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CHIEF DR. I. CARLTON FAULK

Ekom doo ndito ete – Welcome my brothers and sisters!

This phrase is a native cry of the people of Nigeria and it is reflective of the greeting received by Chief Dr. I. Carlton Faulk who entered the kingdom of God on March 8.

You will hear of a leader extradinare – a father (grand and beyond), a husband, a committed local leader, yes – even a General Officer who lived and loved as one of the very best of us.

A brief chronicling of some of Dr. Faulk’s major accomplishments: wrote the original most heralded lay manual; created the lay logo we use today; made the issuance of charters, lay pins and lay cards prevalent; championed lay speaking and lay commitment; established the platform that lead to successful intergration of Stewardess, Stewards, & Ushers at the connectional level; paved the pathway for the Graham/Webb Scholarship fund; and elevated the connectional presence of the Lay Institute.

But, listen more closely and you will hear echos of a great – largely unheralded work that should stir our consciousness.

Listen then, and you will hear a story of a boy happening upon thousands upon thousands of starfish along a vast stretch of arrid ocean beach front. He begins tossing them one by one back into the ocean. As the sun beats down a gentleman approaches him and ask, “why are you tossing those starfish back into the ocean? You cannot save this entire beach of starfish.”

Undaunted and tossing yet another starfish back in the ocean – the little boy turns and exclaims, “I just saved that one”.

Now regarding the Chief’s work in Africa, I searched for the one word that best summarized his sojourn on the African soil.

It wasn't the word Chief though he was twice so annointed and ceremonilized as Ibibio Chief in Nigeria. It wasn't the word education though he gave generously to scholarship and to his school even after his retirement as General Officer. It wasn't the word trainer though he greatly led in precept and example for an entire civilization. It wasn't the word dedication though he made his way there some 25 different years out of a consecutive 26 missing only 2005 – a year of bypass surgery.

The word is “children”. It's the kids!

He never knew if the next child educated through a Faulk scholarship or by the Faulk school would be the next President, a pioneer in medicine, a beloved school teacher, or maybe just a great mom or dad.

He knew that though he could not provide for all the children of the world, he could save one – which became tens, which became hundreds, which became thousands.

He knew what he wanted to accomplish and directed his resources and energies toward that overriding goal – “We (referring to himself and to this General Secretary) give scholarships”, he would crow.

Almost never did he deny the children.

His exacting and disciplined standards survive him today and are yet alive in West Africa.

Dr. Faulk led the people as a twice ceremonilized Chief, a leading trainer & educator. However, most importantly, he led them as a father/husband who knew the value of the success of one's children.

He believed this success was best achieved through education.

Despite my own best intentions to resist, I myself was lead to open two additional schools educating nearly 400 children to combine with more than 300 from the Dr. I. Carlton Faulk Nursery and Primary School – which school has been educating hundreds per year since 1989.

And even though, like most of us, Chief Faulk's ancestors never received the land and blessings promised to us by this nation of the United States – his adopted native or “motherland” as he called it – dained to grant him a singular honor only one week prior to his death in the Village of Ikot Ndua Iman – Onna LGA – Akwa Ibom State.

The Village Council of Ikot Ndua Iman did transfer and convey some forty (40) acres of land for the construction and operation of the new Chief Dr. I. Carlton Faulk Technical School.

And though no mule was conveyed in this transfer it did come with the muscle, the mentality, and the morality of the community (the village of the people which is the vitality of our African mission).

Though Dr. Faulk never saw these actual plans we have the opportunity to make the dream bigger than the dreamer himself – that the reach exceeds the grasp is for what is heaven.

It is written – ‘there is a friend that sticketh closer than any brother’. Obong Emem – Prince of Peace!!!! Sleep well, my friend.