

Dear TCDSB trustees, parents, and teachers,

I, a former student at the TCDSB, would like to support the motion by Nancy Crawford to both recognize and promote June as Sacred Heart month throughout the TCDSB community.

The devotion of the Sacred Heart is a popular Catholic devotion that arose out of apparitions by Jesus to a French nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. It emphasizes Jesus' heart, which thirsts for love from his beloved children. I would argue that now, more than ever, when students are isolated, mental health is at an all time low, and families are forced to confront disagreements they previously avoided, we need devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

As educators, trustees, and parents, you undoubtedly know the crisis that Catholic students face in 21st century culture. Given the constraints of the pandemic, children lack face-to-face connection with their teachers, visible encouragement from their peers, and outlets to express themselves (through sports, music, etc). Most importantly, they lack a grounding framework upon which to approach their lives, as they discover who they are. This is where our Catholic faith emerges. We need to emphasize to all students of this board that their identity is not an arbitrary, discardable construct, but that they are first and foremost children of God. If we do not do so, our students will inevitably adopt the standards of the secular world as their metrics of success and self-worth. And, if the mental health crisis has not clarified this enough, these metrics never satisfy. They are grounded in lies about our identity – that we are merely what we do, what we have, or who we know.

So why the devotion to the Sacred Heart in particular? The devotion to the Sacred Heart is the perfect response to what our Generation, Generation Z needs. We believe as Catholics that Jesus has a long-suffering, compassionate love for every soul. They are dear to His heart, and they don't need to achieve anything, or know anyone, or be "anyone" to merit His love. When we (as Gen Zers) compare ourselves to other people, especially through social media, or define ourselves through our achievements, we always emerge inadequate. We cannot let this crisis settle in the hearts of our students. They must know that their souls are beautiful enough that Jesus would die for them, no matter what they have done or what they feel about themselves. No amount of intellectual knowledge can provide that certainty, and I hope as an alumnus that the TCDSB can continue to re-affirm the fundamental identity all students have as children enveloped in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In Christ,
Daniel Lobo