Thank you DVC Academics for your introduction and for your academic leadership.

Your Eminence John Cardinal Njue, Archbishop of Nairobi, Pro-Chancellor of CUEA and Chief Guest for this Convocation,

Our Deputy Vice Chancellors,

Principals of Constituent Colleges,

Rector, Bakanja Seminary,

Deans and Directors,

CUEA Faculty and Staff,

CUEA Students (old and new)

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning.

1. Your Eminence, this formal ceremony, which marks the beginning of CUEA’s 2016-2017 academic year is a fitting occasion for employees and students of the University to come together in preparation for the new academic year. But it is also a moment of thanksgiving to God for leading, protecting, and sustaining the University for all its 34 years of existence, first as CHIEA and now as CUEA. In a particular way, we
thank Him for enabling CUEA to successfully conclude the 2015 – 2016 academic year with all its trials and challenges. We look into the future with hope and determination because of the opportunities and promises that it brings.

2. On behalf of the entire CUEA family, I would like to convey our gratitude to Your Eminence for accepting to grace this event as our Chief Guest. We as a University would also like to congratulate you for being appointed to Vatican Secretariat for Communications, the department that oversees all of the Vatican’s official communication. Congratulations, your Eminence.

3. Let me also thank Your Eminence for presiding over today’s Eucharistic Celebration, for your inspiring homily and also for the reflection that you are about to give us. I would like to assure your Eminence that these reflections will guide the University as it sets about performing its core business during the Academic Year 2016 – 2017.

4. Your Eminence, our Chief Guest, Looking back to the just concluded academic year, we have every reason to breathe a sigh of relief. It was a trying year in which the University underwent extensive organizational restructuring that has affected each and every one of CUEA’s staff. The impact of that shake up is still ongoing.

As you are all aware, the University’s top management has been reorganized in its entirety. With this in mind, I ask each and every one
of you for your support and prayers as we in the top management take up the mantle of steering CUEA to the heights of institutional and academic excellence.

5. The vision of CUEA is: “to become a world class University producing transformative leaders for Church and Society.” This target has not changed and is not about to change. It is a vision that can be realized, will be realized, if we all commit ourselves to make it happen and if we all come together as one family and work as a team, a winning team. But we can only do that if we care for one another, if we are mindful of one another.

6. John 13:35 tells us that by loving one another, everyone will know that we are Jesus’ disciples. At CUEA, we must live our communal life so well that anyone who walks into this campus will know without being told, that here we live “the Jesus experience”. Through our witness of life, (which is our first core value), people must see and perceive that CUEA is an institution where students, faculty and staff encounter Jesus, the Lord. By coming together in His love, and by laboring selflessly in His vineyard, we will make our University a truly world class institution. I don’t say it will be easy to reach world class status. No. That calls for unwavering dedication, but it also calls for unity of purpose. For this university to become the giant that it ought to be, we must sacrifice many things, including our own egos and personal pride. If we have wronged others or been wronged by them in any way in the
past, let us forgive or accept forgiveness for the benefit of CUEA and let us come together to make our University truly great. TEAM CUEA, let us stand united as we work hard to make ours the best University not only in Kenya but also in the AMECEA REGION AND BEYOND.

7. The Catholic University of Eastern Africa’s mission is, “To promote excellence in research, teaching and community service by preparing morally upright leaders based on the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church.”

Guided by our mission, CUEA needs to not only maintain but improve and keep improving its quality of education. Musicians normally say that as an artist, you are only as good as your last performance. We in CUEA should also tell ourselves that when it comes to quality of education, we are only as good as; our last trimester, our last class lecture, our last academic seminar, our last publication, our last batch of graduates.

8. Today, the world is increasingly turning to Information Technology and we as a University can no longer take it for granted. Although CUEA has embraced ICT in its teaching, especially through the m-Elimu platform which is being used for our Open and Distance e Learning (ODeL) mode of study, its full impact is still to be felt. We must not only use ICT. We must also let it drive our business. We need to take our use of ICT a notch higher by using the m-Elimu tool to assist us in
teaching and learning in all our programs. If all our lecturers embrace the use of ICT in their teaching, it will make it easier for students to access reading material for their lectures, motivate them to read ahead, contribute and participate more in the lectures.

9. The University needs to improve communication from both academic and administrative perspectives. ICT can play an important role in this endeavor. CUEA has been building its infrastructure in readiness for Video Conferencing for a couple of years now. It is time we conclude this exercise by making sure that by the end of this academic year we are not only compliant in the technology, but are also using it to improve our teaching and administration.

10. In addition, CUEA is at an advanced stage of building a Media Center in the Learning Resource Center. Through our collaboration with Loyola University-Chicago, CUEA has been able to acquire a rich collection of video cameras, computers and editing drives for the Center.

The aim of this Media Center is to produce material on justice and peace for sensitization purposes. Through this center, we also aim to prepare lecture videos which will be used in our distance e-learning mode of study, and produce media footage for the promotion of our University to the outside world. As can be seen, through ICT and the Media Center, CUEA is moving towards the full digitization of its operations.
11. Another important pillar of CUEA is research. CUEA’s restructuring process has led to the strengthening of our Research Department. We now have a Directorate of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Training. By putting research, innovation and postgraduate training in one basket, we have made it much easier for our students and staff to use the skills they have acquired during their academic life, to come up with innovative solutions to challenges we face today in Africa and the world at large. These challenges may have been identified by CUEA students or staff in their academic life or by organizations and institutions that may need CUEA’s expertise to research on areas of interest. This Directorate also represents CUEA’s chosen niche, which is excellence in graduate studies. This is the single area in which the University seeks recognition as an authority and an outstanding center of excellence. By placing the graduate students in this Directorate, we not only give them the recognition and attention that is rightfully theirs, but we also create opportunities for them to harness the skills of CUEA’s highly experienced Research unit.

12. In CUEA, innovation has been given an avenue to go beyond research. We recently launched a Business Incubation Center that brought to our attention the fact that we have accomplished entrepreneurs among us, some of whom have started successful multi-million businesses such as GAMU, an e-commerce website and cultural gallery that was founded and is owned by two of our students. The University will seek
ways of supporting and strengthening these efforts.

13. In line with the University’s concern for placing the student at the center of our operations, and our keenness to explore ways of adding value to the students’ experience at CUEA, our University has also looked into providing more opportunities for our students to have a feel of the job market. CUEA and Safaricom Ltd have come together to build a Student Center that will house Safaricom shops. The shops will employ CUEA students as interns. Students will also have the opportunity of opening their own shops which will help them develop their business acumen.

14. AMECEA’s University industry is growing. Several National Catholic Universities have been formed in the region; these include the Catholic University of South Sudan, Saint Augustine University of Tanzania, Uganda Martyrs University and Zambia Catholic University. A number of Diocesan Universities are also either in operation or in the making. In addition, there are also Congregational Universities such as Strathmore and Tangaza that are already established or at an advanced stage of being so. As a graduate center of excellence, CUEA is in a unique position to contribute to Higher Education in the region by helping build capacity and providing mentorship to enable the proper running of these universities for the benefit of the Church and the society. We will, therefore, continue to mentor other Catholic Universities in the AMECEA region and beyond. To do this successfully,
however, we must establish ourselves as the undisputed kings of virtue and excellence.

15. As we in CUEA pursue academic excellence, we realize that partnerships are key, for no man is an island, and in the global village that is today’s world, neither is a University. This is why our Academic Linkages and the International Relations wing of our Communications and International Relations Department must continue working on partnerships with like-minded academic and non-academic institutions.

16. Partnership with like-minded institutions is what made us come together with International Business Machines, IBM, who decided to honor CUEA by housing one of Africa’s two IBM Research Labs here at our main campus. Although we have enjoyed some small benefits from this collaboration, we are yet to fully exploit our relationship with the research lab. This year, we will change that as we seek greater benefits.

17. Our students also need to add value to their education by building on professional skills which, when combined with the academic education they acquire in CUEA, makes them even more marketable in the job market. In this spirit, we have come together with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) to run a joint parallel course that will enable our students acquire additional professional skills in accountancy. More of such partnerships should be pursued.
18. Throughout my address to you today, you have heard me talk about CUEA being an international University because of its regional and African reach. I say this because our students emanate from over thirty-two countries in Africa. We need to take advantage of this by posturing CUEA as the University to go to regionally, continentally and also globally. This can be done by reaching out to our alumni across the globe asking them to look back to their academic home and help make CUEA a truly World Class University. The University Management is already working towards achieving this goal.

19. We as a University have to accept that the world is continually changing. That is why our academic programs ought to be reviewed every so often. The review of CUEA’s programs will help us make them more relevant and demand driven. This is why I am asking our DVC Academic Affairs and Research, and the Academic Deans to review these programs so that by the end of this academic year, we will have made them more relevant and responsive to the needs of our students and to the society.

20. CUEA’s Law program has undergone review in the past year. Today the law program boasts of having a niche in regional integration, which is relevant globally because that is how the world now interacts, through regional economic communities and political unions. These
communities include the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), while the Unions include the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). By doing this, the Faculty of Law and the Institute for Regional Integration (IRID) have opened a window that will entrench the University as a major player in the study of regional integration in Eastern Africa.

For the past one year CUEA has worked with the Council of Legal Education (CLE) in improving the Law program. The University has complied with all that CLE has asked of us and this was depicted by the positive audit CLE carried out in CUEA’s Law program over two months ago. Although it took a very long time to get to the last stage of the process of accreditation, we thank God that even as we sit here in this Convocation today, the Council for Legal Education is finally on the campus to carry out their final inspection and hopefully validate the findings of the audit. The University awaits with bated breath the outcome of today’s Council inspection and eagerly looks forward to the renewal of its Law program accreditation in the coming weeks.

21. When the Japanese say that one is living in interesting times, what they mean to say is that times are difficult. In the recent past CUEA has lived in interesting times. However, under the wise guidance of the University Council, CUEA has faced these tough times head on. We
have a restructured staff, a reconstituted University Management Board and a restructured top management. From where I sit today I can tell you that with all that we have put in place and if we fulfill all that we have set out to do in this Academic Year, and I know we will, CUEA will emerge from these challenges a stronger University on the clear path to becoming World Class. In order to ensure we are on course on our flight from the darkness of the Cave to the bright light of the midday sun, however, three crossroads will frame our 2016-17 academic year.

i). Number One, the Financial stability of our institution is key. We will strive to ensure that our financial systems are sound, stable, and in compliance with integrity and all accounting principles. We will also continue sealing any leakages that could be responsible for any financial losses to the University. At the same time, we shall prioritize our expenditure to ensure the most prudent use of the little money that we have or collect. Here, determination of priorities will be crucial. Finally, we must all come out and help the University to raise as much money as possible by strengthening our non-tuition income so as to enable her to run her business without disruptions.

ii). Number Two: Customer Care and handling of all our stakeholders is crucial. While students are our most obvious stakeholders, we
must also extend CARE, love, concern and courtesy to all other stakeholders, including faculty, staff, parents and guardians, suppliers, visitors, and everyone else with whom we do business. This will call for a change of attitude in the way we conduct our business. Very specifically, it will call for a change of attitude and improved communication by all staff of the University. The benefits of treating everyone with courtesy, respect and dignity are too obvious to spell out in this convocation. But so too are the consequences of sloppy or nonexistent customer care. Tied to this goal is also the decline of our student numbers. Through good customer care and student care, we could easily raise our student population from the current 6000 to 10,000. However, in this academic year, we aim to increase our population by only 1000 to 7000. Is it possible? Yes, it is. Can we do it? Yes, We can. Shall we do it? That depends on each one of you!

iii). Number three: Staff Welfare. We must work hard to not only attract but to also retain qualified staff. We cannot afford to lose more of our staff including those in senior positions. Despite the difficulties we are going through, we must begin to do something for the welfare of faculty and staff. Given our situation, we certainly cannot do much that will translate in increased salaries or allowances. However, that must be the ultimate goal in the long run. My personal ambition is to achieve a salary increase, no
matter how small, for all members of staff by the time, my 2-year term comes to an end! That way we can point the way for future regimes.

In the short run, however, we will be looking to see what small concessions are possible and what communal benefits can be availed that will add value, reassure staff and help raise the morale of our employees. I have to reiterate that in the initial stages these benefits may not translate to an increase in what ends up in your pockets. In that connection, I consider timely payment of salaries, the implementation of the new medical scheme, and enhancement of security to be early signs of better things to come! But our students must not be left behind. We shall be looking into ways of having them medically covered and of increasing the number of scholarships available to needy students. We will also turn our attention to the provision of more sports and student activities in this academic year.

I thank you all for coming to this convocation, for the services you rendered to our University in the last academic year and for the great contribution that I know you will certainly make in the new academic year that is now beginning.

May the Lord God bless us all, may He bless our beloved University and
may He bless AMECEA.

Prof. Justus Mbae,
Vice Chancellor

August 25, 2016