



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 28 November 1992

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Holy See. I gratefully recall the warm hospitality I received from your fellow-citizens in 1985, and I would now ask you kindly to convey my greetings and best wishes to His Excellency President Hassanali, to the Prime Minister and to all the people of your beloved country.

During my visit to Trinidad and Tobago, I expressed my esteem for the way in which people of different races, religions and traditions live there in harmony. The human family's unity, based on the fact that each person is created in the image and likeness of God, requires that all diversity should serve to strengthen solidarity among people. The State and the various communities which make up a society have an obligation to defend this diversity but also to ensure that it enriches national life. If self-serving interests, prejudice and intolerance gain the upper hand, human dignity is compromised and the work of authentic development is impeded (Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1991*). I am especially grateful that, by reason of the spirit of trust and respect which characterize your country, members of different religions actively cooperate in promoting the common good.

I note with appreciation Your Excellency's reference to the enshrinement in your country's Constitution of the principles of equality, social justice and respect for fundamental human rights. The future of humanity is intimately linked to the way in which individuals, groups and nations will effectively be guided by these principles. For the Catholic Church, the central principle in a correct

view of the social order is the God-given dignity of the human person, which makes each one the subject of inalienable rights not conferred from outside but arising from the person's very nature (Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1988*, 1). In such a perspective a development limited only to the economic dimension is clearly doomed to failure, since the availability of goods and an abundance of technical resources, while desirable as means to a better standard of living, cannot of themselves satisfy the individual's yearning for transcendence. In the life of a nation great attention must be given to respect for life, for the family, for justice, for freedom in the political sphere, for the freedom to profess and practise religious beliefs. All of these are values which go beyond the economic and material sphere, and require a moral and ethical vision on the part of those responsible for public policy.

I share Your Excellency's distress at the harm to individuals and communities caused by drug and substance abuse. Drug dependence is indicative of a collapse of moral and spiritual values, a disintegration that has affected even society's most basic and treasured cell, the family. Where the breakdown of the family is most pronounced, the drug problem is most acute. Since the family is the most crucial institution in forming the character of the young, the State must appropriately support its role as the primary teacher of moral values. The scourge of drug trafficking and addiction will be eradicated only if all social institutions valiantly work together to overcome the personal and social evils that lead to this tragedy. For her part, the Catholic Church, in teaching her message of hope, encourages initiatives which lead drug users and their families to a rediscovery of their human dignity.

As Your Excellency has graciously noted, the Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago works zealously in the area of human promotion. The network of Catholic schools, hospitals and social service institutions testifies to the cooperative spirit of the Catholic faithful in providing a better future for themselves and their fellow-citizens. Because of their profound conviction regarding the universal brotherhood of all men and women as God's beloved children, Catholics and other believers are committed to fostering the common good in the context of a healthy and legitimate pride in their own country.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission as your nation's representative to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes and assure you that the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in fulfilling your duties. Upon you and all the beloved people of Trinidad and Tobago I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XV, 2 p.746-748.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1992 p.810-811.

L'Osservatore Romano 29.11.1992 p.10.

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