



Message by Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony
to mark the 27th Anniversary of St. Lucia's Independence
22 February 2006

Twenty-seven years of anything, by any measure, is a milestone. By the yardstick of anniversaries, it is more than a Silver Jubilee. But by the measuring tape of history, it is but a short space in time.

Our 27th anniversary of Independence is, like every other, a time for the usual reflection and projection. But this year, as we take steps at home and abroad that will decide much about our future as a nation, we must also focus on what is that makes us proud citizens of St. Lucia and examine the potential locked in the collective power that we have as a people.

We have chosen as our theme this year "C'est peyi nou. Pouvwa-ah se sa nou.!" For the many St. Lucians who still have to grapple with our indigenous language, this means "It's our country. The power is ours!"

It is not for nothing that we have chosen to select a theme this year to be acclaimed in the Kweyol language. If anything, we wish to highlight the continuing importance of recognizing the place and role our native tongue plays in our history and our development. Indeed, the St. Lucian nationality is incomplete without at least an understanding of the native tongue.

It is not for nothing that our Mother Tongue was elevated to the status of having equal recognition to the official language we inherited from the Mother Country. People can hardly miss the sense of pride and satisfaction displayed by the sons and daughters of St. Lucia every time our Governor General delivers the annual Throne Speech in Kweyol. It is an affirmation of the fact that when it comes to our language that was once frowned upon and suppressed, we today give it the reverence it deserves.

Yes, St. Lucia is our country. And the power is ours to do what we have to, to take it to the next stage.

Our first 25 years have seen us forge for ourselves a place among the nations. Our Nobel Laureates have placed us on a pedestal that is as much a pinnacle of achievement as our Pitons are twin peaks of world beauty and environmental heritage. Our bi-lingual and multi-cultural heritage adds to our diversity, but also makes us unique.

Indeed, we are special.

But even while we are special, we are also citizens of the universe, of the wider world – a world that is increasingly becoming a global village.

We are no longer tied to the apron strings of our former colonial masters. We are today masters of our own destiny. But we are also the bearers of the historic responsibility of shaping the destiny of our young nation.

Where others are celebrating the growth of civilizations, we are deciding who the St. Lucians of tomorrow will be. Yet, even as we shape our future, we cannot do so in isolation from what's happening around us.

The changes in the regional Caribbean landscape and the fast-moving developments in the wider world all have their impact on what we do. The dawn of a new Caribbean is being forced by the realities of the new global dispensation. The inequality of global trade is increasingly influencing how well we survive, or if at all.

But the challenges also bring with them the opportunities we must take. They offer the opportunity to unlock that power of potential that resides in each and every one of us.

As we observe our 27th anniversary of Independence, it behoves us to remain true to our objective of setting the pace and establishing the foundation of generations to come.

How we approach the problems and challenges of today will decide what our future will be. The tasks we face may be monumental, but there is no mountain too high for us to climb, just as there is no valley too low for us to cross.

As we celebrate our 27th year as an independent nation, we do so as we face challenges that will determine our place in history. Our challenges are many, but definitely not too much. We have overcome difficulties in the past and we can in the future.

Here's hoping that we are all willing to face the challenges and accept our responsibilities as we lay claim to our country and the power that we have, as a people, to make a difference for our country and for our children, today and for tomorrow.

“C'est p[eyi nous; Pouvwa-a ses sa nous!” This is our country and the power is ours. Let's use that power to change for the better – always!