



Moments of Grace

The term will soon come to a close, and so will the academic session. For some of the students, the closure is for secondary school education. For some, it marks the end of Nigeria's compulsory basic education, which ends with the BECE examinations. Yet for others, like the JS1, the end of the session confirms their rootedness in Loyola Jesuit College and secondary education. A reflection on these terminals shows some moments of grace when challenges change us to be more open, honest, generous, understanding and loving. Let us name three in LJC for this academic year.

The first is to recognise the miracles that happen in the daily life and routine of the school. The miracles happen in the classrooms, the dining hall, hostel, chapel, and the 2-hour, 10-minute walk in-between those places each day. Daily, the jewels move like a herd from one location to the other on the campus in an almost automated manner. Any disruption of this rhythm seems to disorient them. On one occasion, the school schedule was modified to allow them to relax and play more. But after two hours of "doing nothing," they all clamoured that the classrooms should be opened to allow them to "do something." It was as if the body clock was on auto-run and guiding their days. As a moment of grace, it is in those routines and the routinization of those routines that growth (physical), learning (mental), and character (will) take shape.

The stage plays and other artistic exhibitions constitute the second moment of grace in the Den this year. History tells us that Jesuits used play right from the origins of their school system in 1551 (in Messina, Sicily, Italy) to teach and entertain. Jesuit school plays became so famous at some point that there was public criticism that students staged plays and wasted resources on the elaborate preparations and performance. The Loyola Union (LU) play is already legendary in the College. This annual play commemorates the 60 Angels of the Sosoliso plane crash. However, this term, there are more timely plays to enable the students to

create more content for their entertainment and education. The expanded stage performances concretize one of the desires of the school to nudge (yes, nudge) the students towards content creation. This "do it yourself" has been on the back burner since there are readymade entertainment outlets available.

The fuel crisis and its attendant disruption of life in the country and in the den is the third moment of grace. The energy crisis and scarcity that started as a one-off blip in the life of the school has continued for over half of the school year. At least we have had five significant disruptions of light and water during this academic session. They are caused majorly by the lack of diesel to generate power and the multiple collapses of the national electricity grid. At some point, we considered seriously sending the children home if we could not guarantee the essentials for learning and growth. However, it turned into a moment of grace for us: the child, even as we try to give them a normal childhood, can not but perceive that their country and the world need people of character to make things right. The urgency of forming good men and women in this country cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the energy crisis has become a Kairos for the school.

As we come to the end of the term and session, and as various PTAs experience the Ignatian mode of prayer during their recollections, and as the staff continues to do their best to raise the Jewels aright, may these moments of grace spur us to "See all things new in Christ."

By Fr. Chikere Ugwuanyi, SJ
The Principal