

Independence Message 2005

By His Excellency Sir Daniel Williams, GCMG, QC

Governor General

7 February 2005

Citizens and friends of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, the anniversary of a young nation is an appropriate time for it to review its way forward. The thirty-first anniversary of Grenada's independence is very special in our history as it is punctuated by Hurricane Ivan which is a monumental landmark by which we are all affected or infected.

The theme for this two thousand and five anniversary "Rebuilding with a Vision for a better Grenada" could not be more appropriate. The magnitude of this Hurricane in the life of this Nation is enormous, both in the immediate and distant future. The history of Grenada could be divided between life before and life after Ivan.

Generally speaking, up to and before Ivan, as a small island state Grenada had done reasonably well, especially when it is compared to other Third World young developing nations. A clear piece of this evidence is the applications by certain distinguished citizens from some developed countries that have elected to make their homes here. We have had some rough patches, but realistically life in Grenada was good.

I now turn to Post Ivan, we have seen most of our homes damaged or destroyed, agriculture and tourism our two main foreign exchange earners have been greatly damaged. However, we are a resilient people; within five months after this catastrophic Hurricane, we have seen an almost unexpected amount of normalcy. Despite a few hiccups and setbacks here and there, schools are reopened, health services are almost fully operational and we have seen activity in construction in respect to homes, hotels and commerce; the essential services of telephone, water and electricity have progressed beyond the expectation of many persons. I will say that

over all, the recovery has been remarkably good. Of course I know there are some people who have been complaining that things are bad here. I can only reply that after a Hurricane of that magnitude there will inevitably be many problems and difficulties.

I said on previous occasions and I will say again, I saw how Grenada bounced back after Hurricane Janet in 1955 and I believe that Grenada will bounce back again and even better than the Post 1955 experience. It is this confidence in the future of Grenada that causes me to feel so warm to this year's Independence theme which proposes a vision for a better Grenada.

A week after Ivan many areas of Grenada appeared as though the island had suffered from the devastation of an extensive bush fire; today someone looking around Grenada, with most of our landscape again green and beautiful would find the contrast incredible. Despite its devastation Ivan did not destroy the physical features of our beautiful island or its landscape. We have our island and our people. God has given us Grenada, God has given us life and God has given us talents. We must make good use of those talents. We now have a wonderful opportunity in the rebuilding of Grenada to make use of the experience and wisdom of the past; for example, we will now build stronger houses, better hotels and wherever convenient we will engage ourselves in better business and agricultural practices. In other words we can update and improve Grenada for our future and the future of generations yet unborn.

We each should endeavour under the watchful eyes of God to perform our tasks whatever they may be with sincerity, humility, honesty, vigour and to the best of our abilities. With such an approach the vision of our theme for a better Grenada will be a reality. I take this opportunity to wish through God's benevolence a happy anniversary and a happy future for us all.

May God bless us all.