

2006 Atlanta Convention Address by Mr. Russell Macfarlane First Principal 1960 - 1963



My sons – including a great number that I have never met. When Bamidele came to see me, he asked me to write out a message to you Charleans.

My problem was knowing when to begin. The obvious place is to begin at the beginning.

In the beginning, God created Heaven and Earth and he made man in his own image.

What is this image? It cannot be a body image because God has no body. Our image is our immortal soul, which God has given to us. It has powers of memory and understanding and free will, which gives us the ability to make

choices.

God also gave man the responsibility of controlling all things on earth, both animate and inanimate.

Principals must have principles. My view of teaching is that a teacher has a duty to pass on God's message. A teacher must help his pupils to develop their memory and understanding. He must give his pupils the appreciation of their power to choose and make decisions. He must try not to pack children with knowledge but must inspire them to seek knowledge and to find things out for themselves.

When I came to Nigeria in 1957 it was to a teacher at the Boys' School. When I arrived, I was told that no permission had yet been given to build the school so I was put on reserve and sent to Ife to be Principal of the Murumba Teachers' College in Ife. After two years, I was sent to Oyo to help set up Science teaching at St. Bernardine's Girls' at School. Permission finally having been obtained to build the Boys' School at Oshogbo, Bishop McCoy gave me the job: he gave me a plot of bushland and told me to get on with it. I chose the name Charles because I wanted the patron to be Charles Lwanga, the leader of the boy martyrs of Uganda, but their canonization process had not been completed, so I picked St. Charles Borromeo the great scholar-Archbishop of Milan and his was the motto 'Humanilitas' with the crown. It would be pleasing if the school could have both Charleses as patrons: Ss. Charles' Grammar School. The Grammar part is archaic and obsolete so that could be dropped.

Everything was left to me: designing buildings, supervising the builders, procuring furniture and other equipment, ordering books, putting in water and electricity, working out a curriculum for the studies, and finally enrolling students. I enjoyed all of it. When I selected students, I was looking for those who seemed most likely to succeed. Birth certificates were hard to get, and I had to rely on intuition to reject the old men who would have found study too hard. In this field, I did make a few mistakes. The school was Catholic but I admitted Protestant Christians, Moslems, and even a Hindu (Do you remember Raja Kapardia?).

I congratulate myself on making my choices. Many of the boys were more intelligent than I am and all of them have exceeded my expectations. I am proud of them.

The country was soon to become independent and I saw that what Nigeria needed most at that time were men of integrity and especially practically minded men. There was no shortage of men wanting to take over from the British Administrators and become big Ogas sitting behind desks and directing by remote control. What the country was going to need would be architects, doctors, electrical, mechanical, water and chemical engineers, even teachers and lecturers and people of that type, practical minded people and especially ones who put profession before profit. What I hear confirms that my dream has come true. What I never anticipated was that

you would spread all over the world like missionaries of St Charles.

Back again to the beginning. God is love, and if love is to have any purpose it must be shared, and so God created man. The love that people had for one another brought the people into communities and so began Civilization. African civilization is as old as European and other civilizations where groups of people, loving, respecting, and helping each other, formed clans or tribes. Civilization develops but not always for the better and the clan system has died out in most places. There I a Clan MacFarlane, but it is just a nostalgic charade, though it does have a website. Your tribal system does however remain civilized and you have strong bonds within your communities, and all are brothers. You took naturally to Scouting, where "a scout is the brother to every other scout..." It was you who as boys brought your tribal tradition into the school and even though you were not all the same tribe you cared for each other as brothers. You even included my wife and me in the family and called us your mother and father. I never knew I had so many sons, and I still do not know how many.

I am asked what is my wish for the future? All I can say is "Ad multos annos" which means, "keep going for many years", and

Benedicat vos Omnipotens Deus.

Your adopted father,
Russell Macfarlane.