



# The Holy See

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## *Discurso al Embajador de HAITI,*

*Excmo. Sr. Don Wilson FLORESTAL\*29 de septiembre de 1986* This moment corresponds to an important phase in the history of your land. A new departure has been taken, new institutions are being set up, great responsibilities fall on those who have the mission of guiding the present and preparing the future in a climate of peace; the people continues to aspire to a renewed society.

While I wish you, Mr. Ambassador, a fruitful accomplishment of your mission to the Holy See, where you will always find understanding and support, I express my fervent wishes for your nation and those who direct it, to whom I send my cordial greetings.

I think often of the brief but intense meeting that I was able to have with your compatriots in March 1983 at Port-au-Prince: I found there a genial people, fervent in their prayer, clearly anxious for a change in society. I could not but encourage this aspiration, which had already been expressed by the bishops, as I took my position on the moral plane of the common good of the people. Political change has appeared to your compatriots to be a preliminary condition. Now the task remains of achieving the desired renewal in structures, in daily life, and in consciences. To construct a democratic society, based on a broad participation, is a marvelous and difficult task.

2. Indeed, your land does not lack resources to confront this task, and the enterprise has already been initiated. The sense of the rights of man, the feeling for justice and for freedom, remained alive, as did the will to participate. Many desired to take their own responsibilities in this, even if they had little chance to receive a formation in this direction. Besides this, a whole literacy programme has been begun, in which the Church has taken a large share. In order to prepare a better future, it is indeed necessary to ensure that as many as possible have instruction and education in a country which enjoyed little of these benefits; thereby one acquires the openness of mind to the realities of the world and to cultures, as well as the bases of a professional formation, the critical sense which promotes liberty, the civic sense which makes one aware of the rights and the duties of each one and of relationships of solidarity.

3. Today, one must prepare the whole structure of a new society, with the adequate political instruments that can ensure the common good in a stable and just way, in accordance with the functions that belong to the State, to the Government, to the intermediary bodies, under the guarantee of a wise and equitable Constitution. The choice of systems, means and political forces belongs to the citizens and to their appointed representatives. The Church in Haiti, as elsewhere will respect this choice, which does not fall within her own competence.

But the Church may – indeed. it is her duty to do so – recall the moral values that must inspire the conduct of affairs, for the good and the real progress of the people, according to God's plan for society. On this level, the Holy See was extremely happy to see that the bishops of the Haitian Episcopal Conference had published, last June, a «Fundamental charter for the passage to a democratic society according to the teaching and the experience of the Church». Prescinding from all party politics, the principles and the valuable reflections that are found in this text will be able to help the Catholics– who make up the majority of the citizens – and also other people of good will to prepare themselves for decisions and for responsible commitments, in' the interest of all.

4. Indeed. who would not wish to see firmly rooted in those who are called to exercise a responsibility, as well as in the other citizens, a sense of the common good of all, a particular care for the poor and for the underprivileged classes, competence, honesty, freedom from all corruption, courage, truth, a desire for social justice, a respect for persons – for their goods, for their reputation, for their life – in short, a spirit of disinterested service in the search for better conditions of life for all?

It is not so easy to find the balance between the necessary authority of the State which guarantees security, and the respect for the fundamental liberties and the initiatives of the intermediary bodies, in accordance with a subsidiarity that is well understood. This, however, is the goal to which your noble nation aspires, far from totalitarian systems, far from regimes which impose an ideology at the expense of the rights of man, far also from anarchy, and from the struggle of particular interests or the privileges of riches used selfishly and without caring about the poor.

May the climate of peaceful collaboration be finally established! The citizens and the parties who love their native land certainly understand the necessity of turning their back on the errors of the past, of mutual reconciliation, and of joining together in sincerity to save the nation and to promote its democratic future, without seeking a personal hegemony and without yielding to the temptations to violence and to internal struggles.

5. The Church makes her contribution above all to the formation of consciences, so that the Christian laity may exercise their civic and social responsibilities in the best way possible. She is equally ready to lend her aid, as far as her means allow and without claiming to close all gaps, to the tasks that have an urgent character and a particular importance: to pursue the spread of literacy, to collaborate in the formation of persons qualified to assume responsibility in the various spheres, to guarantee and promote family life, and to ensure the necessary provision of care.

6. Finally, the Holy See, which takes part in a specific way in international life, wishes that the Republic of Haiti may benefit within the family of nations from the good will and the help of the other partners in the international community and of the international organizations, in conditions compatible with its dignity, its independence and its liberty.

The human enterprise which I have just evoked, Mr. Ambassador, will certainly not be able to be realized fully all at once. It is necessary to ensure the bases of a solid future, with all the guarantees that prudence and equity inspire without however permitting sectarian interests or pressure groups to profit from – the delay and divert Haiti from the goal. The Holy See is sure that the Haitian people which has already shown its maturity in a difficult upheaval, will know how to face its destiny, and the Holy See gives it every encouragement.

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