VOTE OF THANKS GIVEN AT HILTON COLLEGE ON BEHALF OF THE GRADUANDS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 8TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF ST JOSEPH’S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

It is my honour and privilege to propose the vote of thanks. Mr Grand Chancellor Sir, our Guest of honour and the keynote speaker Professor Barney Pityana, the president of St Joseph’s Theological Institute Dr. Sylvester David, your eminence Wilfred cardinal Napier, your Lordship bishop Barry Wood, the members of the Board of St Joseph’s Theological Institute, our Cluster partners, dear lecturers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and most importantly our dear graduands;

We are gathered here on this august occasion of the 8th graduation ceremony of St Joseph’s Theological Institute to celebrate the gift of wisdom. This occasion is special in many ways; it is special because 97 graduands have had degrees and diplomas conferred on them; it is special because it is the first time that the Institute is awarding certificates; it is special because it is the last time that the institute is awarding diplomas.

It is often said that gratitude is the attitude that takes you to your altitude. And so, on behalf of the graduands, those here present and those who could not make it to be with us today, I take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped us over the years. Allow me to begin by thanking our guest of honour, Professor Barney Pityana, for accepting to grace this day with his presence. Professor, thank you for your very insightful address.

Over the years we have been fortunate enough to be backed by a team of very motivated, dedicated and qualified professors and lecturers. With their wealth of knowledge and experience, they have given us deep-rooted foundations in our various fields of study. They have nurtured talents of which we perhaps had lost sight, or didn’t even know we possessed. They have stimulated us to think more critically but to act more compassionately. For this, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Academic Dean, the Heads of Departments and the Academic Advisors for helping us out whenever and wherever we approached them.

We also express our gratitude to those who have supported us in practical ways behind the scenes; from the administration staff, the tireless librarians and the support staff.

To our friends, families and our religious congregations, we say thank you. Thank you for tolerating us when we were so stressed and could not see our life beyond a research paper; you bore with us when we were completely drained of life, patience and energy as a result of our busy schedule. Without your network of support, we could not have gone through the challenges brought upon us by our academic demands.

We owe thanks to our colleagues who regularly challenged our opinions in various forums, colleagues who helped us to widen our intellectual scope and who supported us in ways too great to forget.

We also take this opportunity to extend our most sincere thanks to all our invited guests who have come from far and wide. Thank you for being here today to share in our joy.

To our wonderful audience who have turned up in such overwhelming numbers. We thank you too, for coming to rejoice with us. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.
A very warm thanks goes to the SJTI choir. Every year your musical skills have become more and more fine-tuned. Your entertainment today has been refreshing throughout the graduation ceremony. Thank you for adding a sweet fragrance to this celebration.

An event of such magnitude does not come together overnight. The wheels have to start rolling months in advance. It requires meticulous planning and execution with an eye for detail. We know that we cannot thank everyone enough for their involvement and the willingness they have shown to take on tasks, beyond their comfort zones. We want you to know that we are deeply appreciative of your support.

And now to my fellow graduands:

Today is a day when we have a sense of fulfilment. Our achievements have been recognised, and we celebrate this significant milestone in our lives. If you all believe in the phrase; “knowledge is power and ignorance is slavery” then today, we stand here together, as a proud cohort of friends, with that power. This power has been earned, not through bloodshed or violence, (although many of us have destroyed stationery, shed tears of frustration and lost our cool) but this power has been earned through a thirst for knowledge and a desire for understanding. This power is not the power to control or boast about how much we know, it is the power to think and to make a difference.

Neurologist Oliver Sacks said, ‘Nothing is more wonderful or more to be celebrated than something that will unlock a person’s capacities to allow him to grow and think.’ SJTI has given us education, and that education has now come with responsibility. The responsibility is to be able to apply our skills in new situations and to see things from a global perspective with a social conscience. This is indeed the gift that we have been given and that now propels us into the future as we pursue positive changes for humanity and our planet.

Today we receive our degrees and diplomas, but this does not make us the smartest people around. If we think we are, then we need to reflect on what the Japanese say: “None of us is smarter than all of us.” So we need to build bridges between ourselves and others. Our achievement should never separate us from others; instead, it should draw us closer to them in a spirit of service. This is what, in professional circles, is called networking. In organisation, it’s called team building. And in life it’s called family, friends and community. We need to approach others in the mutual respect of equals.

After today, we will leave the protection of SJTI, the community of our friends and lecturers to find and forge new communities of our own. We cannot claim to know how to face the many opportunities and challenges of postgraduate life.

It was good to be here! We loved it here but, it wasn’t always easy. If it were easy, it was probably going to be boring. And if we weren’t pushed, we were probably approaching it the wrong way.

We were not held by the hand. We were not pampered. We endured. Here, together, we endured. And now we’ve emerged. We’ve emerged better read and more passionate than when we had begun. We’ve emerged as the selves we were meant to be. We’ve emerged whole and complete, undoubtedly by the Grace of our Risen Lord.

…..and for this I say …ALLELUIA

CONGRATULATIONS!!!
GOD BLESS SAINT JOSEPH’S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

GOD BLESS YOU ALL

THANK YOU!!!!!

By Samuel Francis Onyango IMC