

CCSJ makes plea for modesty in dress and 'good' behaviour during Carnival

The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) calls on all party-goers and revellers during this Carnival period, to dress and behave in a manner that is commensurate with our inherent human dignity. Remember the words in Romans 12:2: "Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind."

It is time we reflect on what we call "we culture" in TT and take up the challenge of transforming the negative aspects of our "culture" so that we can take our nation to a higher, more noble level. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church (554,556) states: "...culture is that through which man and woman, as man and woman, become more man and woman, 'are' more, have more access to 'being'...The integral perfection of the person and the good of the whole of society are the essential ends of culture..."

"The formation of a culture capable of enriching men and women requires ...the involvement of the whole person, who, in the cultural sphere, expresses his/her creativity, intelligence, knowledge of the world and of human persons; someone moreover who puts to good use his/her capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and readiness to promote the common good."

At the centre of development is the human person. Are our people becoming more 'man' and 'woman' in their dress and behaviour at all times? What is our vision for TT and for its people? In answering these questions, it may be useful to consider how others view our "culture" and our people. Matthew Link's article in TIME Magazine (3 Feb 2011) – entitled: "*Caribbean Carnival Season: Let's Party*" outlines a view of us and of our country that needs to be addressed.

He describes our Caribbean Carnival as "one of the greatest debaucheries in the western hemisphere...Today, the Technicolor giant of all Caribbean Carnivals happens in Trinidad and Tobago...feel free to grind against your partner in the all-out gyrating style of dancing called 'wining.'"

Link's article places a mirror before us and shows us how others see us. God made us in His image and likeness with an inherent dignity. Although this dignity cannot be taken from us, we have a moral duty not to violate our personal dignity but to promote it and that of others. While we enjoy ourselves during Carnival, let us make use of responsible freedom.

Beware of the dangers related to consuming too much alcohol or engaging in reckless behaviour. Practise the 3 'R's of integrity: Respect for self; Respect for others; and Responsibility for all your actions. Martin Luther King Jr's words are instructive: "The time is always right to do what is right."

Each of us can be a role model for others who look to us for leadership in our homes, our communities, and our country. Let us enjoy our Carnival remembering our duty to promote positive morals and values in our society.

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