

School Old Girls Build N35m Laboratory For Alma Mater .

GUARDIAN

Sunday, 03 June 2012 00:00

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Sunday Magazine - Kaleidoscope

THE students of Benin City's St. Goretti were in a celebratory mood as new laboratories were handed over to the school management on their behalf. The principal and staff showed much gratitude to the old girls for bringing joy to the students.

The event was about two things namely: the dedication and commissioning of the Biology and Chemistry Laboratories built, furnished and equipped by the St. Maria Goretti Old Girls' Association at an estimated cost of N35million. It also included the handing over of 20 computers from the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology to the school.

At the ceremony, founders of the School such as Bishop Patrick Kelly, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Benin in 1959, Our Lady of Apostles Irish Sisters and in particular Rev. Sr. (Dr) Henrietta Power, who served as Principal of the School for 22 years (1962-1984) were honoured; the laboratories were named after her.

St. Maria Goretti Girls' Grammar School, Benin city was founded in 1959 by the Bishop of Benin, Bishop Patrick Kelly in conjunction with the Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) Irish Sisters with the objective of educating young girls.

The most visible representative of the founders, charged with the responsibility to actualise their objectives was Rev. Sr. Power. As Principal of the school, she lived in the compound, raised, educated, molded and prepared the girls to take up various positions in the country.

According to Justice Gladys Olotu, National President of the Old Girls' Association, many of the old girls present can attest to her dedication, devotion, and sacrificial service to the school.

She acknowledged that though they were children at the time, she recalled these things. "Most of us still remember those who gave us the solid foundation, which has helped us today. So this is what today is all about – to show gratitude and appreciation to our founders, benefactors and teachers, who raised and taught us."

Osaretin Demuren is an old girl who was the first National President of SMAGOGA, initiator of the project and facilitator. About N9 million was raised at the time.

She told The Guardian that they are grateful to the founders of the

school for doing their job, which is a far cry from what obtains in Nigeria today; where people seek and place personal gains and self-interest above all else.

“We also thank God that many of us had good role models to mentor and tutor us. In my time was unarguably the best Girls’ Secondary School in the Old Mid Western/Bendel State. It was not only number one in terms of education and examination results, but it instilled the right moral and ethical values in us. There is no doubt that standards have dropped significantly. However, in spite of this drop in standards, St. Maria Goretti today remains one of the top schools in Edo State.”

Engr. Christy Adelowo (nee Jacobs), also National President who actually started the construction of the building said the old girls were inspired to take up the responsibility of providing these facilities because of its desire to give back to its Alma mater that made them and to contribute their quota to improving the educational standard of the school.

On her part, Barrister (Mrs.) Pat Ogedegbe (nee Okoro) also National President, who continued work on the project said the laboratories will be used to prepare the students for Science education especially for those who would like to pursue science related careers in medicine and other allied medical professions, engineering etc.

“They were built, furnished and equipped to meet WAEC standards. Each laboratory has the capacity to seat 100 students at a time.”

Also, the Vice-President, Mrs. Philipa Akpata lamented that the taking over of the school by Government in the late seventies was responsible for the downward spiral of the school. However, as a means of arresting the trend, the Old Girls Association has appealed to the State Government to return the management of the School to the Catholic Diocese of Benin/Our Lady of Apostles Sisters. This will no doubt mark a positive turn around in the fortunes of the school”.

The Old girls are grateful for the effort of Governor of Edo State, Adams Oshiomhole in restoring some of the decayed and derelict infrastructure of the school.

Before now, the old girls had intervened in the other areas, namely, provision of water borehole, built water system toilets and rehabilitated old ones, installed befitting gates for the school, rehabilitated broken down fences and helped in the general maintenance of the school among other things.