

# **Independence Message 2006**

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**President of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

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Citizens of Dominica, how do we celebrate 28 years of Independence?

It should not be just another holiday – a time away from work.

I do hope that it will be much more than that. This should be a time for sober reflection even as we take part in the several cultural activities available to us.

We are experiencing growing pains, like any other developing country as we strive to provide better conditions for our people. Most importantly we still have too many among us who are living below the poverty line, and too many of our young folk who are living on the edge.

It is true that many opportunities are being provided for education at all levels, but it seems that there are still a large number of young people who, for whatever reason, are not embracing the opportunities that are available.

There are many voluntary organisations in our country that are doing all they can with limited resources to save our families. They have the heart and wisdom to respond to needs which are greater than their own. Those of us who can do so could assist them by giving of our time and expertise.

Each one of us has a responsibility to respond to the needs of our society. We must participate, as parents, guardians, teachers, social workers, religious leaders, friends and relations, and we must use our influence to ensure that whatever good that is available is embraced.

The theme under which we celebrate our 28th Anniversary as an independent nation is meant to serve as a reminder that this is the time for unity. We are called to strengthen families, and thereby building our nation. This is a telling statement of the situation that presently exists in our country. We should as a nation pay particular interest to, and ponder on, this year's theme.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that today throughout the world families are under attack. Everyday we witness the breakdown of the family structure.

Leaders of nations and people everywhere have recognized that the family is the most important unit in society. There is the increasing realization that the strength of a nation is reflected in the strength of its families. Thus we all should be dedicated to strengthening relationships at home by teaching principles of truth, honesty, kindness, commitment, communication, choices, wellbeing and spirituality.

Everyone is required to play his part. And there are tangible ways in which every citizen can contribute. A commitment to sound values, productive living, the observance of the laws of our land, respect for each other, the objective search for integrity, equality and justice, and the nurturing of goodwill are among the time-honoured inputs which invariably work to the benefit of any society, and have always underscored the progress of any nation.

Strong individuals will build strong families, and strong families will help to build the kind of society that we all dream about.

I wish everyone a restful and reflective independence day, as we move to strengthen our families for nation building.