



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI  
TO SIX NEW AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION  
OF THE LETTERS OF CREDENCE**

*Clementine Hall  
Thursday, 13 December 2012*

*Your Excellencies,*

I welcome you with joy on the occasion of the presentation of the letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your countries to the Holy See: I thank you for your courteous words and for the greetings which you have conveyed to me from your respective Heads of State. I would be grateful if you would reciprocate by conveying my best wishes to them, both for themselves and for the accomplishment of their mission at the service of their people. I pray God to grant all your fellow countrymen to live a peaceful and dignified life, in concord and unity.

While examining the numerous challenges of our age, we can note that education occupies a primary place. It takes place today in contexts where the evolution of lifestyles and learning has created human, cultural, social and spiritual ruptures, unprecedented in the history of humanity. Social networks — another novelty — tend to replace the natural places of society and of communication, frequently by becoming the sole reference point for information and knowledge. The family and school no longer seem that first and natural fertile terrain, where young generations find their vital nourishment. Moreover, in the scholarly and academic fields even the authority of teachers and professors is called into question and, sadly, the competence of some of them is not exempt from cognitive bias and an anthropological deficiency, thereby excluding or diminishing the truth of the human person. The latter is an integrated being and not the sum of the elements one can isolate and manipulate at will. Schools and universities seem to have become incapable of creative projects which contain a transcendental teleology that can captivate young

people in their deepest recesses, even if they are tempted — ever anxious about their future — by the least effort, a sufficient minimum and easy success, at times inappropriately using the possibilities offered by modern technology. Many would like to succeed and rapidly to obtain an important social and professional status, while disdain the formation, skills and experience they need. The modern world and responsible adults have been unable to give them the necessary bearings. Could not the dysfunction of certain institutions and some public and private departments be explained by a poor education and poor assimilation?

Making my own the words of my Predecessor Pope [Leo XIII](#), I am convinced that, "the true worth and nobility of man lie in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is, moreover, the common inheritance of men, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor" (*Rerum Novarum*, n. 20). Therefore I invite your governments to contribute courageously to the advancement of our common humanity by furthering the education of new generations, through the promotion of a correct anthropology, the indispensable basis for any authentic education, and in conformity with our shared natural patrimony. This task could be accomplished first of all by a serious reflection on the different problems existing in your respective countries, where certain political or economic choices can surreptitiously erode your own proper anthropological and spiritual patrimony. These have been purified through the centuries and built up patiently on foundations that respect the human person's essence in its plural reality, while remaining wholly consonant with the entire cosmos. I once again ask your leaders to have the courage to work for the consolidation of moral authority — understood as a call to a consistent life — necessary for a true and healthy education of the young generations.

The right to an education in the right values must never be denied or forgotten. The duty to teach these values must never be curtailed or enfeebled by any kind of national or supranational political interest. For this reason, it is necessary to educate in the truth and for the truth, but, "what is truth?" (Jn 18:38), already Pilate — who was a governor — asked himself. In our day, speaking the truth has become suspect, wishing to live in truth seems outdated, and promoting it seems to be a useless effort. Yet, the future of humanity is found too in the relationship of children and young people with the truth: the truth about man, the truth about creation, the truth about institutions, etc. As well as an education in rectitude of heart and mind, today more than ever the young also need to be educated in the meaning of effort and perseverance in hardship. We must teach them that the human person's every action must be responsible and consistent with his yearning for the infinite. These actions must guide his development with a view to forming an ever more fraternal humanity, freed from individualistic and materialistic temptations.

Please allow me to greet through you the bishops and faithful of the Catholic communities present in your countries. The Church accomplishes her mission in faithfulness to her Lord and with the fervent wish to make her specific contribution to the integral promotion of your compatriots, particularly by the education of children and the young. She takes part daily in the shared efforts for the spiritual and human fulfilment of all, through her educational, charitable and health-care

structures. She has at heart the awakening of consciences to mutual respect and to responsibility. In this regard, I encourage your government authorities to continue to permit the Church the freedom to attend to her traditional fields of activity which, as you well know, contribute to your countries' development and to the common good.

Madam Ambassador, Mr Ambassadors, as your mission to the Holy See begins, I extend to you my best wishes and assure you of the support of the Roman Curia's various services in carrying out your role. To this end I gladly invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon you and your families, and upon your colleagues.