paul and some of his course mates organized outside of their normal evening lectures and combined with their day jobs. They were a determined bunch, and used that inconvenient little window of opportunity to open new vistas to life.

The academic environment in which Paul made his career in the Administration wing of the university system obviously rubbed off on him, and he transferred to a teaching position at Unijos after his LLM, then later at the Nigerian Law School Abuja. His other work experience included as Special Assistant to the Minister of Works, and General Counsel for the Bureau of Public Enterprise. He was subsequently appointed Professor of Law and Director of Research at the National Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) and, for a while, was Acting Director General of that Institute. He was awarded the prestigious *Senior Advocate of Nigeria* (SAN) title in 2015 in recognition of his contributions as an academic, author and practitioner. Paul is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and has many other honors. His services are in high demand on many fronts, especially in Arbitration and, just recently, was persuaded to come out of retirement to accept a professorship in Law at Veritas University, Abuja.

In achieving all this, Paul was staunchly supported by his wife, Rose, not just through direct encouragement, but also in raising the family — especially in those years during which Paul was away

from home pursuing his course in the UK and even his career in Lagos and Abuja. They have managed to raise excellent children (Emo, Obo, Emeso, Imoudu and Tony) who are doing very well in their own right.

Paul's career has reached the highest peak of three different professions and, like the mighty river, is still running — a long way from its modest beginnings. Surely, God saw it all from the start, but characteristically let the man discover each step for himself — to experience the highs and the lows, for better appreciation of the journey. And what a journey it has been!

Happy birthday, Paul, and our best wishes for many more to come.

Dr. Bright and Mrs. Rosemary Okogu  
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