



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr GEORGE ROBERT FURNESS TROUP
AMBASSADOR OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 9 June 2011*

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican today and to accept the letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of New Zealand to the Holy See. I thank you for the kind greeting which you conveyed from Governor-General Sir Anand Satyanand, and I would ask you kindly to assure him of my good wishes and prayers for the well-being of the nation.

I take this opportunity to express once more my solidarity with all those still suffering from the devastating earthquake which struck Christchurch on 22 February last. Conscious of the considerable work of reconstruction on which you and your fellow citizens have embarked, I am confident that the impressive outpouring of generosity and the countless acts of charity and goodness which were seen in the wake of the disaster will contribute in no small part to meeting the material and moral challenges of the immense task now before you.

In your address you kindly made reference to the cordial relations existing between the Holy See and New Zealand. By its presence in the international community, the Holy See seeks to promote universal values which are rooted in the Gospel message of the God-given dignity of each man and woman, the unity of the human family and the need for justice and solidarity to govern relations between individuals, communities and nations. These values are deeply inscribed in the culture which gave birth to New Zealand's political and legal institutions. A cornerstone of that heritage remains respect for the rights of freedom of religion and freedom of worship, to the benefit of all. These rights, enshrined in the legal traditions to which you are heirs, are proper to each person because they are inherent in the humanity which is common to us all. Through the

promotion of these freedoms, society is better equipped to respond to profound political and social challenges in a way consonant with humanity's deepest aspirations.

Due to its geographical position, your country is able to assist in the development of smaller, more distant countries with fewer resources. Some neighbouring countries, including the Small Island Developing States, look to New Zealand as an example of political stability, rule of law and high economic and social standards. They also look to you as a source of assistance, encouragement and support as they develop their own institutions. This gives your country a particular moral responsibility. Faithful to the best of its traditions, New Zealand is called to use its position of influence for the peace and stability of the region, the encouragement of mature and stable democratic institutions, and the fostering of authentic human rights and sustainable economic development. The desire for development poses a number of important challenges concerning the environment, some of them with serious consequences for people's well-being and livelihoods, and especially for the poor. I would like to encourage the work being done to promote models of development at home and abroad that reflect a truly human ecology, are economically sustainable and fulfil our duty as stewards of creation (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 48; 51).

The Catholic Church in your country, drawn from the populations both ancient and new of your islands, strives to play her part in knitting together a truly multicultural society with a sense of mutual respect, shared purpose and solidarity, for the peace and prosperity of all. She wishes to serve the common good by bringing the spiritual and moral wisdom of the faith to bear upon the important ethical questions of the day. In a particular way, the Church wishes always to nurture the greatest respect for the whole human person, defending the inalienable right to life from conception until natural death, promoting a stable family environment and providing education.

Regarding this last point, the Church has always placed great emphasis on the education of young people, recognizing it as an essential component in the preparation and development of individuals for the good, so that they might take their proper place in society. In addition to the pursuit of excellence in academic studies, athletics and the arts, Catholic schools are concerned above all with the moral and spiritual formation of their pupils. The enduring attraction of educational institutions steeped in authentic Christian values demonstrates the perennial desire of parents to have their children prepared for life in the best possible way in a healthy environment that will bring out the best in young people as they prepare for life's challenges. I am confident that your Government will continue to support parents in their role as the primary educators of their children, by ensuring that the faith-based education system remains accessible to those who wish to avail themselves of it for the good of their children and of society at large.

Finally, Mr Ambassador, let me take this opportunity to reiterate my good wishes as you begin your mission and to assure you that the Roman Curia stands ready to assist you. Upon you and your family and upon all the people of New Zealand, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

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