



Created in the Image of God

By Noel Martin, OCSTA Director of Catholic Education

God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created them; male and female, He created them. God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:27, 31

Made in God's image – that is the sublimity and the quintessential dignity of the human person. Regardless of race, creed, colour, political or financial status, each human person is created in God's image and is intrinsically entitled to the respect and dignity accruing to that reality. The Pope in Rome, the chief executive in her office, the teacher in the classroom, the young person on the hockey rink, the surgeon at the operating table, the homeless person under the overpass equally share the dignity of being created *in God's image*. God not only created human beings *in God's image*, but God appraised creation and found it “very good”! The beauty and immensity of this truth has profound consequences for each of us – to ourselves, to one another, and to the created universe.

To be created in God's image means, first, a profound respect for oneself. It implies for each of us an obligation to nurture and develop the talents with which we were blessed. It means a respect for our entire humanity, so that we do not willfully subject ourselves to life threatening circumstances, or abuses that may inflict grievous injury or mental harm on us.

Finding God's image in our neighbour is not always the easiest of tasks. Our human nature often has us see the warts and the wrinkles before recognizing the image of God that stands before us. Since relationships are such an essential part of who we are as practicing Catholic Christians, then perceiving the divine imagery

in those with whom we relate is paramount in our loyalty to the Gospel message of “loving our neighbour as we love ourselves.” (Mark 12:31) Character development has always been an integral part of Catholic education. Its source lies in that most profound and optimistic of truths – we are all created *in God's image*. Our schools, in their images and icons, must constantly reflect this reality.

Our equal creation *in God's image*, female-male, young-old and all in-between is the foundation of the mutual respect and reverence with which we must view each other. This truth gives the lie to the age-long perception that some are more equal than others. When God created us “little less than the angels” (Psalm 8:5), God did not specify or imply that there were any exceptions. Not only did God create us, God gave us a commission to be faithful stewards of creation. Since we are mortal beings, our responsibility is to maintain, foster and transmit the gift of creation to our children and to our children's children. Furthermore, as St. Teresa of Avila has told us “God has no hands but ours” to continue the work of creation.

For Catholics, the invisible God of Creation is made visible in Jesus Christ, who as St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians, “is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation” (Colossians 1:15). Our Catholic education, firmly rooted in the gospel values of Jesus, should be the mirror that reflects to the world around us a vibrant image of a God who created us, called us in love, and remains faithful.