

## Archive for May, 2009

May 22nd, 2009

### **Dates, Activities and News**

Our next management forum is June 8 – 10. There are still spaces available. Details at [www.crossmountainforum.com](http://www.crossmountainforum.com) This is also a great seminar if you are wanting to run your own school in the future. Regular cost \$975. Being offered for \$675.

The national conference is right around the corner. Details are on [www.christianmontessorifellowship.com](http://www.christianmontessorifellowship.com) on "Conference" Page. Conference cost \$350 Early registration \$325 and an additional discount of \$25 for CMF members. Early registration ends June 1st.

Live Montessori training begins June 21st in San Antonio and goes through the 26th. A tremendous week of getting the transforming basics of the Christian Montessori philosophy. Details are on [www.christianmontessorifellowship.com](http://www.christianmontessorifellowship.com)

Scheduled Regional Seminars for Fall 2009:  
St. Paul, MN September 26, 2009  
Shawnee, KS October 17, 2009  
Dallas, TX November 21, 2009

May 14th, 2009

### **God, why can't you make it any easier?**

That's a good Montessori prayer! Actually, it's a prayer that most of us breathe now and then – and often now! Why can't God make it any easier? All the good work that is done in Montessori schools that blesses children shouldn't have to be so hard. No, it is not the children by and large – they are a great joy. It is all the other things. Finances! Staffing! Parents! Life! Why doesn't God choose to make it easier? That's a mystery. It is also a mystery why we have been chosen and blessed to know Him and to serve Him. But why can't He make it easier for us to accomplish His calling in our lives? I keep forgetting a lesson I learned years ago. (It is hard for a type A to remember.) He is interested more in my relationship than in my ministry. "But Lord, this ministry is so important. It blesses little children and families and ..." And He smiles.

Yes, it is all true. And He knows it but He has a purpose beyond our vision and our understanding. He uses our ministries to forge our relationships. It is in life that we learn to handle life. Why doesn't He make it easier? I have no simple answer to that mystery but I do have a word of comfort – you are in good company! (Misery loves company is not exactly the word of comfort or encouragement you were hoping for.) Along with the word of comfort I can offer you a word of perspective.

Paul's resume: 2 Cor. 11:24

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.  
Three times I was beaten with rods,  
once I was stoned,  
three times I was shipwrecked,  
I spent a night and a day in the open sea.  
I have been constantly on the move.  
I have been in danger from rivers,  
in danger from bandits,  
in danger from my own countrymen,  
in danger from Gentiles,  
in danger in the city,  
in danger in the country,  
in danger at sea,  
and in danger from false brothers.  
I have labored and toiled  
and have often gone without sleep;  
I have known hunger and thirst,  
and have often gone without food.  
I have been cold  
and naked.  
Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Did he mention being lied about,  
Gossiped about.  
Criticized  
Abandoned  
Being second guessed  
Being in jail.  
Being chained  
And Oh yeah, being snake bit!

Did Paul "deserve" any of this? Do we? So why does God allow us to go through the tough times? In 2 Cor. 1:3-7 Paul uses the word comfort or comforted eight times. Comfort one another with the same comfort you've received. "I know how you feel." Is no comfort from someone who has no idea of how you feel. Death, divorce, despair, loss, failure, pain,

betrayal, humiliation are all part of the fall. Sympathy is feeling for someone; empathy is feeling with someone. Scripture tells us that we have a High Priest who is touched by our infirmities. And He asks us to bear each other's burdens. So why do you go through hard times? To be able to help others? In Peanuts, Linus tells Lucy, "We are here to help others." "Well, what are the others here for?" asks Lucy. It's still a good question! Why doesn't He make it easier? He has his own reasons. And as Charlie Brown says, "Pain hurts." There is no way to minimize the discomfort we encounter. People in the world tend to mask it with money, alcohol, drugs, sex, or power. But what do you do when you follow God and it leads through valleys that feel like the shadow of death? I think you have to keep going. Does the pain stop? Not always. Do things turn out right? Not always. Do you get what you want? Not always. What do you get? Endurance. You will reap if you don't faint. However our reaping may not be in the here and now.

We live both in a natural and supernatural world. We are to be good stewards of that which we can control and are called to cede control to God in those areas beyond our control. There is no way to minimize those challenges except by trusting them into God's hands. And so when we are faced with "Why can't God make it any easier?" we must lean into the wind of faith and let it carry us forward. The irony of sailing is that you can make progress "against" the wind but it is how you set your tiller that will determine your progress.

Life is real – and often painful but if we can steadfastly look at Jesus in the midst of our challenges we might say with Paul (I Cor. 4:8): We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

May 5th, 2009

## **The "S" on your T-shirt isn't for Superman (or woman.)**

"Faster than a speeding bullet ... able to leap tall buildings in a single bound ..." we are well familiar with the resume of Superman (or Superwoman.) Ironically, because of how well our children perform there is a tendency to view Montessori teachers as Superwomen.

They must be, to be able to achieve such amazing outcomes. And when we become Montessori teachers this same myth drives and hounds us.

When Barbara was a young teacher and director she looked at her mature staff in awe. The control, respect and authority they seemed to exude were beyond her experience. That tends to discourage the new teacher. "I'll never be able to do that" is often the unspoken thoughts of the rookie. It is the same feeling we bring to our regard of mature Christians. "I'll never be that holy, saintly, confident etc."

In the years that followed, the younger teachers that Barbara began to mentor would look at her with that same awe and feeling of "I'll never be able to do that!"

So when do you get the "S" on your T-shirt? When you begin to understand that the "S" is not about super powers but about supernatural power. It is never about how much you work (and there is always work to do to make the environment better.) It is not about how much you know (though the more knowledge you have the better chance you have of earning your "letter.") It is about who you become and how you become transformed. Each of us starts with the raw talent and ability that God gives us. It is when we become stewards of that talent; when we begin to use it, practice it, develop it and enhance it that we begin to earn our first T-shirt "S" for Steward. And when we begin to expand that stewardship concern to encompass the children given to our care that we begin to become stewards first class.

The challenge of a steward is to do what is best – not only for ourselves – but for the children entrusted to us. Much of our labor in life is done to make us look good. Why do you think that pastor's children are under such stress and pressure? Because if they are not perfect it reflects badly on the pastor.

The steward does not look into the mirror but into the hearts and lives of the children, choosing the best for each of them.

There is a second meaning to the "S" on the t-shirt – and that is servant. Very few of us growing up had the privilege of teachers who saw themselves as servants and not masters. That used to be the common name for

teachers – school masters. Our great teacher came as a servant. The servant and the steward are not looking at what is best for themselves but what is best for their students.

The Montessori (and Christian) concept of servant is not just doing for someone but helping them do for themselves. The classic tendency of mothers is to do for their children (that's how you show you are a good mother.) but the mother (and teacher) who prepare their children to be independent embody the best of steward and servant. The "S" also stands for shepherd. As a Christian Montessori teacher our concerns have to go beyond academics. In Montessori academics are wonderful, exciting, phenomenal (and that is what most parents are paying for) but academics are just one component of the child's life and needs. Academics can serve both the temporal and spiritual life of the child. Montessori children are trained to make choices – wise choices. Since life is full of choices to be made it is wise choice making that brings the possibilities of success.

It is also the introduction to academics – science, math, language, art, music and nature that can usher them into God's presence – full of awe and wonder. The ability to read (and read well) allows the child to explore the scriptures and to let God speak to him.

The role of shepherd is added to steward and servant. You can be a steward and a servant doing the right things but without caring for the sheep. But you can't be a true shepherd unless you care. Scripture says that the hireling flees when there is danger. David the shepherd fought for and protected his sheep.

So you too become the shepherd of your sheep. You become their pastor. Sometimes you pastor with words, most often with actions but always with love. You lay your life down for the sheep. You pray for them. You counsel. You guide. You lead them by still waters, through the scary places. You keep them safe from the lion and the bear. The "S" for shepherd is hard won.

But there is one more "S" to consider – saint. Oh, No! "I'm no saint." But yes you are. We have a wrong definition of saint. Maybe we've let the world define saint. The world wants saint to be someone (a very few someones)

who is beyond the "norm" of humanity in goodness, kindness etc. They do this to excuse themselves from even having to bother to even enter this state. "I'm no saint." Is still a poor excuse.

But what does God call a saint? Someone who is in communion with Him. Someone who is being transformed into the image of His Son. God's idea of saint does not involve perfection. A saint is someone who in being transformed takes on God's agenda rather than his own; who begins to think God's thoughts, who begins to breathe God's breath in order to put that living breath into others. It is when God breathes into us and through us that we truly become living beings.

That "S" on your T-shirt is imprinted and fulfilled in the supernatural. That "S" is designed to bring many sons and daughters to God. Wear it proudly. Wear it humbly. Wear it daily.