

Distinguished Trustees,

Thank you for having me. By way of introduction, my name is Liam Farrer. I'm a Ph.D. Candidate in Theological Studies at Regis College, the Jesuit member college of the Toronto School of Theology and the University of Toronto and a theologian in the Catholic tradition. I rise today, albeit virtually, to support Trustee Crawford's motion that the Board focus on the Sacred Heart of Jesus this June and every June hereafter.

As someone who, quite literally, studies grace, I would be remiss if I did not bring my delegation by pointing out that I do not think that this motion was Trustee Crawford's idea; I believe she's responding to the grace of the Holy Spirit who inspired and invited her to put this wonderful motion before the Board. I bring this up not to be problematic or facetious but because I genuinely believe that the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit is one of the key elements of Catholic education. Everyone involved in Catholic education must recognize that within the TCDSB, there is one true teacher, The Christ. We are called to let his Holy Spirit guide us in making our schools a place where students can not only learn about him but where everything from Masses to Math can be an encounter with our living God. The ultimate hallmark of Catholic education must be that a student leaves our schools recognizing and appreciating that the fundamental core of their identity is that of a beloved Child of God. This can only be done through a personal encounter with the living God where one responds to his graced invitation and open their hearts to Him.

One way that the Church has traditionally maintained that people may encounter and respond to God's invitation is through the use of prayers and devotions. I believe that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an excellent place to start in our current circumstances. It is again for this reason that I genuinely believe that the Holy Spirit is inviting the Board to make June Sacred Heart Month. The Gospel for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart (Mt 11: 25-30) sees Jesus preaching about how God has taken away things from the wise and given them to the children and how people can cast their burdens on him for he is meek and humble of heart. By placing the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the core of the month of June, the TCDSB can cooperate with our Lord's invitation to us all to find rest in him. This response could be as simple as reminding students daily that as Children they have a special place in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and /or include a daily prayer to the Sacred Heart in the Classroom.

Furthermore, I believe that devoting the month of June to the Sacred Heart will provide an excellent catechetical opportunity for teachers to establish within their classrooms the link between the sacraments and social justice. Teachers can very easily identify the water and blood that poured forth from Jesus' pierced Sacred heart with the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist through which we conform ourselves further to Him while at the same time noting that these Sacraments which bring us closer to Jesus' sacred heart should make our hearts beat and break for the same things that the Sacred Heart breaks for. A particular way to do this might be to reflect on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in June, in light of Red Dress Day in May.

Similarly the reestablishment of June as the traditional month of the Sacred Heart would serve to breathe new life into the concept of the Catholic imagination, which could encourage students to seek a further connection between faith and the arts.

Finally, I believe that the Feast of the Sacred Heart ought to be celebrated liturgically in Catholic Schools each year. The fact that the the Sacred Heart is one of the few solemnities not moved to Sunday and celebrated during the school year would also allow the school family to celebrate a Solemnity together.

The Sacred Heart is an ancient devotion and, due to this fact, I am sure that there are many other valid reasons to honour the Sacred Heart in Catholic Schools. Well I cannot speak to these I can only express my hope that for these reasons, if they are known to you, as well as for the reasons I have outlined above you vote in favour of Trustee Crawford's proposal to make June Sacred Heart Month in the TCDSB.

Sincerely,

Liam A. Farrer, MTh, MA

PhD Candidate, Regis College, Toronto School of Theology / University of Toronto