

## **Is Calling the People Back to God Appropriate for a Statesman?**

I would like to present for your consideration a challenge that the Late-Prime Minister Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica gave to her political party during the celebration of the party's twenty-fifth anniversary. I consider it one of the most courageous and honest acts by a leader.

### **Calling the Nation Back to God in Unity**

Fellow Dominicans:

The constitution of the Commonwealth of Dominica begins by declaring that "the people of Dominica have affirmed that the Commonwealth of Dominica is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God . . . . ." This in effect means that in all our institutions and in every aspect of our life in Dominica, all our activities, and all our policies are subject to the sovereign will of God and should reflect that will. It means that we must also acknowledge that we cannot reject God, despise His will, and get away with it. When we reject God, or simply pay him lip service as we so often do, we must expect to pay the price.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that in practice, we as a people have not given God the place which our constitution says we must give Him. We have not been living as though God is supreme over us. Whether it be in our politics, our culture, our family life, our education, we have had very little room for God. Some of us have no room for Him at all. Is it any wonder that there has been such widespread breakdown in family life? Is it any surprise that we have so many formidable social problems – drugs, violence, unwanted children, abortion, child abuse, AIDS, division, hatred, greed and selfishness? Is it any wonder that witchcraft is so widespread in our society? Is it any wonder that there is such lack of respect for one another? We are paying the price for failing to make God supreme, and for exalting ourselves and our own selfish ends instead. That is why the theme for this occasion is of such great importance –

*Calling the People Back to God in Unity.*

I am not taking on the role of the churches. I am not trying to play the role of preacher, priest or pastor. We are Christians and take lessons from our Bibles, and therefore know that I, as leader of the government of this nation, am on solid ground in playing my part in calling our people back to God and uniting our people under God. I am doing this in all sincerity, because I believe it is what God wants me to do.

Let me begin with the home. Perhaps the greatest disaster that has taken place in Dominica over the years is the breakdown of the family. The root of all our problems lies here. The family is the cradle of the nation, and the nation cannot be better than the homes which make it up. Today, everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes, not what is right in the sight of God. Parents seem to think they can turn out good children by living loose and immoral lives. Parents, let us bring God back into our homes! Let God be

supreme in our homes! Make prayer and the words of God in our Bible central in our homes. Let us train our children as God wants them to be trained. Parents, let us turn back to God, and let us begin to rebuild sound family life in Dominica.

I turn now to the schools. I think we must take a close look at what is happening in our schools. Let me quote from a letter of Principals of Secondary Schools to the Minister for Education dated 14th May 1993:

*In our schools there has been increasing evidence of unusually serious misconduct which warrants an urgent examination of the entire socio- economic and moral atmosphere existing in and out of schools in order to arrive at possible solutions.*

Among the problem identified by the Principals are: pregnancy, abortion, pornography, perverse sexual practices, theft, violence, drug abuse, and vandalism. These are problems in the schools. Some of the possible reasons identified are: child abuse, parental neglect, television, and a general moral decadence in the society. Why? We have almost completely thrown the study of religion out of our schools. Churches no longer have a close relationship with schools as they used to. Many teachers are no longer role models for our children. The supremacy of God which our constitution speaks of is not generally demonstrated in our schools. I am calling on Principals and teachers in all schools to correct this. Christian teachers must play a significant role in molding the lives of our children. We need to exercise greater care in appointing people to be teachers in our schools. We cannot simply look for people to teach subjects. We must have in our schools teachers whose lives are a pattern for children to emulate. Prayer and the study of our religious faiths must once again have an important place in our schools, as ways of teaching our children what God requires of them, and how to live with one another. I know that there is a danger of religious education being misused in schools. I know this can be a touchy subject. But it still remains true that we require this study as a Guidebook for living. It is the best guidebook there is. If we lived our lives according to our religious beliefs we would not be having the problems that plague our society today.

There has been almost complete reversal of values in our Dominican society. Most of us seem to call good evil, and evil good. The Preamble to our Constitution says that the people of Dominica

*recognize that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded on respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of Law.*

We are in danger of losing our freedom in Dominica. Our society is threatened with widespread anarchy because we no longer base our life-style on Christian values. Our life-style is increasingly fashioned by television, by the styles imported from industrialized countries. It is reported that even in our preschools little children are practicing the sexual patterns which they see on televisions. Such things as honesty, truthfulness, hard work, self control, respect for people, courtesy, gratitude, service to others – these things are now foreign to us. Instead most people seem to be motivated by selfishness and greed, and from these follow all the evils which are destroying our society. As a people, then, we must return truly to God, [and to] Christian values. We must reject the evil trends in our society. We must develop a Christian conscience which cries out loudly against every manifestation of evil; and we must preach and teach, and live those traditional values

found in our religious faith and teachings which shape sound character and build stable societies.

But I would be failing if I did not acknowledge that it is in the area of politics and government more than in any other that we in Dominica need to acknowledge and demonstrate our acknowledgment of the supremacy of God. We have seen how in the past bad politics and bad government have brought this country near disaster. We have seen how greed and corruption, lack of honesty and lack of integrity have marred our political life. We have seen how godless politics has brought hatred and disunity among our people. We have seen how some politicians in their greed for power resort to witchcraft and satanic devices. And we know that for the same reason many will encourage violence and threats of violence to hinder the people from exercising and enjoying the freedom which is theirs under our constitution. All of this is the price we pay when we throw God out of politics and out of government.

If this nation is to prosper, if we are to have a stable society, we must as a people turn back to God. Politicians must turn to God. I do not mean by this only that politicians must go to church. We all know that politicians can go to church when it suits them – as a vote-catching gimmick. Nor does it mean merely being a member of a church or holding office in a church. What is all that if you leave church and go out spreading hatred and telling lies, and buying votes. What I mean is that our politicians must be people who are god-fearing and who practice godliness. I am challenging you, my fellow Dominicans, to look for god-fearing people when you are looking for politicians. If the leadership of the nation is ungodly, the nation is heading for disaster.

I happen to be the leader of a political party, and the leader of the government. Let me take this opportunity to make a strong call to the party which I lead to make God supreme in all our doings. Let us celebrate this anniversary occasion with a general and sincere turning to God, and with a determination to order our affairs according to His will. I am pleased to have in my government a number of men who truly fear God. I would like to see this become the normal and acceptable thing in government. Let me urge my colleagues in government to do their part in making God supreme in all aspects of the governing of our beloved people and country. This is the only way we can guarantee good government in Dominica.

The theme of this service is "Calling the People in Unity Back to God." However, not much will be accomplished if we simply sound the call at this service and leave it there. We must all make a commitment to submit ourselves to the sovereignty of God. There must also be a pledge to continue what is begun here today. For this reason, I am making a strong appeal to the churches to plan and carry out an ongoing campaign to lead our people in unity back to God. I am sure this is a goal you all share. Therefore, let me ask you to muster all the resources you can, and to work together as far as you are able with this single purpose in mind, to make the people of Dominica a people who fear God and practice righteousness. Bring our people back to God.

May God bless you in this effort so that Dominica may truly become the land of the Lord, and Dominicans, the people of the Lord.

**APPLICATION.** Here, this strong lady, often called “The Iron Lady of the Caribbean”, acknowledges dependence upon God for the well-being of her society, and she challenges every component of society to operate with the same conviction. This message is an acknowledgement of the truth from God in Psalms 33:12:

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.*

which applies to all nations, and Psalms 47:7-8:

*God is King of all the earth. God reigns over the nations.*

She recognized the need for national blessing from God as opposed to His judgment. Because of the need for God’s hand of blessing upon a nation in order to achieve our goals of well-being for our people, can we ignore this truth? My question for you is what role such an acknowledgement and challenge plays in the leadership of a people? What role should such an approach play in the life of the Statesman?