TRIBUTE TO REV. JOSEPH OKAFOR MOKOKWU (DIOKPA), A MAN WHO CAME, SAW AND CONQUERED.

According to Ray Bradbury, "Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine"

Marlon James seems to agree with Ray when he, James Lamented that "there are things about death that the dead cannot tell you: the vulgarity of it". Death indeed is vulgar.

In the night of 4th March 2021 time fell asleep in the aftemoon sunshine of Diokpa Joseph Okafor Mokogwu. But the event that led to the final episode convinced me of the truth in the statement of shusaku Endo that "in this life there are missions which can only be accomplished through death" .

In the last three months before his death, Diokpa Mokogwu told everybody around him that he had finished his assignment and that the only job left is to enter into the presence of his creator. His chorus was "why is he not allowing me to enter. I am already at the door". To this I comically replied him: "Diokpa wait; when the man who has the right key comes, he will open the door and you will enter". And so, when the man with the right key to the mansion appeared on the 4th of March Diokpa entered peacefully without the characteristic rustle and hustle that we are used to in Nigeria. Rest in perfect peace, Diokpa.

People who know the history of the Dutch are used to the statement "God made man and man made Holland" If you permit me to parody this statement I would say "God made Diokpa Mokogwu and Diokpa Mokogwu made Wilfred Mokogwu (me). He carried me physically, emotionally, educationally, financially through life. In my early life, I was an infantile valetudinarian. When others were going to farm they would suggest leaving me alone at home but he (Diokpa) would refuse and instead carried me to farm and carried me back in addition to his yam load.

It was not surprising therefore that when our father died in 1956, leaving three of us under his care as the first son of the family, he took me along to all the stations he was posted to as a Baptist teacher: Ogwashi-liku, Ute Alohen, Oligie-Ota, Igbanki etc. Diokpa could not go to the University because of me and my younger brothers. We had become men when he went to Headmasters Institute Benin City and later took degree courses through correspondence. Because of Diokpa. I did not suffer any of the deprivations that fatherless children suffer. On my arrival home after my graduation in 1971, Diokpa had built and furnished two rooms for me; a brand new bicycle was waiting for me; he took over all the traditional aspects of my marriage: how many can I talk (Ngaekwuone).

The discipline he inculcated in me was invaluable.

Hilary Mantel said that "A man who doesn't understand his position in the world must learn it or forfeit it". Diokpa understood his position in the world. He was a born leader and he had to lead a united family. He scored high in this aspect.

Stephen king Observed that "Busy hands are happy hands" No hands can be busier than Diokpa's hands. He was a teacher, a pastor, a farmer, a hunter, a Builder, a Counsellor, a Chronicler, a Purveyor of noble thoughts. Diokpa, you are gone physically from us but I am comfortable in the assurances of Hilary Mantel that:

"you can have silence full of words. A lute retains in its bowl the notes it has played. The viol, in its strings, holds a concord. A shriveled petal can hold its scent; and an empty house when the owners have gone out can still be loud with ghosts." A million deaths of you cannot dim my loving memory of you. REST IN PERFECT PEACE, DIOKPA

WILFRED OKONKWO MOKOGWU