



The Holy See

Your Excellency, Madam Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. As I prepare to return to Rome at the conclusion of this Pastoral Visit to Curaçao, I wish to thank all of you for your kind welcome and generous hospitality. Although my stay among you has been very brief, I am indeed grateful to God for this opportunity to come to the Netherlands Antilles, to meet with numerous distinguished representatives of your political and religious life, and to celebrate the Eucharist with the Catholics of the Diocese of Willemstad. Throughout this afternoon and evening I have been privileged to experience the gentle warmth and solid virtue of this island people. I have sensed as well your desire to build a strong and vibrant society, a society of material prosperity and moral virtue, a society of which coming generations will rightly be proud. In all your efforts, may you never forget that the greatness of a people will never be measured by its wealth or power, but by the degree of its concern for the needs of others, especially the weakest and the least fortunate.

2. As you face the challenges which will determine the future of your society, do not be tempted to neglect the poor, the voiceless and the troubled in your midst. Scripture promises that " he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully ". These words express a profound truth which governs the lives of both individuals and entire peoples. To the extent that you respect the law of God and place your neighbour's good above your own, you will experience a wealth that far exceeds any material calculation. In the end, it will be this spiritual wealth that will guarantee to each of you and to your entire society a lasting stability and a steady growth in unity, prosperity and peace.

Assuring you all once again of my prayers, I commend you and your families to the "goodness and loving kindness of God". May he bless you all! May he bless these islands with the peace that only he can give!

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