

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

December 2006

**National Conference
July 26-28, 2007
San Antonio, Texas
“Celebrate the Inspiration
Continue the commitment”**

The Gifts of Christmas

Christmas is that great time of gift giving. That time of year when we express our intangible love in tangible ways. Christmas giving is a mirror of that first Christmas when God made tangible His love for us in the form of the Babe in the manger. 1 John 1:1 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched –this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”

Gift giving, modeled by God, makes love tangible. “For God so loved the world, He gave...” It is the nature of love to give. However, you can give without loving but it is impossible to love without giving.

The Magi in their preparation of seeking the King of kings came with gifts. Their gifts were not an afterthought. The gifts were planned and had a telling purpose for their visit. The best gifts that we receive have thought behind them; thoughts of the pleasure that we receive from gifts that are specially chosen for us.

The Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Each of the gifts represents a

part of Christ’s life. The gold is for His kingship. The frankincense, as worship, speaks to His divinity. And the myrrh speaks to His death.

Just as the Babe in the manger speaks of God’s provision for eternal life, his gift of Montessori is a provision for a fuller and deeper life here.

Let’s consider the gifts in light of our Montessori experience.

Gold: The Gift of Discovery

Proverbs 25:2 “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.” What other educational system puts a premium on discovery and on the joy that discovery brings? Truly, Eureka! moments. Who hasn’t experienced (and rejoiced with) the bright eyed student who shares with you that 4x5 is the same as 5x4; or that 2x9 is the same as 3x6? Such marvelous discoveries are only the threshold that await our students.

As they begin to discover the wonders that God has hidden in the universe, they begin to see connections and relationships. They begin to discover cause and effect. They begin to ask questions for which there are answers. And as there questions are rewarded with answers, they begin to ask harder and bigger questions. They are encouraged to continue to ask their questions. And the questions that they are asked in return don’t necessarily lead to answers on a test but to more

questions. They gain the confidence (because they have not been discouraged) and the experience to ask the hard questions of life – “Why am I here?” “What does God want from me?” “Who did God make me to be?” and “What is my relationship to Him?”

Ultimately, they discover who God made them to be and the relationship He has for them. And that is a great gift we share with our children.

Frankincense: The Gift of Respect

A sense of worship on our part is to hold holy what God holds holy, to love what He loves, to respect what He respects. The great gift of Montessori is to teach us to respect the little ones (we are all His little ones.) The gift of respect transforms us into different people. It helps mitigate our arrogance and pride. It makes us become more like Him. But this gift of respect is one we also give to the child – the child learns to respect himself. Respect changes our relationship to the child. It dynamically changes the environment. And it dramatically changes the child.

As we learn the gift of respect we become even more aware of Jesus’ words, “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Matthew 18:6. Interestingly, the verse is repeated in Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:2. It gives me great pause on how I treat the children.

Myrrh: The Gift of Failure

The December issue of Guidepost Magazine has a story “The Little Juggler Boy” that recounts the fable “The Juggler of our Lady”. In medieval times there was a Christmas ceremony before a statue of the baby and His mother, where the townsfolk would present their finest gifts. A little orphan boy observed the ceremony. He had nothing to give. And after the ceremony, he timidly approached the setting and began to juggle – his only talent, his only gift. And then the miracle happens, the statue of the baby raises his arm and makes a blessing on the head of the kneeling juggler.

The writer of this contemporary story tells how in elementary school they performed this fable using the talents of one of the students. However, his juggling skills failed him at the performance much to the derision of his classmates. However, the teacher reined in the rowdy students with a gentle admonition of “There is no gift so lowly, that it cannot be offered with love and praise to God.” The writer reminds us that the juggler’s offering was his failure.

It is a powerful lesson to touch our own hearts and lives. We judge our worth by our success. God values us by our reactions to our failures. Failure speaks to our character, success to our actions. Failure is seldom fatal (even though we feel we could die of embarrassment.) And failure is not final, if you pick up again and try. Churchill was noted for having said, “We fail our way to success.” Is there any other way?

Life is a continual process of learning and applying what we learned to do it better. Which artist comes out of the womb painting or sculpting or

composing? It is a learning process that involves “failure”. We tend not to call it that because we have a fear of the word “failure”. We are afraid. And we are afraid of being labeled a failure – and of defining ourselves by that label.

Theodore Roosevelt addressed this in a classic quote. “It is not the critic who counts. Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

The only way to success is through failure. And the gift we receive and give our children (and ourselves) in Montessori is the gift of failure – being allowed to fail. Being allowed to fail without recrimination, without slurs to our character, without insults to our intelligence and without destruction of our egos. Nobody wants to fail. And the gift of failure is to give the courage to walk through failure to success.

Respecting the process of failure removes obstacles to success. Easy “success” is never respected because there are no challenges. It is the challenge and the attendant prospect of failure that gives zest to life. If we make our children afraid of failure they may never experience all the joys of life. Which is probably the greatest failure.

The Gift of Montessori

At this Christmas season, I’d like to ask you to give the gift of Montessori to the world. Rather a big package isn’t it? Your support of the fellowship will allow us to continue to be there for the people who are looking for “Christian Montessori”. Every week there is someone who finds the website – looking for a school, looking to start a school, looking for help in doing Montessori better, looking for help in sharing Montessori. It is your support that makes this possible.

As you wrap your presents for Christmas. Wrap one up for the children of the world and give yourself a membership in the fellowship.

Small World

We are tremendously humbled as we watch God work. We received a call last month from a lady who knows Kristina Vecpuise in Latvia. They had met 12 years ago. Jennifer paid for a membership for Kristina and asked us to send a half dozen Montessori books to Kristina. They are on their way.

Yesterday, we received this email from Kristina.

“Hallo my new friends!

I have received another very good news and I want you to share with me the happiness I feel now. Jennifer's grandma who is 86 years old is willing to pay for my studies in The Modern Montessori. I thank the Lord! So, this really is Gods will! I'm very excited. The Modern Montessori gives the knowledge for age group from 3-6. It is a good beginning, isn't it?”

Have a Blessed Christmas

Regional Conferences

Honolulu **January 13, 2007**
Shreveport **January 27, 2007**
Seattle **February 10, 2007**
Amarillo **February 17, 2007**
Rock Hill, SC **February 24, 2007**

Check the web site for details
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210-698-1911

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Christian Montessori Fellowship
22630 East Range
San Antonio, TX 78255