



**ANNUAL ARCHBISHOP SAMUEL E. CARTER, S.J., LECTURE:
“CHARACTER FORMATION IN 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION”**

JANUARY 6, 2016

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(Please Check Against Delivery)

Chairman Anton, Archbishop Reece, Head boy Jabari may I first of all express appreciation for your kind words of introduction. At the same time I wish to sincerely thank the Champion family and the Archbishop Samuel Carter Foundation for inviting me to deliver this lecture on “Character Formation in 21st Century Education”. I note that I follow my classmate Minister Thwaites who delivered last year’s lecture. In a manner of speaking, through us, as George’s Old Boys, St. George’s is giving back to Champion in return for Champion contributing so much to our school’s development, as, in the broad sweep of history, Champion was a key feeder preparatory school to St. Georges before you graduated to secondary status fifty five years ago. But my connection to the Champion family is more personal and direct; my son Tarik contrived, with my full connivance, to have the best of both worlds, to go to St George’s up to 4th form and then to Champion for 5th form to do his CXC; in fact I have pleasant recollections of delivering the keynote address at his graduation class in July 1995. Moreover all my second generation

cousins, the Munroe's, the Knights, and others, were Championites; one such, David Plummer, achieved what was then unusual, a silver medal at Champs for Champion in the 800 meters, so I feel very much at home with the Champion family.

Equally, with the Foundation which celebrates and carries forward the work of Archbishop Carter. I did know him personally but not so well as I would have loved to. I learnt very early from my mother that he and her- then a Ford- were classmates, along with Louise Bennett, Hugh Shearer and others at St. Simon's College which did so much to form their characters as devotees to public service. In fact at my parents 50th wedding anniversary mass at which Archbishop Sam officiated, he recalled, with a twinkle in his eyes, how, at St Simon's, he used to admire the 'pretty Ford girl'. In the mid-90s he and I did work together as among co-founders of Citizens Action for Free and Fair Elections. We not only worked together but literally walked together in that famous peace march through some of the tough neighbourhoods of inner-city Kingston. I recall well when some misguided citizens surrounded us marchers, at whose head was Archbishop Sam with me a step behind; they tried to intimidate us, "unu fe lef yah, go bout' unu business"; some otherwise stout hearted males amongst us heeded the advice; somehow found taxis and left quickly. Archbishop Carter did not flinch, stood his ground and the march continued through Tivoli Gardens. Such was the courage of the man.

But you did not ask me here to reminisce on the past but to talk about the present and the future: **character formation in 21st century education**. This may seem a little inappropriate in memorialising an outstanding Jamaican who hardly lived to see beyond the dawn of the 21st century as he passed away in September 2002. On reflection however Archbishop Sam in his understanding of the interaction between social environment and character formation was very much a man of the 21st century, indeed a man of all centuries. Please listen to his words penned in **The Pastoral Letter -The Priority of Labour** written in May 1988. Talking about the effect on “personal and family life” of unacceptable living conditions of Jamaica’s working people he said:

“The true impact of these conditions cannot be adequately expressed by statistics, data and number. In Jamaica, more than one out of every five workers created in the image and likeness of God, are denied work. Their sense of worth is damaged, ambitions extinguished and hope for a decent and productive life frustrated...the resulting anger and bitterness cannot but aggravate our higher level of crime and violence including domestic violence in which women and children are victims of socio-economically induced aggression.

When a worker, even by long hours of tedious labour cannot earn enough to feed and clothe his or her children, send them to school, and provide no better than miserable and sub-human housing, not only is that persons human

dignity violated, and their worth as providers destroyed but family life, the basic structure of society suffers disastrous damage. Men who cannot find dignity in work are tempted to father more children, women whose wages are insufficient to support themselves or their children are driven to find partners primarily for economic motives. Children are the most innocent and vulnerable victims of the physical and emotional violence of these situations”.

These words of Archbishop Sam in effect talking about character formation among so many in conditions of late 20th century Jamaica, do they not still resonate in 21st century Jamaica?

So let us now turn to character formation in our times, nationally and globally. Character for me “encompasses all of agency, attitudes, behaviours, dispositions, mind-sets, personality, temperament and values”. Character qualities therefore are distinct from skills which represent the ability to effectively use what one knows. I might add that character refers to qualities, more so than traits, because the latter are often assumed to be fixed and mutable while, in my opinion, character can be learned and acquired to a certain extent. May I link this understanding to the mission of Campion College, a mission bearing the stamp of your first Headmaster, Archbishop Carter, “a school committed to building the Kingdom of God – a world characterised by social justice, love and respect for the dignity of every person”.

Towards this end, your mission statement pledges “to give every student opportunities to achieve his or her maximum potential ...so as to develop as a confident , critically conscious and useful citizen who will **shape a more just society**”. Very clearly this includes but goes well beyond building academic prowess or intellectual capacity, important as those undoubtedly are. It may be gratuitous for me, but I do ask you to note what jumps out at me in the mission statement; namely “**shape a more just society**”. Shaping I understand to include but go beyond talking about a more just society; more so, so more than just complaining about injustice. In this regard I note the intersection between Campion’s mission and the National Pledge “**to stand up for Justice, Brotherhood and Peace so that Jamaica may under God, increase in beauty fellowship and prosperity, and play her part in advancing the welfare of the whole Human Race**”. I am happy to say and you should be proud that so many of your graduates, particularly some of the recent Rhodes Scholars with whom I have had the privilege to work, I think of Nadiya Figueroa on whose Rhodes selection committee I was privileged to serve, are indeed fulfilling this mission seeking to shape “a more just society”. I think of some of your graduates, inductees into the Hall of Fame, like Billy Shagoury , Mark Golding and Peter Espeut , who are in different ways also seeking to fulfil this mission. Can you imagine what Jamaica would be like if more of your graduates, your students and more young people who

recite this pledge had developed characters formed to turn these words into deeds – standing up for justice, shaping a more just society? That more don't do so reflects not only shortfalls in 'character formation' in their education and socialisation but as well the seductive, distracting and debilitating nature of main stream 21st century society, a society, which in Jamaica, as elsewhere, despite immense technological achievements, is engulfed in a deep and broad crisis of economy, of governance and, most profoundly, of values.

I would like to sum up this crisis drawing heavily on one of the most recent encyclicals of Pope Francis: **The Apostolic Exaltation Evangelii Gaudium**. Chapter Two is entitled "Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment". The Holy Father frames the crisis in the following way: **"in our time humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve the people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time... the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day... a number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation even in the so-called rich countries. The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is**

a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology... an age of knowledge and information which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power”.

Pope Francis sums up the features of the crisis as encompassing a number of elements which constitute powerful forces which, if left unchecked, dominate the formation of the 21st century character and risk infecting 21st century education. I mention 5 such:

1. **A culture of increasing materialism, individualism and secularisation.** In this context “a growing deterioration of ethics... an information driven society which bombards us indiscriminately with data – all treated as being of equal importance and which leads to remarkable superficiality in the area of moral discernment”.
2. **An economy of exclusion.** He goes on: “some people continue to defend trickle down theories which assumes that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion expresses a crude and naïve trust in

the goodness of those wielding economic power...meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting”.

3. **The new idolatry of money.** The Pope then correctly indicates “the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few”. We note in passing that, according to the IMF in its Western Hemisphere Outlook in May 2013, Jamaica has the second highest income gap of all the countries in the Western Hemisphere. “To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions”. In Jamaica the Minister of Finance indicated to the Parliament recently that 25% of entities earning a billion dollars in revenue and above were neither filing tax returns nor paying company taxes.
4. **A financial system which rules rather than serves.** Archbishop Carter put it this way” people do not exist for the service and the development of the economy, rather, the economy is to serve the basic and essential needs...of all persons”.
5. **Inequality which spawns violence.** “until exclusion and inequality in society and between people’s are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate

violence... no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquillity...because the socio-economic system is unjust at its root”.

I have cited Evangelii Gaudium at length because I believe it sums up well the foundations and manifestations of the crisis of our times and the influences on character formation which 21st century education, especially in Catholic institutions, shall have to understand, explain and resist.

Understand first the impact on character formation often seen among those at the “Head of the stream” in fuelling greed and dishonesty, instead of compassion and integrity, amongst otherwise educated, highly-skilled and well-off people at the pinnacle of society.

- 2012 – HSBC admits to widespread anti-money laundering violations including taking over \$800M from notorious Mexican and Colombian drug cartels. HSBC is fined \$1.9B.
- May 2014 – Credit Suisse fined \$2.6B after pleading guilty to helping US Citizens evade billions of dollars in tax over several decades.
- June 2014 – BNP Paribas fined \$8.9B for wilfully and knowingly breaking US sanction laws. According to US Regulators the bank “with the

knowledge of multiple senior executives engaged in a longstanding scheme that illegally funnelled money to countries involved in terrorism and genocide”

- 2015 – United Office of Drugs and Crime estimated the amount of money laundered globally each year is 2 to 5 percent of GDP or 800B to 2 trillion in current US dollars.

Now to the head of the political stream, just in the last few months:

- September 2015- President of Guatemala Otto Perez Molina indicted for corruption and three years earlier Sylvio Berlusconi former Italian Prime Minister found guilty of tax fraud and sent to prison for four years.

I dare say none of these bank CEOs or political leaders were uneducated. I am sure if you did an investigation you would find that many of them passed exams with flying colours. Clearly, in the values system of these and too many captains of finance and leaders in government we could discern the idolatry of money and clear shortfalls in character formation.

Look at our own experience here at home: what could have driven so many Jamaicans, many with degrees, some quite well off, to invest in Ponzi schemes which promised 10% per month increase on principal as, the pipe dream which David Smith, subsequently convicted criminal and money launderer dangled before

so many? Please understand these character deficits when accumulated, not only negatively impact individual livelihoods, but the national economy as a whole. A 2009 study done by the International Monetary Fund estimated that, the amounts invested/lost to the Jamaican economy in OLINT, Cash Plus, Worldwide, LewFam etc at 1 to 2 billion United States dollars, that is 12.5% to 25% percent lost to GDP; except for Albania the highest of eleven countries surveyed in the IMF paper. Approximately, fifty thousand investors/accounts were involved, about 2% of Jamaica's population. Can we doubt that many bright graduates of Campion, and of St. George's, were among the willing victims of this fraud – in so doing were they engaged in advancing Campion's mission to “shape a more just society” or in advancing St George's motto: Ad majorem, dei gloriam (To the greater glory of God) ? or were they reflecting shortfalls in character formation in late 20th and early 21st century education?

And often at the lower end of the income scale are the lotto scammers. Once again greed , here compounded by lack of opportunity, compounded further by flawed morals and deformed character formation fuelling murder and mayhem.

Is all of this indicating that we Jamaicans are blind to the need for character formation in 21st century education? Not at all. **Vision 2030, Jamaica's National Development Plan**, accurately specifies some of the qualities in our Jamaican character that a transformed education is designed to produce: Jamaicans “socially

– aware and responsible; conscious of what is good for society; spiritually conscious and mature”. Similarly in his sectoral presentation on May 7, 2014 Minister Thwaites indicated “the future of this country rests on effective education. By that we mean passing subjects, acquiring skills, and **DEVELOPING CHARACTER. Always all three.**” So we have as one clear goal character formation in 21st century education. But why then a shortfall? Obviously, there is much in community circumstances and household conditions, as Campion’s Founder Headmaster pointed out, militating against ‘character formation’. But as well, could the deficit be because we believe that “character formation”, important as it is, does not rank with passing Maths and English and advancing STEM education? Do we recognize that if our education gets the best results in Maths, English and STEM but falls short in character formation, it is like ‘sounding brass and tinkling cymbal’ ;we may get economic growth but not a sustainable society, not a society characterised by equity, justice, security, peace and human development.

To attenuate, mitigate and ultimately turn around the main stream culture of individualism materialism and secularism, an indispensable, number one priority is to educate graduates who are not only academically bright, who not only have marketable skills but who are also able to engage the public and the private sectors in ways that are ethical, in ways that can truly transform Jamaica, and ultimately

the global community, into a society of justice and fair play. Humanity is waking up to this reality, if too slowly, as it is increasingly obvious that things cannot continue as they are, globally if mankind is to survive and, in Jamaica, if we are to create a more cohesive society in which ‘ all shall be one’(Archbishop’s motto), and if we each are not to fall victim to increasing social disorder and personal stress in our daily lives.

For things to change, enhanced character formation in 21st century education, especially in catholic institutions like Campion, is essential. But let us not fool ourselves, character formation in education at various levels, has to be complimented by other transformations in other spheres. Concretely, you tell me how you will instil the understanding in a young student, here in Jamaica or anywhere else, that “honesty is the best policy” or “crime and corruption does not pay” if all around him, the honest struggle every day to make two ends meet while some of the dishonest and corrupt in high places, at the global and national levels, drive the best Mercedes, live in veritable mansions, own their own yachts – enjoy all the conventional fruits of the good life; are rarely, if ever, investigated, prosecuted, brought before the courts, found guilty and jailed. Put another way character formation in the 21st century education, to achieve maximum impact, must be complemented by a number changes:

- **In the justice system** to uphold the rule of law and to demonstrate that crime does not pay, whatever the person's station in life;
- **In the economy** to regulate the tyranny of the uncontrolled market. As Pope Francis put it: "money must serve, not rule"; very specifically, structures must be adjusted to ensure provision of opportunities for "decent work" for the youth, to ensure preservation of the environment and to mitigate climate change;
- **In the media** – to downplay individualism and materialism, to expose corruption more and promote concern for society as a whole, to celebrate and propagate examples of the positive;
- **In other institutions of socialisation**, like the church and the family household to more assertively form concepts of right and wrong amongst the young.

In this context what are the qualities we should seek to cultivate in a reformed curriculum, in our school– based character formation endeavours?

- **Ethics** – by this I mean a deep and practical understanding of the difference between right and wrong; of how to resolve ethical dilemmas; to make choices between my immediate self-interest and the wider public interest; to recognise and stand against injustice and to uphold integrity and fair-play. I

ask you to recall the remark of Theodore Roosevelt: ‘ **To educate a person in mind but not in morals is educate a menace to society**’

- **Mindfulness** – by this I mean a sense of self-awareness, knowing one’s strengths and weaknesses, recognising when one is going off the ‘ straight and narrow, being able to self-correct and to self-manage, to listen, to share, to have compassion.
- **Resilience** - to practise perseverance, tenacity, self-discipline, the ability to come back from setbacks; to persist in the face of push-back. It was Nelson Mandela who said: ‘ the greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall’
- **Courage** – the ability to stand up for what is right, to subordinate fear, to resist peer pressure when peer pressure encourages wrongs and not rights
- **Leadership** – the ability to persuade, influence, guide others to a higher level as much by your deeds as by your words, by what you practice as by what you preach, to empathize with, connect with, never to disrespect followership even when engaged in wrongs but to engage and correct that which is negative with patience and understanding .**Curiosity** – willingness to probe beneath the surface of what exists, to learn at all times not to be

content with received wisdom, to be open-minded towards the new and the positive.

May I conclude by commending the extent to which Campion is already making efforts in character education, with Christian Living Classes from first through sixth form in which the emphasis, I understand, is placed on the practice of lived faith. I commend the outreach ministries to Chambers Lane and to senior citizens homes. I am encouraged to hear that the social teachings of the church are brought to fourth and fifth forms and that the over forty clubs and societies each have a service component.

In that last regard, last year NIA sponsored a pilot experiment in three schools, in St. Hugh's, Holy Trinity and St. George's College, in the establishment of Integrity Clubs and the formation of Integrity Champions. The experiment showed promise. Out of it came a manual which I would commend to you as a possible framework for exploring the establishment of an Integrity Club at Campion. I am very encouraged by my experience a few months ago, in addressing the three Youth Consultative Conferences sponsored by the Governor General as part of the ' **I believe initiative**' to see the extent to which teachers and student leaders, head boys, head girls and prefects from across all the parishes of Jamaica expressed an interest in establishing such clubs in their institutions. My hope is that Campion, as one expression of fidelity to your first Headmaster, Archbishop Carter's concern

for social transformation, may begin the process of establishing and sustaining an integrity club and celebrating integrity champions, as one important ingredient of enhancing character formation in 21st century education. My vision would be that this school and other Catholic institutions would initiate the process that would lead, with the support of the Ministry of Education and NIA, in partnership with teachers and parents to establish, such clubs throughout our educational system. Of course appropriate curriculum reform for character building, would have to be given much higher priority than is now the case as one indispensable accompaniment of character formation

The raw material is there, hidden and often unseen, deep in the recesses of our peoples psyches, but real and present nevertheless as manifested in youngsters like Jabary Williams, a 19 year from Kidd Lane in Kingston inner-city. A few months ago, he found a bag containing approximately \$100,000. Despite great personal need – Jabary earns \$1000 a day when he does have work in a small bakery, despite much temptation, despite his friends treating him as an outcast, Jabary returned the \$100,000 to its rightful owner. We celebrate him even as we recognise that there are many other Jabary Williams' in our communities. It is our duty to seek them out, to give them encouragement, to strengthen the honest core of their personalities with transformed 21st century education.

In this endeavour, let us resolve to shape the character of which Archbishop Carter spoke in his 1987 Pastoral Letter; “it is not enough for a Christian simply to sympathise with the plight of the poor and understand the causes of poverty. We are called to action – action that is informed and effective. In addition to charitable donations we must take action to root out the causes of poverty that dehumanise so many people. This will mean committing our energies to changing the unjust, economic, social and political arrangements that give rise to the present condition of the poor”.

I dare to hope and to expect that Campion and other Catholic schools, with the support of the Archbishop Samuel Carter Foundations, old boys and old girls associations, parents and teachers shall be incubators for such ‘character formation in this 21st century’.

