



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EXCELLENCY Mr ROBERT CAREY MOORE-JONES
NEW AMBASSADOR OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 29 May 2009

Mr Ambassador,

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 New Zealand to the Holy See. I would ask you kindly to convey to the Governor General, and to Prime Minister John Key and his Government, together with all the people of New Zealand, my sincere best wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the well-being of the country.

The Church's engagement with civil society is anchored in her conviction that authentic human progress – whether as individuals or communities – is dependent upon the recognition of the spiritual dimension proper to every person. It is from God that men and women receive their essential dignity (cf. Gen 1:27) and the capacity to transcend particular interests in order to seek truth and goodness and so find purpose and meaning in their lives. This broad perspective provides a framework within which it is possible to counter any tendency to adopt superficial approaches to social policy which address only the symptoms of negative trends in family life and communities, rather than their roots. Indeed, when humanity's spiritual heart is brought to light, individuals are drawn beyond themselves to ponder God and the marvels of human life: being, truth, beauty, moral values, and relationships that respect the dignity of others. In this way a sure foundation to unite society and sustain a common vision of hope can be found.

The young people of Aotearoa rightly enjoy a reputation for generosity and a keen sense of what is fair. Appreciating the many privileges they are offered, they readily engage in voluntary work and service to others while assuming the ample opportunities they are afforded for personal achievement, and cultural and academic development. [World Youth Day](#), held for the first time in

Oceania last year, gave me an opportunity to experience something of the spirit of the thousands of young New Zealanders who took part. I pray that this new generation of Christians in New Zealand will channel their enthusiasm into forging friendships across divides and creating places of living faith in and for our world, settings of hope and practical charity. In this way they can assist other young people who might be misled by the lure of false promises of happiness and fulfilment, or find themselves struggling on the margins of society.

Your Excellency, cultural diversity brings much richness to the social fabric of New Zealand today. The growing presence within your shores of migrant communities from various religious traditions together with the Government's increasing participation in Pacific and Asian affairs has raised the awareness of the fruits that can be obtained through inter-religious dialogue. Indeed, not so long ago, your nation hosted the Third Asian-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue in the historic setting of Waitangi. Yet some continue to question the place of religion in the public sphere and struggle to imagine how it might serve society, particularly in a highly secular culture. This of course heightens the responsibility of believers to bear witness to the significance of the essential relationship of every man and woman to God, in whose image they are made. When God's gift of human reason is exercised in reference to the truth he reveals to us, our powers of reflection are adorned with wisdom, and thus reach beyond the empirical and the piecemeal, and instead give expression to our deepest common human aspirations. In this way public debate, rather than being entrapped by the narrow horizon of particular interest groups, is broadened and held accountable to the true source of the common good and dignity of every member of society. Far from threatening the tolerance of differences or cultural plurality, truth makes consensus possible, ensures that political choices are determined by principles and values, and enriches culture with all that is good, uplifting and just.

New Zealand's diplomatic activity predominant in the Pacific and considerable in Asia and beyond is marked by a strong commitment to justice and peace, good governance, sustainable economic development and the promotion of human rights. Your generous commitment of personnel to peace-keeping initiatives can be found from Solomon Islands to Sudan, and New Zealand's innovative approaches to foreign aid include an outstanding recent example of the development of eco-tourism in Afghanistan. As Your Excellency has indicated, the Holy See has worked closely with New Zealand in developing the Convention on the Prohibition of Cluster Munitions; an achievement which illustrates well the need for ethics, which stem from the truth of the human person, to stand at the heart of all international relationships including those of defence.

Mr Ambassador, the Catholic Church in New Zealand continues to do all she can to uphold the Christian foundations of civic life. She is much involved in the spiritual and intellectual formation of the young, especially through her schools. Additionally her charitable work extends to those living on the margins of society and I am confident that, through her mission of service, she will respond generously to new social challenges as they arise. In this regard, I wish to take this opportunity to express my spiritual closeness to those families in New Zealand who, like many across the globe,

are suffering from the effects of the current economic uncertainty. I think especially of those who have lost their jobs and those young people finding it difficult to obtain employment.

Your Excellency, I trust that your appointment will serve to strengthen further the bonds of friendship which already exist between New Zealand and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities you will find that the broad range of offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and your fellow citizens, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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