

It is a great honour to once again be expressing gratitude in yet another Iriji, we remain grateful to God and we acknowledge his presence here today in all that we do.

I will also like to acknowledge and welcome all that are present here today to celebrate with us.

Celebration many say is an outward expression of gratitude and that is exactly what we intend to do here today. Our ancestors were predominantly farmers by profession and yam was the most important crop for our people and as such a traditional ceremony and celebration of the said most important crop was deemed the best way to show gratitude to God for a successful planting season.

Throughout the history of the Iriji, the thanks giving to God has always been accompanied by a request for same or better in the future. So as we show our appreciation and gratitude for all that the lord has done for us we pray and strongly believe that he will do even more in the following year and for that we are already grateful.

We in ICA have a lot to be thankful for in the last year, as we went about our own planting and harvesting here in Aberdeen. Key amongst these is the health and wellbeing of ourselves and our family and friends. The harmony that we have continued to enjoy and the benefits that brings to us as a group is something that we also appreciate and remain thankful for.

We are also very grateful for the very idea of ICA, this idea that has afforded us the great opportunity to serve and be served by each other in what can best be described as a mastermind alliance of people working together for the general welfare and benefit of each other and the local community as a whole.

To everyone here we welcome you and we encourage you all to remain thankful and hopeful in every situation. Things are always as good as we think they are and our lives and the things we enjoy today are there and available mostly through the efforts and labours other people and for that we should be grateful. Someone gave birth to us and others invented the millions of things that make our lives possible today.

Let me please use this opportunity to specially appreciate the efforts of the Events committee who made the impossible possible as you can see, they insisted that no matter the oil price and the effect that was having on the entire city of Aberdeen, Ndigbo will never fail to show their gratitude to God.

They say that circumstance can never change a man rather it reveals him; you guys and many others in the various ICA committees have done very well. Every single ICA member has also shown what they are individually made of in their support of ICA activities and in supporting ICA's overriding objective of peace, harmony and unity through selfless sharing and giving of their time, opinion, support and other things of value for the benefit of all regardless.

I will like to close by praying that in these challenging times, we will find the courage and boldness to try new things and that what so ever our hands shall find to do, we will give our

best and if we are persistent we can never fail. Let's not be too scared to risk good productive things as everything in life is risky, even life itself is so risky that no one ever gets out of it alive. So let's all endeavour to make the most of opportunities like this to have as much fun as we can, whilst remaining grateful for all we have, all we used to have and all that we intend to get.

Thank you all.

Obinna Ugwu BEng, MSc, MBA, CEng MIMechE

(Okpolu Ibe Mkpa).