



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF JAMAICA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 13 December 2002

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Jamaica to the Holy See. I gratefully recall the warm hospitality which I received from the Government and people of your country during my Apostolic Visit in 1993, and I would ask you kindly to convey my greetings and best wishes to the Governor General, the Prime Minister and your fellow citizens. Please assure them of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the Nation.

You are well aware that the mission of the Church in the world is eminently spiritual and therefore distinct from the political order. The Church nonetheless offers civil society the contribution of her teaching, her two-thousand-year experience of humanity's journey through history, and her many different forms of service to the human family. She knows that society will develop peacefully and prosper only to the extent that it reflects the moral order established by God, the Creator, who from the fullness of his love seeks to draw all men and women into the wholeness of his life. It is for this reason that the Holy See speaks so insistently to the international community about the duty to respect human dignity and about the fundamental importance of supporting the family as the primary cell of society.

The scourge of destructive social ills, present in many societies and which undermine moral values and threaten family life, is a great tragedy of our time. Drug trafficking, gang violence, attacks on law and order, oppression of women and children are all part of the 'culture of death' which social institutions must assiduously work together to overcome. I note with appreciation Your Excellency's reference to your Government's principal priority of achieving reconciliation and

national unity through the promotion of wholesome values and attitudes. Such objectives depend upon the ability of all members of society to feel that they have a stake in their national community and that they are able to contribute to its progress. For her part, the Catholic Church, in proclaiming the Gospel of life received from her Lord, ardently desires to promote among all people, and especially among the young, the culture of truth and love which leads to authentic freedom and happiness.

During my visit to Kingston I encouraged the Jamaican people to let the Gospel transform their lives and society. The future of society, I observed, is essentially linked to the strength of its families, and it is indispensable that every person of good will should be committed to saving and promoting the family as the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society. The God-given dignity of every person is first realized and experienced within the family. When this dignity is expressed in principles of equality, justice and respect for the common good, the renewal of society is assured.

Since the family is the most influential institution in the education of the young, the State must appropriately support and encourage the family's role as the primary teacher of moral and civic values.

As Your Excellency has graciously remarked, the Catholic Church in Jamaica is actively involved in the spiritual and intellectual development of the young, especially through her educational centres at various levels. This is an area in which there is ample room for cooperation between the State and other religious and social bodies striving to support parents in their role as principal educators of their children. The State has, as a matter of distributive justice, a supportive role, and should recognize the education of the young as one of its chief objectives and a matter of vital importance for the future of the nation. The Church in Jamaica will continue to do all she can to ensure excellence in her educational work, which is not limited to imparting knowledge but extends to everything that helps a young person grow into a mature and responsible human being, a capable and upright citizen.

Your Excellency, during your term as your country's representative to the Holy See the various departments of the Roman Curia will do all they can to assist you in the discharge of your duties. I offer my best wishes for the success of your endeavours to strengthen further the cordial relations already existing between Jamaica and the Holy See. Upon you and your fellow citizens I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XXVI/2 p.877-879.*

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