

TCDSB Delegation Written Submission
2021-05-18

Hello everyone, trustees, delegates;

I'm currently an undergraduate student, but four short years ago I was a student in the Toronto Catholic school system. I still have siblings in this system, and I care very much about their formation and education.

I was delighted to hear about Trustee Garry Tanuan's proposal for Catholic schools to dedicate the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As Cardinal Collins called for in his letter to the board, our schools have a "responsibility to help their students...to encounter Jesus," and this dedication is a wonderful way to do that. As a prior TCDSB student, I was blessed to have some teachers at my high school who would set up adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel in the mornings. This short time set aside in the morning signified to me that my teachers, the people in charge of my school, cared deeply about me and about our shared faith. They provided a way for me to encounter Jesus at school, and I will always be grateful for that.

I am sure that in dedicating June to the Sacred Heart, this short month set aside to contemplate Our Lord's love for us will signify to students that there is a place for them to turn as Catholics: towards the heart of Jesus. The first novena I ever prayed, which is a series of prayers over the course of 9 days, was Padre Pio's novena to the Sacred Heart. In this novena, we meditate on Jesus' words: "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." This is a message that our students do not hear often enough, because it can never be repeated too many times. To Whom can we turn if not to Christ, Whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits?

What is so beautiful about this prayer, and about dedicating June completely to the Sacred Heart, is that doing so orients our children to seek solace in the Heart of Jesus during these especially stressful times. We need to support students mentally, physically, and spiritually. Letting them know that they can turn to the Sacred Heart without ridicule or hesitation is of utmost importance. I support Trustee Tanuan's proposal because I know from experience the profound peace realized in turning to the Sacred Heart, and I think a decision on behalf of the board to make this turn would signify a depth of understanding about the spiritual needs of our age and of our children. Relying most heavily on the Sacred Heart in June specifically is the perfect way to end this turbulent and, for many, traumatizing

year on a resounding note of hope, which was the theme of Catholic Education Week.

I would love to see this dedication implemented in prayer especially. The novena prayers to the Sacred Heart are especially rich and could provide material to incorporate into celebrating this devotion throughout the month. If possible, providing opportunities for prayer in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament would be ideal. The Cardinal's letter outlines some other practical ways to live out this devotion.

Thank you for your time!