



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H. E. MRS URSULA HELEN BARROW
NEW AMBASSADOR OF BELIZE TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 13 January 1994

Your Excellency,

I am happy to welcome you to the Vatican today as you take up your responsibilities as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belize to the Holy See. Thank you for the kind sentiments which you expressed on behalf of your fellow-citizens. Please assure them that they have an abiding place in the thoughts and affections of the Pope, and that he continues to pray to Almighty God for their safety and wellbeing. Likewise, I ask you kindly to convey to Her Excellency the Governor-General, as well as to the Prime Minister, my heartfelt greetings and good wishes for divine blessings upon their efforts to serve the common good.

I recall that the arrival of your first predecessor occurred just ten years ago last month, not long after my Pastoral Visit to your beloved nation. Although the period during which there has been an exchange of diplomatic representatives is relatively brief, the cordial relations between the Catholic Church and Belize go back much farther in time, and the experience of this past decade has built upon that tradition and reinforced it. I am confident that during the term of your service these bonds will grow even stronger.

By cooperating on a day-to-day basis and in such important initiatives as the International Year of the Family, of which you made mention, the Church and the State, each according to its own nature and proper sphere of operation, can all the more effectively "act for the benefit of a common subject-man" (Paul VI, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*). When I went to Santo Domingo to participate in the commemoration of the Fifth Centenary of the first preaching of the Gospel in the New World, I took the occasion to reaffirm the essential relationship between the Church's mission and the true progress of mankind: "Stimulating human development must be the logical outcome of evangelization, which tends toward the comprehensive liberation of the person" (John

Paul II, *Inaugural Address on the occasion of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, 13 [12 Oct. 1992] .

It was on behalf of the human person, not as an abstraction, but as a real, historical individual, that I spoke on that occasion. With increasing urgency people must be enabled to participate more fully in forging their own destiny in a society in which all can contribute to providing for their own material needs and to fulfilling the demands of their intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious life (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 64). Overall development can only come about through the persevering practice of solidarity, which requires, as a precondition, the full cooperation of all in order to overcome the inequalities epitomized in the gap between the developed North and the developing South. "But", as I said in my Encyclical Letter "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*", "the developing nations themselves have the duty to practise solidarity among themselves and with the neediest countries of the world" (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 45). In the Caribbean Region, such cooperation is particularly important, as Belize and its neighbours face the challenges of advancing in the ways of integral human progress.

The spirit of cooperation and dedication to the common good is indispensable in all matters concerning the relations between one State and another, between individuals and groups within a nation, and between a people and its leaders. In all cases dialogue and mutual respect are the paths to be followed in resolving tensions and settling conflicting claims according to the norms of justice.

The Catholic faithful of Belize, under the guidance and direction of their Bishop, will continue their tradition of service to the common good. Over the decades the Church's schools in particular have done much to strengthen the life of the nation, and remain an important resource for the intellectual and moral formation of the next generation of citizens. It is my ardent hope that in all matters affecting the country's peace and progress the citizens of Belize will find inspiration and encouragement in their religious convictions and spiritual resources, so that together they can build a society ever more just and ever more caring towards those in any kind of need.

Your Excellency, I assure you that during the term of your service as Ambassador of Belize you will find the departments of the Roman Curia always ready to assist you in your lofty duties. With prayerful good wishes for the success of your mission, I invoke upon you and your fellow-citizens the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVII, 1 p.100-102.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1994 p.42-43.

L'Osservatore Romano 14.1.1994 p.8.

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