

**A Speech given by Daniel W Hill, Chancellor, on the occasion of the
Matriculation of students of Tansian University, February 2011**

Dear Honourable Guests, the Founder and Pro Chancellor, Reverend Monseignor Professor John Bosco Akan, the Vice Chancellor Professor Nduka Uraih, Professors, Priests and Nuns, Brothers and Tansian Missionaries, Lords, Temporal Knights of the Church, Ladies and Gentlemen, Parents and Guests, Students of Tansian University.

It's a great pleasure to welcome this new matriculation class to Tansian University and to address our existing students.

Despite the difficult economic times facing the world; our university continues to grow, spiritually and intellectually. The topic I want to talk about today is "THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS". This title is reminiscent of a 1979 essay written by Czech dissident playwright Vaclav Havel. Havel wrote this essay at the time of the communist repression in Czechoslovakia and he acknowledged the insight of a Russian writer and dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

We all have times when we see injustice in our society and the challenges we face appear to be. We are tempted to give in to this, and go with the flow, not standing for the integrity, truth, justice and beauty that we all feel in our hearts.

I will relate to you a story of two men who lived in our time, both of whom spent many years in prison and how their spiritual strength and insights helped to change their countries and the world, thereby, inspiring us all.

The first was the Russian dissident Solzhenitsyn who was arrested in 1945 after fighting for Russia in World War II. He was sentenced to 8 years in prison for writing a letter to a friend questioning some of Stalin's decisions. During those 8 years of utter brutality, which were memorialised in his classic book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn went through a spiritual transition during his imprisonment where he had a Christian conversion, realising the power of love, truth and beauty would always overcome the master/slave pillars of violence and lies. He is given much credit along with President Reagan and John Paul II for recognising and appreciating the terrible vulnerability of the Soviet Union and its "Empire of Lies". The vulnerability to ordinary brave men and women who would opt for "spiritual integrity" over "spiritual slavery", when these men stood up and proclaimed the truth of the darkness of the anti-God Soviet system, once the light was shined on the evil and repression of man's spiritual nature, that power of darkness dissipated and collapsed with the Berlin Wall coming down in 1989 and the Soviet Union dismantling on Christmas Day in 1991. Solzhenitsyn's life and work amply confirm the wisdom and power of the Russian proverb that he cites at the conclusion of the ceremony in which he received the Nobel Peace Prize "one word of truth shall outweigh the whole world".

Now I would like to talk of another man, an African man who had this same spiritual insight and strength. This young man was not very different from all of you. He grew up in a very poor, rural area. His father was the Chief of his village. He grew up looking after sheep and cattle. He loved running, boxing and dancing.

When his father died, the Regent sent him away so he could be trained to become the Chief of his village. He was a very good student and observed one

day that “the makings of a great chief is the ability to keep together all sections of his people”. He attended a Methodist high school and he found his religious roots at this school. The Regent decided to send him to attend a university, where he graduated with a Law Degree.

He devoted his law practice to civil matters, which ultimately caused him to be arrested and thrown in jail. For the first 12 years of his jail time, he was working in a quarry breaking rocks. He lost some of his eyesight due to the glare of the sun on the white rocks. He was regularly beaten and abused. He often found himself in solitary confinement because of his nature of not giving in or giving up, increasing the resolve of the prison guards to try and break him. For 27 years, he was known as prisoner number 46664. In 1990, he was released. His spiritual strength and grace removed all emotions of bitterness, hate and revenge and converted them into compassion and understanding. This man’s name is Nelson Mandela and arguably is one of the great statesmen of the 20th Century, and is truly loved and respected the world over.

Adversity breeds greatness. Both of these men had been through untold adversity that brought out in them a spiritual strength that ultimately caused their opponents’ evil empire to collapse.

To use Solzhenitsyn’s words, the process was “to temper, to cut, and to polish one’s soul so as to become a human being”.

We are all called, and I call all of you to aspire to this high goal of achieving spiritual strength, again as Solzhenitsyn pointed out, the line between good and evil “passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, through all human hearts”. When we resist evil, and aspire and live a life of virtue, integrity and love, the forces of darkness around us will collapse as they did around Solzhenitsyn and Mandela. I am calling each one of you ladies and men of

Tansian University to delve into your hearts and with God's Grace be transformed into the great men and women which God has planned for you from the beginning. To be leaders in your professions, leaders in your villages, examples to young people in uplifting this great nation and when you do that you will help uplift this continent and then you will join with young people everywhere and truly uplift and change this world into a home deserving of man's high calling.

As I said 2 years ago when I came here for the first matriculation and official opening of Tansian University, if you have only accomplished the academic challenges that you will meet, that will not be enough because as Tansian graduates you should make a better friend, a better husband, a better wife, a better doctor or lawyer. You should be more free, not just physically but spiritually. This is what we aspire to and may God bless you all and best wishes.

Sincerely

Daniel W Hill