

CCSJ calls on citizens to respect self and others during Carnival season

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The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ), urges citizens and visitors to demonstrate by their actions that they respect themselves, others and the environment during this Carnival season.

If we are to build our nation and set an example to our youth, let us refrain from violating our dignity; let us take responsibility for our actions and behave in such a way that we will turn the tide and embrace morals and values that will help us to build a civilization of love.

You and I can foster a culture of respect and responsibility. As we have said before, the challenge for each of us is to recognise our dignity/self-worth as individuals and that of others and to pursue personal excellence. A lack of modesty creates a fertile ground for individuals to rid themselves of social responsibility or ethical standards. Strive to avoid reckless behaviour; show respect for self and for others and take responsibility for all your actions.”

Archbishop Harris has said that *we have* let the *culture shape us* instead of being the ones to *shape the culture*. Each of us can help to shape the culture by making a commitment to exercise self-control and modesty in dress and behaviour during the Carnival season.

Catholics believe that we all are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26-27) and that deep within us there is a voice that urges us to do good and avoid evil. Listen to that voice. Modesty helps us to rein in our human passions. The Catholic Carnival Band (The Word & Associates) has proven over the past few years, as have a number of bands, particularly children’s bands, that one can enjoy oneself without losing one’s dignity.

And don’t do as the calypso says and let the “liquor conquer” you. As the retired Principal of Rose Hill RC School, Thora Best, constantly reminded her students in the school’s motto: “Do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.”

Blessed John Paul II rightly said: "Every generation needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like but in having the right to do what we ought." So, while we have rights, we also have responsibilities as citizens. Character development is enhanced if one aims for high personal standards. Freedom of expression should not lead us to act in an indecent manner.

Reflect on the core values that guide you as you make decisions daily. Enjoy carnival but remember to maintain a high standard of decency. Embrace a code of conduct that will allow you to be a role model for others to emulate; a code that will lift our nation to what Martin Luther King Jr. called "a higher, more noble place." Happy Carnival!

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