

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
September 2002

Just Like Christmas

That's how you describe the feeling of opening up your e-mails or envelopes and finding all kinds of new brothers and sisters.

Last month we began a search on line (suggested by my kids of course) of Christian Montessori Schools. There were 20,800 sites that came up. After having explored over 700 sites we came upon several "comprehensive" lists of Montessori schools. Of course each list was not a duplicate of the other and they didn't contain all of the schools that we had already found on line but it was a great adventure.

We found some 350 schools that had a good probability of being interested in Christian Montessori. There were of course many parochial schools – St. James, St. John etc. I didn't find my favorite St. Edward's though. My wife said of course I never will. She didn't find St. Edward either when we married. Oh well, we are both still trying.

There were a number of schools, like Abundant Life and Agape that certainly would seem to have a good interest. And then to my surprise there were whole handfuls of schools that were called Christian Montessori that I had never heard of. But that is a common problem that we face in trying to find each other. One Montessorian wrote, "I had no idea that others were doing what I am doing." We look forward to fellowshiping with all of our new brothers and sisters.

How Jesus Comes to Your Classroom. Part 8

Aesthetics

Scripture speaks about the beauty of holiness but there is also a holiness about beauty. Stop a moment and consider, as you look at the natural world the effort God took to make it beautiful. On your next trip to the grocery store linger in the produce section. Look at the colors that surround you. The bright red of the apples, the deep reds of the cherries, oranges, the yellow of the bananas, find the deep purple of the eggplant, or the purple of the red cabbage. Look at lemons. Look at sweet potatoes and cauliflower. And we haven't even gotten to the greens yet.

The greens alone require their own study. Start with the dark deep green of bell peppers. Look at the variations in lettuce from light to dark, from iceberg to romaine. Look at the green of spinach leaves; compare it to the green of cornhusks. Have you looked at snow peas? Have you seen the avocados? Then there is broccoli and zucchini, Brussels sprouts and cabbage and the list goes on.

The aesthetic creativity of God is amazing. And we have not even touched on the variety of shapes that grace the produce counters. If God took such effort for that which passes away so quickly imagine the effort He takes with us who will live eternally.

Now look at your environment and see the natural aesthetics that He has

placed there. Blondes, brunettes, freckle faced redheads, raven-haired children. Look into their eyes, black, brown, green, blue. And when you look at the golden hue of their skins, brown, black, white, pink, yellow you continue to see this amazing aesthetic that God has created.

What is our first introduction to God? If we start in Genesis we read, "In the beginning God created..." We are made in his image. And we are at our best when we too are creators. This is why the aesthetics of the environment are so important. It is the world we create for our own little "Adams and Eves". It is their very own garden.

The emphasis on creating this environment aesthetically also comes back to the words of Genesis. After each part of creation "God saw that it was good." Can we in turn look around at our environment and say that it is good? Again the scripture tells us in John 1 that "All things came into being by Him (Jesus)". Colossians 1:16 "All things were created by Him and For Him." The aesthetics of our environment are a reflection of God's abiding presence in the world.

Dr. Montessori gave a wonderful sense of the importance of environment because squalor and dirt and disarray add nothing to the child's soul. The beauty of the environment adds greatly to the child's development as a spiritual being. Consider the poor atheist who sees a glorious sunset and has no one to thank for it.

Remember it is the knowledge that Jesus is present in the environment that should encourage us to continually look not only at our surroundings but deep into the wide eyes that are discovering a whole new world in our presence.

A Baker's Dozen of Montessori benefits for the children Number Six Grace

Above all things a Montessori environment provides grace to its children - grace in both the sense of graciousness and the sense of special favor. Each child is treated uniquely, treated in a sense like royalty. (How are you today, your Grace? That's from watching too many old English movies about kings.) The children are literally held in delicate hands and handled delicately. Compare this to your experiences from non-Montessori environments.

We talked about the aesthetics of the environment, which is another aspect of its graciousness. We set our tables for lunch everyday with tablecloths and china. Parents would ask, "Do you think your High Schoolers appreciate it?" It would never dawn on them to ask whether the pre-schoolers would appreciate it because it was so far outside of their own experience of graciousness in school. The answer to the above question was easy. It wasn't meant for them to appreciate but for them to feel appreciated. "I am so glad you are here." can be communicated in so many ways without words.

Is the discussion of grace and aesthetics really something that will make you a better teacher than discussions of new techniques for using the red rods or the botany cards?

New techniques for red rods and botany cards are wonderful but understanding the basic importance of aesthetics and grace will make you a better teacher because it will help transform your students. (And we are transformed in the process as well.)

A beautiful, inviting, warm, gracious environment will begin to loosen the bonds of fear that prevent children (adults?) from achieving their potential.

We are born both fearless and fearful. It's a paradox. At some point we lose our fearlessness because experience teaches us there are consequences to actions. (We also have to learn that there are consequences to inaction but that is another set of lessons.) And so we become afraid.

Parts of fear are rational. Yet many fears are irrational (They won't like me, I can't do it. They'll laugh.) It seems that many fears are also engendered in childhood from environments that are hostile, unforgiving, harsh and unloving. Some of those environments are homes and for lots of children many schools are similar.

What a difference we make to the child who enters into this gracious environment who can experience love and success along with work and perseverance; where he is welcomed and loved, encouraged and disciplined. (Discipline is not a negative. It is a setting of boundaries within which the child feels secure. Secure that you won't let others hurt him, or let him hurt others or even hurt himself.)

To paraphrase the scriptures, Grace covers a multitude of hurts. What more glorious reassurance to our children that God loves them and extends His grace to them. He extends it to them through our hands, through our environments.

Cross Mountain Forum

If running a school were only a matter of teaching it would be wonderful but it is much more complex than that.

We are holding three-day seminars in our home for heads of schools and their

spouses to help find fresh insights in how to balance the Ten P's of ministry. .

1. Purpose
2. Passion
3. People
4. Problems
5. Pressure
6. Pain
7. Possibilities
8. Perseverance
9. Prayer
10. Principles

Seminar dates for Cross Mountain Forum: October 24th-27th, November 7th-10th, December 5th-8th
Call or e-mail for more information.

Each month in the newsletter we will touch on one of the P's.

Purpose

One of the joys of following Christ is knowing that there is a purpose to life. One of the human difficulties of that life is in trying to reconcile the events of life with their attendant and meaningful consequences. And that becomes a rock bottom definition of faith – trusting God for purpose in the inexplicable happenings of life.

Yet God often allows us to see the purposes behind situations and actions. But just as often He doesn't. It is at those times that faith is actually at work. **Faith is not getting what we want from God but God getting out of us what He wants.** He doesn't always explain. So we have to be sure in whom we have believed. God has purposes of his own and He uses us to accomplish them.

So why are we here? I've always liked the interchange between Linus and Lucy from Peanuts. Linus says, "We are here to help others." And Lucy retorts, "Well, what are the others here for?"

Regional Seminars

St. Paul, MN	Oct 5 th ,
Washington D.C.	Oct 12 th
Metuchen, NJ	Oct 19 th
Atlanta	Nov 2 nd

Saturday 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Conference Topics

1. What is Christian Montessori
2. Grace and Courtesy
3. The 10 most important Montessori lessons
4. Hands on Bible
5. Practical Life
6. Spiritual life in the classroom
7. Parenting

Seminar costs are \$150 per person. Early registration (two weeks before the seminar) is \$125 each. Multiple registrations received at one time qualify for an additional \$10 discount two weeks before the seminar. Due to the lateness of this announcement the early registration period is extended to one week before the MN and DC seminars. Please e-mail us of your interest

Christian Montessori Fellowship
22630 East Range
San Antonio, TX 78255

Congratulations

Congratulations to Erika and Mark Schabert of St. Louis Park, MN on the birth of their son, Caleb, born 9/12/02.

It is interesting that since Barbara and I became grandparents last year we have developed a whole new set of eyes looking at children. We are even less critical of indulgent grandparents than we use to be but at the same time trying to balance what we know is best for children. It has been said that grandchildren are God's reward for not having killed your own growing up.

OH, by the way we had our second granddaughter Madeline Michelle born on September 9, 2002. Congratulations to the parents Beth and Andre Fidellow.

Surveys

Please send us your completed surveys from the August Cobbler.

Fidellow@swbell.net
210-698-1922, 698-1911