

MESSAGE BY THE HONOURABLE PATRICK MANNING

PRIME MINISTER OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF SPIRITUAL BAPTIST LIBERATION DAY 2009

As we celebrate Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day in 2009, let us continue to be inspired by the triumph of that historic struggle for freedom of worship and expression, heroically waged by the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad and Tobago. With conviction and divine inspiration they took on the might of the Colonial Authority and gained the freedom to worship in accordance with their religious beliefs. It is a reminder that no matter what the difficulty, with resilience, determination and conviction, we can overcome all obstacles in our path to development.

This is a message for all times and which we must always cherish both as individuals and as a nation as we continue the challenging journey of life. Indeed we can draw on its comfort in this very difficult period for the global economy and its negative impact on our national life.

The history of our country is rich with rewarding experiences of success in rewarding adversity. We have traveled a long road from that first encounter between Europe and the Caribbean; to slavery and indentureship; to Colonialism; and then to Independence and the attainment of full sovereignty. There was struggle every step of the way

involving leaders and ordinary citizens, and our achievements should make us proud as a nation and confident of our future.

The celebration of Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day also underscores our most important achievement as a people. This is the unity of our diverse society. In other countries, racial and religious differences have torn apart societies leaving wounds that sometimes never heal. We have always been a shining example to the world of the equality of all our people and all our religions. This is to the eternal credit of all citizens, past and present, whose conduct of their lives based on respect for one another has been of pivotal importance in the foundations of our society and civilization. It is also a tribute to the leadership that engendered the stabilizing harmony of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Spiritual Baptists are among the many religions that flourish in our country and which contribute to our nation's development. Our constitution affirms our belief in God as the creator of all and as a guiding principle for the conduct of national affairs. Religious beliefs and practices are a most integral part of the lives of the vast majority of our citizens.

We need spiritual strength for the challenge of life. We need it in our individual lives and collectively as a nation. Let us be thankful for the attainment of freedom by the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad and Tobago. Our nation has benefited greatly from this achievement. The religion has grown from strength to strength, administering to the spiritual needs of its members and making a most significant contribution to national life through education, social amelioration efforts and the strengthening of community life.

On this occasion, we salute the Spiritual Baptists on their achievements and their growing contribution to national development. On behalf of the Government I extend greetings to the national community on this joyous occasion of Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day.

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