



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr HENRY LLEWELLYN LAWRENCE
AMBASSADOR OF BELIZE TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 9 June 2011*

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to receive the Letters of Credence by which you have been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belize to the Holy See. I am grateful to you for transmitting the courteous greetings from the Governor-General, Sir Colville Young, and in return I would ask you kindly to convey my own good wishes to him and to all the people of your nation.

The Holy See values its diplomatic relations with Belize as an important means for achieving mutual cooperation for the moral and material well-being of all its citizens. With the cooperation of men and women of good will throughout Central America, the Church works to promote peace and prosperity among all the peoples of the region, even amid challenging circumstances, based upon unchanging Gospel values which have always served the people of the region well. With a special care for the poor and the weak, the Church draws attention to the dignity of man and works to foster and promote that dignity through her many social, charitable and developmental initiatives. The commitment to this activity draws strength not only from a love for the human person, but first and foremost from a profound love for God, “in whose light the identity, meaning and purpose of the person are fully understood” (*World Day of Peace Message 2011*, 1).

Historically, the Catholic Church in Belize has enjoyed cordial relations with the civil authorities, in an atmosphere conducive to the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord. Such an atmosphere is due in large part to the foundations upon which Belize was established, a basis which supports traditional Christian values and acknowledges the perennial value of authentic

human rights and fundamental civil and political freedoms that promote respect for the human person, social harmony and the progress of society as a whole. Among the laws established in your country are the rights to religious freedom and freedom of worship. As I had occasion to note recently, “the right to religious freedom is rooted in the very dignity of the human person, whose transcendent nature must not be ignored or overlooked” (*ibid.*, 2). Freedom of religion and freedom of worship allow believers to flourish as individuals and to contribute positively and fully to the life of the country in every sphere of human activity. May your country, Mr Ambassador, be an example in this regard to its neighbours and to those who would seek to diminish the consequences of such rights and their corresponding values.

The Catholic Church in Belize involves herself in society in a variety of ways, including the education of the young in cooperation with the state. In principle, education prepares individuals and draws the best from them so that they in turn may willingly contribute socially, culturally and economically to society as a whole. Religious education, and Catholic education in particular, makes its own contribution to your people’s welfare, since it “leads new generations to see others as their brothers and sisters, with whom they are called to journey and work together so that all will feel that they are living members of the one human family” (*ibid.*, 4). Education bears fruit when based on virtue already grounded in the family, “the first cell of human society,” and “the primary training ground for harmonious relations at every level of coexistence, human, national and international” (*ibid.*). Possessing a solid grounding in faith and virtue, intelligence and good will, the young people of Belize will be better prepared to assume the mantle of civic and social leadership, and provide for a stable, just and peaceful future for the nation.

With these sentiments, Mr Ambassador, I offer you every good wish for your new mission and assure you of the readiness of the Roman Curia to assist you in your high office. Upon you and upon all the people of Belize, I invoke Almighty God’s abundant blessings.

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