

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
December 2007

National Conference
San Antonio
July 31st – August 2nd
Looking Back
Looking Forward
Looking to Eternity

Christmas All Year Long

Learning to celebrate advent

The excitement and wonder of Christmas seems to be lived to its fullest in childhood. Yes, our motives are suspect, but the reality of the excitement, the specialness of the season is tangible to the child. Every waking moment from Thanksgiving on (and even before thanks to the department stores) is filled with the anticipation of Christmas. There are feasts for the eyes, for the ears, for the touch, for the nose and the tongue. Everything becomes special. Everything becomes “more”. The senses work overtime, the imagination is in high gear. The excitement and the beauty are everywhere. To the fresh new ears and eyes that are at just the beginning of a life time of celebrations of the birth of the Christ child everything is “magical”. We tend not to use the word magic in relationship to God. We equate magic with tricks. But magic is something beyond the norm, beyond reason, beyond understanding, beyond our experiences. It is something that defies our logic. And what could be more magical than the God of the universe coming to us in

human form, coming as a helpless babe, to live as one of us and to die for all of us? Redeemer, Savior – incomparable terms – incomprehensible terms. He was born so we might be re-born.

The season, even with all of its commercialization and secularization gives us pause to reflect on God’s great gift. The child mixes and jumbles all of the elements of Christmas into his experience – the gifts, the food, the decorations, the nativity, Christmas music, Christmas programs, family and celebration. And wide-eyed, he takes it all in. As the child grows and matures, he begins to separate the elements. It takes years from being wide-eyed with wonder to again being wide-eyed with wonder. The second appearance of being wide-eyed with wonder is when we’ve gone from Christmas being about us to Christmas being about the real magic – the mystery – of God’s great gift. Becoming an adult, becoming a parent begins the process of being other directed.

For the child, Christmas is all anticipation; for the adult it is all preparation. For the Babe in the manger – it is revelation – being revealed to the world. God’s unique gift given to the world.

Our challenge is to prepare for that revelation, for that coming. Advent requires preparation. Liturgical communities seem better at creating a focused recognition of the need to prepare for His coming. The shepherds

were joyfully surprised by the angels' announcement but it was the wise men who prepared.

There is a unique parallel to Advent that is found in a Montessori classroom. And it is this parallel that allows us to celebrate Advent and Christmas all year long. Our God is a God of personality. He is tender, compassionate, creative, artistic, demanding, determined, joyful, and a myriad of other characteristics. And we are created in that personality image of God. Each of us reflects a facet of who God is. And it is this personality that is emerging in the manger of the child's heart. This unique presence of God, this unique gift of God is being born literally before our eyes. As a baby in the womb is being formed to emerge in due season, the personality of the child is being "formed" (by God) and is being revealed through and in the environment.

And just as the birth mother has little to do overtly with the growing babe in her womb, her negative actions affect the growing baby. The womb of the prepared environment affects positively the life that is emerging. The physical womb brings forth a physical healthy child, the prepared environment (home, school, church) brings forth an intellectually, emotionally and spiritually healthy child.

Dr. Montessori's refrain was to observe the child. Observe! Observe! Observe! Because it is only by observation that you can tell when the personality is being revealed. It is only by observation that you can tell when the personality – that particular manifestation of God is being born into a new world. And it is only by observation that you can know when your gifts are to be presented to the child. Staying in a

state of Advent – anticipation of the birth of a manifestation of God – is the only way for us to be ready to welcome the new child of Christ.

Each of us has a spark of the Divine in us. And when we are fully illuminated by Christ's presence in our lives then we too become incarnated – God living within us. And when the incarnation of God makes His appearance in our children, in our environment – it is Christmas. It is Christmas everyday. It is Christmas all year long.

And you having studied, having seen this star that leads us to the child, to see the child as God sees him, you are ready to offer your gifts every day to every child. Wise men (and women) not only still seek Him but serve Him – when you serve "the least of these my brethren."

Love and its Source – The Child Chapter 28 The Absorbent Mind

Dr. Montessori writes, "The child is the only point on which there converges from everyone a feeling of gentleness and love. People's souls soften and sweeten when one speaks of children; the whole of mankind shares in the deep emotions which they awaken. The child is a well-spring of love. Whenever we touch the child, we touch love. It is a difficult love to define; we all feel it, but no one can describe its root or evaluate the immense consequences, or gather up its potency for union between men."

And it is this unique insight of the universality of the love for the child that causes Dr. Montessori to place the hope of mankind on the child.

She continues, "Love, like that which we feel for the child, must exist

potentially between man and man, because human unity does exist and there is no unity without love.”

“Love and the hope of it, are not things one can learn: they are part of life’s heritage. It is life that really speaks ...”

“Love may be considered ... from the point of view of life itself. Then we see it not only as something imagined or desired, but as the reality of an eternal energy that nothing can destroy.”

“This force that we call love is the greatest energy of the universe. But I am using an inadequate expression, for it is more than an energy: it is creation itself. I should put it better if I were to say: ‘God is love.’”

Dr. Montessori continues by quoting I Corinthians 13. “Love is slow to anger, is kind ...” Then says, “all these ... remind one strangely of the qualities of childhood.” Jesus reminds us “Unless you become like a little child you can’t enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

So, it is not the educated child but the “normalized” child - the child that has been “converted”, transformed, the child that is incarnating God’s own spirit into his life and soul that will by love – God’s love – be the agent of change and transformation for the world.

Dr. Montessori speaking of Seguin says, “I understood clearly that the first didactic material used by him was ‘spiritual’” Dr. Montessori’s whole approach was not about methods, was not about didactic materials, was not about techniques, it was about the child. And the ongoing power of the Montessori movement comes out of the God-breathed understanding of the true nature of the child. The revelations, the insights she received come from the very Creator of the child.

Understanding the method therefore requires the same spiritual rebirth, the same spiritual insights needed to walk as Christ would have us. The transforming power that changes children is that same transforming power that changes us. And it is only by being continually connected to the source of that power that we are able to live out 1 Corinthians 13 successfully.

The world transforming power does live within the child but the power does not originate with the child but with his Creator. The wisdom and the power and the peace that the world needs do not come from us but come through us as we are yielded to God.

Regional Seminar Shreveport, Louisiana January 19th, 2008

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Shreveport, LA 71106
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Mary Cook

Registration Fee	\$150
Early registration (by Jan. 12)	\$125
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