



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. NIGEL MARCUS BAKER
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE HOLY SEE**

Apostolic Palace, Castel Gandolfo

Friday, 9 September 2011

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Holy See. I am grateful for the warm greetings which you bring from Her Majesty The Queen and I ask you to convey my prayerful good wishes for Her health and prosperity. I am also pleased to send my cordial greetings to Her Majesty's Government and to all the British people.

The Holy See and the United Kingdom have enjoyed excellent relations in the thirty years that have passed since full diplomatic relations were established. The close bond between us was further strengthened last year during my Visit to your country, a unique occasion in the course of the shared history of the Holy See and the countries which today compose the United Kingdom. I would therefore like to begin my remarks by reiterating my gratitude to the British people for the warm welcome which I received during my stay. Her Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh received me most graciously and I was pleased to meet the leaders of the three main political parties and to discuss with them matters of common concern. As you know, a particular motive for my Visit was the Beatification of John Henry Cardinal Newman, a great Englishman whom I have admired for many years and whose raising to the altars was a personal wish fulfilled. I remain convinced of the relevance of Newman's insights regarding society, as the United Kingdom, Europe and the West in general today face challenges that he identified with remarkable prophetic clarity. It is my hope that a fresh awareness of his writings will bear new fruit among those searching for solutions to the political, economic and social questions of our age.

As you rightly remarked in your address, Mr Ambassador, the Holy See and the United Kingdom continue to share a common concern for peace among nations, the integral development of peoples throughout the world, especially the poorest and weakest, and the spread of authentic human rights, especially through the rule of law and fair participative government, with a special care for the needy and those whose natural rights are denied. On the subject of peace, I was very pleased to note the success of Her Majesty's recent Visit to the Republic of Ireland, an important milestone in the process of reconciliation that is happily becoming ever more firmly established in Northern Ireland, despite the unrest that occurred there during this past summer. I take this opportunity once again to encourage all who would resort to violence to put aside their grievances, and to seek instead a dialogue with their neighbours for the peace and prosperity of the whole community.

As you pointed out in your speech, your Government wishes to employ policies that are based on enduring values that cannot be simply expressed in legal terms. This is especially important in the light of events in England this summer. When policies do not presume or promote objective values, the resulting moral relativism, instead of leading to a society that is free, fair, just and compassionate, tends instead to produce frustration, despair, selfishness and a disregard for the life and liberty of others. Policy makers are therefore right to look urgently for ways to uphold excellence in education, to promote social opportunity and economic mobility, to examine ways to favour long-term employment and to spread wealth much more fairly and broadly throughout society. Moreover, the active fostering of the essential values of a healthy society, through the defence of life and of the family, the sound moral education of the young, and a fraternal regard for the poor and the weak, will surely help to rebuild a positive sense of one's duty, in charity, towards friends and strangers alike in the local community. Be assured that the Catholic Church in your country is eager to continue offering her substantial contribution to the common good through her offices and agencies, in accordance with her own principles and in the light of the Christian vision of the rights and dignity of the human person.

Looking further afield, Your Excellency has mentioned several areas where the Holy See and the United Kingdom have already agreed and worked together, including initiatives for debt relief and financing for development. The sustainable development of the world's poorer peoples through well-targeted assistance remains a worthy goal, since the peoples of developing countries are our brothers and sisters, of equal dignity and worth and deserving of our respect in every way, and such assistance should always aim to improve their lives and their economic prospects. As you know, development is also of benefit to donor countries, not only through the creation of economic markets, but also through the fostering of mutual respect, solidarity, and above all peace through prosperity for all the world's peoples. Promoting models of development which employ modern knowledge to husband natural resources will also have the benefit of better protecting the environment for emerging and developed countries alike. This is why I remarked in Westminster Hall last year that integral human development, and all that it entails, is an enterprise truly worthy of the world's attention and one that is too big to be allowed to fail. The Holy See therefore

welcomes Prime Minister Cameron's recent announcement of his intention to ring-fence Great Britain's aid budget. I would also invite you, during your mandate, to explore ways of furthering development cooperation between your Government and the Church's charity and development agencies, especially those based here in Rome and in your country.

Finally, Mr Ambassador, in offering you my prayerful good wishes for the success of your mission, allow me to assure you that all the departments of the Roman Curia stand ready to support you in your duties. Upon you, your family and all the British people, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

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