Vice-Chancellor's Speech

Rev. Canon Prof. James Kombo

VICE CHANCELLOR

SPEECH BY REV. CANON PROF. JAMES KOMBO

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY 34TH GRADUATION CEREMONY

FRIDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2025 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE AT MAIN CAMPUS.

Theme: "Empowering Ethical Leaders through Faith, Innovation, and Lifelong Learning"

Opening / Salutation

(Pause 1–2 sec after each line for recognition of dignitaries)

SALUTATIONS:

1. **The University Chancellor,** Hon. Prof. Margaret Kobia,
2. **Guest Speaker,** Ms. Juliana Rotich, Fintech Leader and Tech Entrepreneur, Chief Executive Officer Electronic Citizen Solutions Company
3. **The Chairman Board of Trustee and the Moderator of the 24th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa,** The Rt. Revd. Thegu Mutahi
4. **The Council Chairman and the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya,** His Grace the Most Revd. Dr. Jackson Ole Sapit,
5. **Members of the University Governing Council and Board of Trustee**
6. **Members of the University Management Board and Senate,**
7. **Members of Faculty and Staff,**
8. **The Graduating Class of 2025,**
9. **Distinguished Guests,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

(Pause 2 sec, smile at graduands)

It is my great honor to stand before you on this momentous day as we celebrate the **34th Graduation Ceremony of St. Paul's University.**

This occasion marks a culmination of years of dedication, sacrifice, and hard work by our **2472 graduands**, as well as the unwavering support of their families, faculty, and mentors.

To the graduating class of 2025 — congratulations!

(Pause 2 sec, look at graduands)

You have reached a milestone that symbolizes not only academic excellence but also personal growth, resilience, and faith.

Before I make my remarks, allow me to recognize and appreciate all our honored guests who have joined us to witness and grace this special occasion. A full list of our distinguished guests is published in the graduation programme on page 21.

(Mention all guests by name)

Institutional Growth and Transformation

Madam Chancellor, St. Paul's University continues to thrive as a center of excellence in faith-based higher education, combining spiritual formation, academic rigor, and innovation.

In an era defined by rapid technological transformation, we have embraced digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance our efficiency, responsiveness, and educational impact. We are digitizing all university operations to become fully e-compliant and have developed an AI Policy to guide the ethical integration of AI in teaching, research, and administration.

Additionally, St. Paul's University is among the few institutions in the region with an **accredited, state-of-the-art Virtual Campus** — a testament to our commitment to flexible, accessible, and future-ready education. This innovation features:

- **Remote teaching and learning classrooms** that support Competency-Based Education (CBE),
- **An e-compliant boardroom** that facilitates interactive hybrid learning for long-distance students, and
- **A modern multimedia studio** that enhances digital content creation for teaching and research.

These strategic investments underscore our vision to make education not only more flexible and accessible but also more impactful in an increasingly digital world.
Our commitment to lifelong learning ensures that education at St. Paul's is not confined to classrooms but continues throughout life — empowering our graduates to adapt, grow, and lead in a changing world.

Through strengthened supervision frameworks and the integration of digital research management tools, we have enhanced the efficiency and quality of our postgraduate research journey. This progress demonstrates our unwavering commitment to academic excellence and to supporting our scholars in completing their studies with distinction and purpose.

Strategic Direction 2025–2030

Madam Chancellor, to steer our continued growth and transformation, the University recently launched its **Strategic Plan 2025–2030** — our blueprint for progress and sustainability.

This plan positions St. Paul's University to thrive in an evolving higher education landscape while remaining firmly anchored in our Christian ethos.

It represents a shared commitment to **innovation, inclusivity, sustainability, digital transformation, and ethical leadership**, serving as a living guide for our priorities and decisions over the next five years.

Financial Strength and Partnerships

Madam Chancellor, while many universities in Kenya face financial difficulties, **St. Paul's University stands financially strong**.

This stability is a testament to prudent leadership, transparency, and strategic management. Our strong financial foundation continues to attract **partners and collaborators** who share our mission and values.

In recent years, University collaborations have grown by more than **70%**, strengthening our academic and research impact.

A key driver for internationalization is our growing network of global partnerships, which has opened new pathways for staff and student exchanges with universities across Europe and the United States. These collaborations continue to enrich our teaching, research, and cultural engagement, while positioning St. Paul's University as a globally connected and competitive institution. In November, seventy-four staff and students will participate in an academic and cultural exchange in France — an initiative that reflects our ongoing commitment to nurturing global citizenship, innovation, and research excellence.

Research and Innovation

Madam Chancellor, our research footprint continues to expand through competitive grants and global collaborations.

We established a regional hub dedicated to advancing Christian leadership at the intersection of faith, science, and societal transformation. This initiative seeks to equip leaders with the knowledge and perspective to engage meaningfully with emerging scientific and technological developments while remaining grounded in strong theological and ethical foundations. Through this hub, St. Paul's University has become a thought leader in promoting dialogue between science and theology — fostering harmony between faith, reason, and the stewardship of creation. It also provides a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and public engagement across Africa, positioning St. Paul's as a key voice in shaping conversations around sustainability, innovation, and moral responsibility in the modern world

To further strengthen innovation and enterprise development, the **University Senate has established an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub** to nurture creativity, support start-up ideas, and promote research commercialization among students and faculty. This initiative will serve as a catalyst for job creation, social impact, and sustainable development in alignment with our mission to empower ethical and innovative leaders.

I am also delighted to note that one of our distinguished faculty members recently received an **Honorary Doctor of Divinity (Honoris Causa)** from Yale University's Berkeley Divinity School, recognizing her outstanding scholarship and service. **(Pause)**

Such honors affirm the high caliber of our faculty and St. Paul's University's growing global recognition

Centres of Excellence and Community Engagement

At St. Paul's University, we believe transformation happens not only in classrooms but also within communities. Our academic centres of excellence continue to play a vital role in promoting research, innovation, and social impact. One of our flagship centres, established under the School of Theology in response to the need for peace and reconciliation, has become a beacon of interfaith dialogue and community transformation. Over the years, it has offered scholarships, facilitated intercommunity workshops, and created valuable opportunities for our students and staff to participate in peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives. Its leadership has been recognized both nationally and internationally for championing peace, inclusion, and harmony — a living testimony that St. Paul's University continues to stand as a force for good in society.

Vibrant Student Life and Holistic Formation

Madam Chancellor, St. Paul's University takes pride in a **vibrant student life beyond the classroom**.

Our students excel in **sports**, regularly attaining top positions at national competitions. At the **14th Edition of the KUSA National Women Games** in March 2025, our teams won **four medals** — one gold, one silver, and two bronze — across Wood-ball, Darts, and Badminton.

Beyond sports, students shine in **Drama and Music Festivals**, consistently ranking **1st, 2nd, or 3rd nationally**.

The University currently hosts **25 active clubs** engaged in:

- Mentorship programs
- Community service
- Environmental conservation
- CSR initiatives

These co-curricular activities complement academics, ensuring students develop **holistically** as ethical, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Closing Remarks

Madam Chancellor, as we celebrate our graduands today, we reaffirm our vision to produce ethical, innovative, and globally competitive leaders grounded in faith and purpose.

As the Apostle Paul reminds us in **Colossians 3:23–24**, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

May this scripture guide our graduates to lead with integrity, to innovate with courage, and to learn continuously in service to God and humanity.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the **University Council**, **Board of Trustees**, **University Management**, **Faculty**, **Staff**, and **Students** for their dedication and commitment.

To the **Graduating Class of 2025**, go forth and serve as **ambassadors of faith, innovation, and lifelong learning**. The world awaits your impact.

May God guide your steps, and may His favor continue to shine upon St. Paul's University.

Congratulations, and God bless you all.