



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr EINARS SEMANIS
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 17 December 2009*

Mr Ambassador,

In welcoming you to the Vatican and accepting the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to the Holy See, I am pleased to express my satisfaction at the cordial relations which we continue to enjoy. I am grateful to Your Excellency for transmitting the courteous greeting of your President, Mr Valdis Zatlers, and I would ask you kindly to reciprocate and to convey my own good wishes to him and to all the people of the Republic.

From its unique position on the Baltic shores, Latvia has played an important role in the commercial and cultural evolution of Europe. This influence has not waned even when its people were deprived, for long and difficult periods, of their status as a sovereign nation. Now that its national identity is no longer under question, and its people again enjoy their freedom, Latvia can offer much to the international community. You mentioned, Mr Ambassador, the twentieth anniversary of the emergence of the “Baltic Way” according to which Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia expressed the wish to return fully to Europe. This historic gesture was an act of trust in the essential values of freedom, truth, justice and solidarity which, based on a Christian tradition and outlook, built up European culture and shaped its most important institutions. Having become a member of the European Union in 2004, Latvia too is now called to share in the continent’s task of finding the means towards greater international collaboration to consolidate the freedom, peace and prosperity of its peoples.

Mr Ambassador, you also highlighted the important moments and the fruits of the Christian history

of your country, which was named *Terra Mariana* by Pope Innocent III in the year 1205. I pray that Latvia, inspired by such an affectionate and powerful appellation, may remain faithful to the principles and values that the first Christian witnesses brought to your country, including Saint Meinhard and the other wise and zealous pastors who evangelized your nation. Christians of all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities in Latvia are called to contribute to the political and cultural life of the nation as well as to work for the visible unity of Christ's Mystical Body. My predecessor, the late [Pope John Paul II](#), on his [historic visit to your land in 1993](#), supported the quest for greater Christian unity as a buttress to national unity and as a priority for renewal (cf. *Address at Marian Shrine of Aglona*, 9 September 1993). It is greatly to be hoped that such a renewal take place soon for the good of the nation as a whole.

The Latvian people, who are known to cherish their land, and are careful to protect it from environmental degradation, also draw inspiration from their own folklore and culture as a solid basis for their concern for the land in all its aspects. By employing their ingenuity and by cultivating the resources God has given them, by extolling human dignity and respecting human life, and by promoting man's vocation to build up a humanism open to spiritual and transcendent values (cf. [Caritas in Veritate](#), 18), Latvia will surely become a model of development that protects the dignity of the human person while being sensitive to the requirements of a sustainable economy.

The recent global economic downturn has had serious effects on the nation's economy, generating poverty and unemployment in some areas and leaving no little uncertainty about the future. It is my sincere hope that the Latvian people may take heart as they and their leaders seek effective ways to weather this crisis and to rebuild Latvia's economic strength. Such times demand courage and resolve. Your compatriots, Mr Ambassador, are aware that some radical measures may be necessary to uphold the common good even at the cost of restrictions, renunciation and sacrifice. On the other hand, such an exercise can only succeed – and be socially acceptable – when it is completed in a spirit of genuine justice and equity and with special attention to those who are most vulnerable. I pray that the resilient spirit of the Latvian people may continue to sustain them.

Finally, Your Excellency, I am confident that the cordial relations between the Holy See and Latvia, re-established sixteen years ago after a long breach desired by neither party, will help to promote fraternity, respect and dialogue. In offering my good wishes at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador to the Holy See, I assure you of the readiness of the Roman Curia to assist you in your important task. May Almighty God bestow his abundant blessings upon you and upon all the people of Latvia.

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