

Address

**Launch of the Roman Catholic
Values and Virtues Programme**

Friday April 1, 2011

In the collection of his works, entitled “Theology of the Body” Pope John Paul the second insists that the invisible God is made visible through the human body. For this reason, he insists, each and every human person, whatever their situation in life, young or old, rich or poor, of every race, creed or class is entitled to be treated with dignity.

Education in the values and virtues to which the Catholic Church and indeed many major religions subscribe will surely then result in attitudes and behaviors that treat each individual –self as well as all others with respect and dignity.

This is in keeping with the philosophy of my government as- in the words of the national framework for sustainable development- we seek to transform the society to create a just and fair environment. We are committed to human development as a central thrust of our plans, policies and actions with our core focus being the establishment and

maintenance of a regime of peace, security and prosperity for our nation. In the Ministry of Education we aim to educate and develop the children of our nation within a quality education system. Our vision for the education of our young citizens in the school system is to nurture children who will achieve their full potential are adequately developed socially and culturally, healthy and growing normally as well as emotionally developed, mature and happy.

The need for Moral and Values Education in Trinidad and Tobago has long been recognized. Although a national Morals and Values curriculum has been developed in the past for infusion into all subject areas we now plan to ensure that a robust programme is included in the revised primary school curriculum. In this regard I wish to digress a moment to refer to the national Consultation on the Primary School Curriculum that takes place next Tuesday and Wednesday at the Cascadia Hotel and Conference

centre and to invite your active participation through your representative organizations or by your written comments and papers. Details are available on the Ministry of Education website at www.moe.gov.tt. This consultation is providing the opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to the curriculum development process through their comments, discussions and written submissions. We plan to continue the process via the Ministry website and focus group meetings that will include classroom teachers as curriculum development proceeds.

There can be no denying the evidence of countless reports that show clearly that many of the problems which afflict our society today are based upon individual lifestyle choices. Some of these choices have the potential to create profound future harm to individuals and families: These problems reflect group and individual value choices in the every possible sense.

Burgeoning technology has also made it possible for ‘unready’ children and young people to come into possession of information that used to be comprehensively guarded under adult secrecy and fiat. The overarching problem is the fact that children and young people often lack the values and spiritual maturity that inform responsible use of such information

Our personal value system developed through our life experiences makes us what we are and determines our relationships with others, whether they will trust us, love us or hate us. It determines whether others will come to our assistance or walk away from us leaving us to mourn.

Many of our citizens are not aware that our education system by way of the various traditional subject areas assist in the development of an appropriate and acceptable moral and value based system which they have applied to their daily lives.

Stand alone programmes such as the *Values and Virtues Formation Programme 2011* that we are launching today—are intrinsically valuable , but they also support and enhance the regular curriculum offerings with which students interact on a daily basis. Students, the morals and values which our society cherishes are all around you in the various subjects which you study.

For example, let us look at the subjects tested within the National Tests at Standards Two and Four:

- In Language Arts when a child reads a story and feels sad when the main character is hurt, the emotional response is “empathy” and is caused by the value called “understanding”.
- Social Studies emphasizes peace, love and non-violence.
- Mathematics encourages the development of decision making skills and

- Science develops the value of understanding consequences.

Additionally Health and Family Life Education via its lifeskills approaches stresses ethical behaviour and the Physical Education and Sports and Visual and Performing Arts programmes because of the nature of the various disciplines within assist in the development of team building, emotional stability, sensitivity to our common aspirations, creativity, appreciation of the aesthetics and enhances skills such as communication and problem solving. Whilst, this is a programme developed for Roman Catholic schools and those who profess the faith, a programme such as this transcends all faiths for all major religions within our multi-racial, multi-ethnic multi-cultural society, agree on how we should treat with each other, for example, ...

- Christianity says “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”.

- Islam.... ‘No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.’
- Hinduism..... ‘This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done unto you.’
- Buddhism... ‘Hurt not others in ways that yourself would find hurtful.’

Programmes such as this are very necessary for the continued all round development of our citizenry. It is a clichéd but true statement that the future of a nation lies in the hands of its children. It is their moral fibre developed and nurtured within the walls of the classroom that will determine whether our still fledging nation continues to grow into a force to be reckoned with upon the world stage or whether we shall sink into the dark night of futility, violence and obscurity.

The programme being launched today will therefore help students to lead personally satisfying and socially

constructive lives through the internalization and adoption of the ideals and values held dear by our society and the development of the skills of moral reasoning and responsible decision making.

Teachers, it is imperative that every teacher becomes a teacher of morals and values in every primary school. Education in morals and values will help to eliminate some of the violence and fatalism that affect our society today. The future destiny of Trinidad and Tobago does not rest alone in the hands of the present day politicians, police or the business men, but also especially in those of students and scholars who come before you on a daily basis. This makes interventions such as this one very important in the eyes of the Ministry of Education.

Finally, let me again thank the Roman Catholic community for this initiative which the Ministry of Education welcomes as collaboration to fulfill its mandate of providing the nation of Trinidad and Tobago with well

rounded, firmly emotionally grounded and stable citizens who will ensure our continued positive growth and development.

Teachers, let me leave you with this statement:

The destiny of the nation is folded within its budding youth as is the flower within the close embrace of the petals. *What you think and do today, the nation will think and do tomorrow*", and as teachers, it is your moral compass which will determine the direction in which they would go. You have a duty to perform for this nation and failure is not an option.

I wish to close my address this morning with a Prayer for Purity from page 47 of "My Values and Virtues" Students Workbook recommended to be said daily.

Thank you