



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR. GILBERT RAMEZ CHAGOURY
AMBASSADOR OF SAINT LUCIA
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday 1 December 2005

Your Excellency,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican today and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Saint Lucia to the Holy See. I ask you kindly to convey to the Governor-General, Dame Pearlette Louisy, and the Prime Minister, Mr Kenny Anthony, my appreciation of their good wishes. I warmly reciprocate them and offer the Government and people of Saint Lucia the assurance of my prayers for the prosperity of the nation.

The Church's diplomatic relations, fruitfully exercised with your country for over twenty years, form part of her mission of service to the international community. They are specifically intended to promote the dignity of the human person and to encourage peace and harmony among the world's peoples. These essential conditions for progress in attaining the integral development of individuals and nations find their deepest meaning in the moral order established by God the Creator who seeks to draw all men and women into the fullness of his life. For this reason the Holy See speaks so insistently and fervently about respect for human dignity and about the fundamental importance of supporting the family as "the primary vital cell of society" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11).

Mr Ambassador, the sacred institution of marriage is vital to the well-being of every nation, including Saint Lucia. It is the indispensable foundation of family life and the primary source of cohesion within communities. In the face of traditions and trends which can devalue and even undermine marriage, a determined effort is required on the part of both civic and religious

authorities, working together, to ensure that stable and faithful domestic life is upheld and supported wholeheartedly. Indeed, any hope for renewal of society which does not adhere to God's plan for matrimony and the family is destined to founder, for it is there that the God-given dignity of every person is first realized and the self-esteem necessary for mature adult relationships is first experienced and nurtured (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 3).

Your Government's commitment to economic diversification and development of social infrastructure offers, particularly to the young generation, a future of confidence and optimism. Crucial to this vision is the creation of educational opportunities. Where schools function in a professional manner and are staffed by people of personal integrity, hope is offered to all and most especially to youth. Integral to such formation is religious instruction. Knowledge enlightened by faith, far from dividing communities, binds peoples together in the common search for truth which defines every human being as one who lives by belief (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 31). In this regard, the principle of religious freedom, when applied to the syllabus of religious instruction in schools, must include the right to teach the content of the Catholic faith and to facilitate participation in its various practices (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, 4).

The moral aspect of authentic economic development is also of fundamental importance to the well-being and peaceful progress of a nation. It is here that the demand for justice is satisfied (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 10). The right to meaningful work and an acceptable standard of living, the assurance of a fair distribution of goods and wealth, and the responsible use of natural resources all depend upon a concept of development which is not limited merely to satisfying material necessities. Instead, such a concept must also highlight the dignity of the human person – who is the proper subject of all progress – and thereby enhance the common good of all humanity. While such a goal certainly demands the support of the entire international community, it is also the case that much can be achieved at the level of regional initiatives. This requires that excessive nationalism be laid to rest so that the profound value of communal solidarity be permitted to find expression in local agreements conducive to regional economic and social cooperation.

As Your Excellency has kindly observed, the Church in Santa Lucia serves the nation considerably through her extensive educational and social apostolate. Faithful to her spiritual and humanitarian mission, she actively seeks to contribute to the advancement of the people. Among the many initiatives in which she is engaged is the battle against the trade and use of drugs. The will to foil this pernicious threat to the fabric of society, which fuels crime and violence and contributes to the physical and emotional destruction of many individuals and families, demands great political resolve, international cooperation, and the support of the whole community. I encourage your government in the efforts it is making to address this scourge and assure you that they have the full support of the Catholic faithful.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that your mission which you begin today will help to strengthen the

bonds of understanding and cooperation between Santa Lucia and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and your fellow citizens I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

**L'Osservatore Romano* 2.12.2005 p.6.

Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI, vol. I p.889-891.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English 2006 n. 6 p.9.

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