



## **ST. KITTS AND NEVIS INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE**

**FROM THE RT. HON. DR. DENZIL DOUGLAS, PRIME MINISTER**

**19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2012**

My Fellow Citizens, I extend to you heartfelt wishes for a good and peaceful day on this, our twenty-ninth anniversary as a sovereign nation.

It is my wish that throughout the duration of our anniversary celebrations - and beyond - Kittitians and Nevisians will be filled with both a sense of gratitude, as well as a sense of hope.

It is my wish that we be filled with a sense of gratitude because there is, indeed, so much for which to be grateful.

And it is my wish that we be filled with hope because it is through our ability to see God's many mercies – both in our lives, as well as in the lives of others – that our hearts become filled with that keen awareness of Life's tremendous, and often magical, possibilities.

I stress the importance of gratitude and hope on this Independence Day not only because they are key to healthy living, but most importantly because this year's Independence theme is "Cherishing Children, Strengthening Families". And the most important parental attitude in the rearing of children is gratitude – gratitude for the lives of our children.....and gratitude for having been given the sacred opportunity to shape them into decent, respectable human beings. Indeed, it is only when we are grateful for our children that it is truly possible for us to cherish them.

In addition, I wish for us all a spirit of hope, because hope creates that spark of positivity, perseverance, and resilience that we, as a people, must instil in our children – whether as parents, teachers, or simply good neighbours – in order that they may fulfil the special potential that resides within each and every one of them.

It is hope that will make them try, try, and try again when the life seems too difficult...when a confusing chapter needs to be read one more time...when the skill that is being taught seems impossible to grasp...when they're just plain tired.

It is hope that will stop them from ever thinking that they just shouldn't care...because hope makes the impossible, possible. And this we must help them to understand, as we strive to constantly improve ourselves as a free and independent people.

Let me hasten to add on this Independence Day, however, that gratitude and hope are not merely what I wish for the people of St. Kitts and Nevis. On the contrary, gratitude and hope are central to all that guides my Government as well:

My Government reflects on our nation's upward trajectory over these past twenty-nine years, for example, and we are humbled and grateful for having been given the opportunity to lead this land that we all so dearly love.

We think about, and talk about, the countless ways in which Kittitians and Nevisians, from all walks of life, make daily contributions, in their own different ways, to what we have become as a nation, and for all of these contributions my Government is deeply grateful.

We are grateful to be governing in a country in which everyone has strong views.....clear opinions.....lively passions – and are not afraid to express them - but where we have no hatreds, one for the other. And a quick glance at the international news is all that any of us needs, to be reminded, in the starkest terms, of the enormity of this blessing.

We think about our nation's children and their families, and my Government is grateful for the strengthening bonds between people all across this land and those who are paid to uphold our laws and keep us safe. For this is how we create the peace that our children need. This is how we create the stability that our families must have.

There is so much more for which we, as a Government, are grateful, but finally, let me say, as we mark this twenty-ninth year, that we are also particularly grateful that Kittitians and Nevisians are the descendants of the men and women who, almost a century ago, started the extraordinary Caribbean-wide movement toward human rights...equality under the law...and eventual independence. Because we know that we cherish our nation's children, and strengthen our nation's families best, by ensuring that in this twentieth century, ours continues to be a society in which human rights are respected, there is the fair administration of justice, and the people - through their vote - are the ones to determine the path of our nation.

So my Government is grateful for a great deal, yes, but we also understand the importance of our being a shining symbol of hope – not as an abstraction, but in the form of real and tangible improvements in the lives of our children, and the lives of our families.

And so we have ensured that there are now beacons of hope - all around, calling on the entire nation to note and value these accomplishments, and to build on them, for the betterment of us all.

Look at the farmers of our independent nation, for example, working the thousands of acres turned over to them...striving to produce fresh, healthy alternatives to foods from distant shores...unleashing the life-giving powers of the earth. Our rich soils make this possible. And for this, we should be grateful. Let us, then, spend our hard-earned resources with our hard-working farmers, and in the process help our families to return to the foods that made our parents strong.

Look, also, at the students in this independent nation of ours, so many of modest means, taking their own laptops, into their families' own homes after a day at school - no longer stuck someplace, 10 at night, hoping that someone else's computer will become free. Their families no longer paying rent on homes they will never own. These computers give students and their families an opportunity at entrepreneurial independence that had not existed before, and they help to develop the technological proficiencies – for parents and children alike - that modern employers demand.

Fire, the great life enhancer, has its dangers, we know. And water, the basis of all life, can be deadly as well. Technology, just like fire and water, has its dangers, too. But just as we use fire and water to serve our interests, while warning of their dangers, so too must we protect our children and families by using these technologies to serve our interests, even as we teach about their dangers and avoid them.

Technology is currency in the twenty-first century. As we honour our families and children, let us commit to keeping technology as a tool and a springboard – never as a snare.

My Fellow Nationals - For much of the world in this turbulent era, foreign assistance has dried up. And in most countries, commercial credit simply cannot be found. On this twenty-ninth anniversary of our independence, however, look at how we, as a people, have used our expertise, our vision, and our wherewithal to ensure that our country has its own, independent source of funds, to advance the public interest: Funds to educate our children...funds to strengthen the tourism industry...funds for our farmers...funds for training, construction, sports, and so much more – all through our internally created Sugar Industry Diversification Fund.

And it is through this Foundation and other funding sources that the Federal Government of St Kitts and Nevis together with the Private Sector and NGO community will pursue a new and exciting Economic Stimulus Program that will respond to our training and skills needs for our employed and unemployed citizens, especially those who have recently completed their high school, university and college education at home and abroad.

By doing this, we will not only increase productivity among the employed but we will also unlock the potential for innovative start-up entrepreneurship as we drive the economy toward positive growth.

This is how we cherish our children. This is how we strengthen our families. And this is how we build a nation, a proud nation that is equipping itself to meet the challenges of the "Human Age".

So, as we mark this anniversary, there is indeed much for which to be thankful. And our hearts should, indeed, be filled with hope.

In this regard we thank God for the life and services of two outstanding citizens whom His Excellency the Governor General has been pleased to confer the following Independence National Honours: 1) Star of Merritt in Nursing to Maria Louisa Barker and 2) Medal of Honour in Agriculture to Agnes Crossley.

Let us rejoice in all that we, together, have accomplished, and let us, in the years ahead, with courage and determination, each doing his part to promote the public good.

May God guide us in this regard, and may God forever bless our Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

Thank you.