



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO H.E. Mr. OSCAR AYUSO  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF BELIZE  
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall  
Thursday, 18 December 2008*

*Your Excellency,*

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary of Belize. I am grateful for the greetings which you have brought from the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, and I ask you to convey to them my own cordial greetings and good wishes, together with the assurance of my prayers for you and your fellow-citizens.

I very much appreciate your kind reference to the contribution made by the Church to the development of your nation, especially through her well-established educational and social apostolates. A history of fruitful cooperation with the civil authorities and respectful relations with other religious groups has, in fact, enabled the Church freely to carry out her proper religious and cultural mission in Belize. The support traditionally given by the state to Catholic schools, and to the religious education of the young, has not only benefited the Church, but has also helped to strengthen the fabric of society as a whole.

Young people everywhere are entitled to a sound education which can allow them to integrate the intellectual, human and religious dimensions of life within a coherent synthesis (cf. *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1). Belizeans are rightly proud of their rich history, the diversity of their cultural and religious traditions, and the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation which has long characterized relations between various groups within society. That impressive legacy cannot be taken for granted, but needs to be constantly reappropriated and consciously handed down to the younger

generation at every level of education and community life.

This task is particularly urgent today, when the values which have traditionally shaped Belize's national life and identity are being challenged by the importation of certain cultural models which, tragically, sap the very energies and gifts which young people bring to society: their idealism, generosity, joy, hope and enthusiasm. By fostering a climate of cynicism and alienation, they facilitate the spread of a counter-culture of violence and escapism, and the search for false utopias through alcohol and drug abuse. The latter phenomenon, which has proved destructive of so many lives and hopes, is a source of particular concern for all those committed to the welfare, not only of the young, but of society as a whole. The Church, for her part, wishes to help meet these challenges by assisting young people to discern, in the light of the Gospel, the lasting truths which are the foundation of an authentic and truly fulfilling life, and the basis of a peaceful and humane social community.

Essential to the future of any society are its families. In my *Message for the 2008 World Day of Peace*, I emphasized the unique role of the family as "the foundation of society and the first and indispensable teacher of peace" (No. 3). Strong families have long been a hallmark of your national life, and the Catholic community in Belize is committed to work with all people of good will in meeting responsibly the growing threats to the institutions of marriage and the family, especially by upholding the nature of marriage based on the life-long union of a man and woman, protecting the specific rights of the family, and respecting the inviolable dignity of all human life, from the moment of conception to natural death. This witness, aimed at informing public opinion and fostering wise, far-sighted family policies, is meant to contribute to the common good by defending an institution which has been, and continues to be, "an essential resource in the service of peace" and social progress (cf. *ibid.*, 5).

Within the global community your nation has sought to consolidate its ties with other countries and to engage in programmes of international cooperation. On the basis of its past history, its relatively recent experience of independence, and the stability of its political life, Belize can serve as an encouragement and a point of reference not only within the Caribbean and Central America, but to young democracies in other parts of the world. Through such solidarity, people of good will can unite their efforts to create a social order embodying the values of freedom, respectful dialogue and cooperation in the service of the common good, the safeguarding of human dignity, and the fostering of effective concern for the poor and the disadvantaged.

With these sentiments, Mr Ambassador, I now offer you my prayerful good wishes for the mission which you have undertaken in the service of your country, and I assure you of the readiness of the various offices of the Holy See to assist you in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. I am confident that your representation will help to strengthen the good relations existing between the Holy See and Belize. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved people of your nation, I cordially invoke God's blessings of joy and peace.

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