

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As Barbados journeys towards its 50th anniversary of Independence in 2016, let us first thank God for all the blessings of this island. In the words of St. Paul: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thes. 5:18 RSV).

With gratitude to God, we reflect with our Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Freundel Stuart, Q.C, M.P, on Barbados' 49 year journey. He asked us: "What are those features of Barbadian life that we have lost and that we need to reclaim? What are those features of Barbadian life that we have not lost but need to discard? What are those features of Barbadian life that we have to try at all cost to retain?" If we individually and collectively engage in this type of reflection, we will be able to look forward to the future with real hope.

What We Lost

A good place to start is with the well known words of the Father of the Nation and National Hero, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow:

"I want to know what kind of mirror image do you have of yourself? Do you really like yourselves? There are too many people in Barbados who despise themselves and their dislike of themselves reflects itself in their dislike of other people."

In 1986, The Right Excellent Errol Barrow also asked deep, penetrating and soul searching questions. He asked about identity, about the dignity of the worker, about our fascination with America, about our disdain for ourselves. **In 1966 he had** charted a course of social democracy in which development was about the worker, the family and the nation and business and accumulation of wealth were an instrument to achieve development, not its primary purpose. But it seems as if we now worship the capitalist market not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. As a result:

1. We have given up the primacy of the family for the primacy of the state
2. We have given up the real economy for the accumulation of money
3. We have given up virtue and character for selfish individualism and the mindless pursuit of pleasure.

By giving up core elements of our national identity, we have lost our way. **What needs to be discarded** is our disdain for ourselves and our fascination with obsessive consumerism for its own sake.

Retain At All Cost

We perhaps need to be reminded that the word "economy" comes from two Greek words – 'oikos' and 'nerrein', i.e. 'house' and 'manage' - it literally means 'house management'. In its original understanding economy was about managing the affairs of the family. Its focus was on ensuring the development of families - the nation being a family of families.

Catholic Social Teaching has made the distinction between amassing wealth and economy—the laws governing the management of a household. This point is vital: the economy is about the household, the family; it is not about a few accumulating wealth and the foundational principle is the priority of the human over the economy. Aristotle observed, "man is not made for an economy but economy is made for man". We have reversed this order - "man is treated as an instrument of production, whereas he alone ought to be treated as the effective subject of work as its true maker and creator" (Laborem Exercens, # 7).

The family is the basic economic, political and developmental unit of the nation - the "load bearing wall of civilisation". Our worship of the market as an end in itself has put every family in Barbados under immense pressure.

Now Barbados has another choice looming – there is pressure to change the concept of marriage from a covenant between one man and one woman in an exclusive and permanent bond. This is yet another element of mindless following of fashion that we must never take up.

The social problems we are presently facing - rising crime and violence, domestic violence, child abuse, indiscipline of our youths, drug and human trafficking, addiction and climate change etc. cannot be disconnected from our choice of allowing the market to dictate our values. We cannot fix these social problems unless we also change our national dream to one that is values driven. Our forefathers sacrificed so much for the good of their children and grandchildren. They put values first in the household, teaching by example the cultural requirements of dedication to hard work, thrift, sacrifice, loving their neighbour. God also played an important role in their lives. What examples do our children see in the household and in society today? Who are their role models?

Hope

Renewal for Barbados requires a different dream; one where we see the development of our nation tied directly to the preservation of family life; the reconstruction of the Barbadian household. To transform Barbados we must transform the economy to ensure the dignity of our people is maintained and that all citizens have an opportunity to contribute to society and become better versions of themselves. We must transform our value system, the family and therefore our culture to restore the core values that made Barbados great.

To dream this new dream for Barbados will require a Development Revolution. We must believe that we are all gifted with incredible capacity and called by God to become the best version of ourselves. That is to become a saint! This will require all of us to commit to incremental continuous growth in our human capacity, our moral values and our capacity to love. It will further require of us, individually and collectively to put the needs of the vulnerable before the wants of the rich. This will require us to choose again and **to take up** a new form of social democracy, one where the authentic development of the individual and the family is accepted as the key to sustainable national development.

Barbados, look in the mirror! This mirror is the soul of our children, of our young adults, of all who suffer the violence of neglect and abuse, of the growing number of unemployed.

As we thank God for his many blessings, "with prayer and supplication" (Philip: 4:6), and start to look forward to the 50th anniversary, may God inspire us to take a long hard look at ourselves and our choices and help us to make new choices for authentic development. We owe that much to our children and their children as 'strict guardians of our heritage, firm craftsmen of our fate.' I pray that we have the vision and courage to choose wisely and to live by moral values through a commitment to human development. Our forefathers and mothers made this choice for us and so can we.

This is a path to genuine hope in the Risen Lord " who makes all things new", and who through us, as Pope Francis puts it, " he builds, and he rebuilds, and that is precisely the reason of our hope."

With Gratitude

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