

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

December 2004

National Conference

San Antonio

June 23 – 25, 2005

Regional Seminars

Shreveport, LA January 22

Houston January 29

The Spiritual Preparation of the Teacher

The following two articles, though not strictly “Montessori” are very much Montessori in helping us to become the guides that our children need. Please take them as encouragement to gain every good and perfect gift that God has for you.

Preparing for Christmas

When we talk about preparing for Christmas, obviously all kinds of things enter our minds. There’s the tree and the decorations; the shopping and the wrapping; the cooking and the eating and the family and the friends. Then there is the celebrating and the worshipping. All of it comes in a rush with excitement and anticipation. The younger you are the more anticipation. The older you are (and maybe the more jaded) the struggle is to reduce the frustration, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Somewhere between the young and the old we need to turn the anticipation

and frustration into preparation. I didn’t grow up with a liturgical calendar – defining the year in terms of the life of the church. I grew up with a mixed calendar – natural, civic and Christian. To be sure, Christmas and Easter were defining dates of that calendar but so was the 4th of July, summer vacation, the start of school, Halloween and all of the other holidays and special days thrown in. And all of them were lived with expectation - well maybe except for the start of school (obviously I didn’t go to Montessori.)

What I don’t recall from that calendar was a call to preparation. This is where the liturgical calendar comes in. Even non-liturgical people seem to know about Lent. But most people have the idea of giving things up for Lent - sacrifice rather than preparation. This is where the season of Advent – the four Sundays before Christmas – really calls us to preparation. Where Lent leads to Good Friday’s sacrifice (an ultimately Easter) Christmas is the feast of God’s great gift.

To make Christmas, truly the celebration that God has for us, we need to be reminded of the difference between the Shepherds and the Wise men. Both rejoiced at the birth of the Savior. Both were amazed at Emanuel – God is with us. And both worshipped. The difference was the wise men were looking for Jesus and they made great preparations both for the journey and

their worship. They prepared costly gifts to offer in worship – gold, frankincense and myrrh.

If we become like the Wise men and prepare our worship we too will bring costly gifts to the Christ child – we will bring Him our lives, again, dedicated to the loving and nurturing and teaching of the children He puts in our lives.

Helping our Children Prepare for Christmas

In the hustle and bustle of Christmas we tend to forget our kids. Wait a minute who are we doing all this shopping for? Yes but we still forget to give them one of the greatest Christmas presents. Can't be, I bought them Ninja turtles (Can you even remember last year's fad?)

We forget to give them the gift from the other side of Christmas, because lost to most of our children amidst the excitement and glitter of the Holidays is the simple gift of giving. Once you receive that gift, you learn about the joy that goes with giving and that is a present that is never out of fashion, never out of style, never breaks and lasts a lifetime.

It is so much easier to shop for the gifts we put their names on to brothers and sisters and grandparents but take time to allow your child to be a part of the selecting and carrying and wrapping (who said it had to be neat? Relax after all it has their name on it).

Maybe if our attitude changed in the process from HAVING to get the shopping done to having fun with your child and sharing an exciting experience with them we might enjoy Christmas more ourselves.

Allowing children to make things to give is allowing them to put themselves into Christmas. If our patience or

expertise doesn't extend to crafts we can always bake things. Imagine the memories that Christmas will evoke of a kitchen full of baked aromas and the happy times of hands in dough or decorating and spending time together. Even if the baking is inedible you can always turn them into Christmas tree decorations to give away - nothing is ever lost at Christmas. And for the hard to give to there is nothing like cookies or fudge or candy from your kitchen to say I love you. And one size fits all.

Other ways to teach your child about giving is to budget a couple dollars in quarters and every time you see the Salvation army kettle let your child put a quarter in. Explain to them who these people are, where the money goes and how it helps others.

Working with your church or a food bank, let your child help you prepare a Christmas basket. Let them help you pick it out at the super market. Tell them about the joy someone will have when they receive your gift of food for Christmas. You've turned an ordinary (and sometimes difficult trip) to the grocery store into a memory and a virtue. Let them add some of their favorite foods to the Christmas basket (Who says Rice Krispies don't go with turkey?).

You might go through their toys and have them select toys they are no longer playing with that are in good condition, wrapping them up and giving them away.

Help your children select errands or projects that they can do for elderly neighbors or friends whether it's cleaning a house, walking a dog, mailing letters or raking a yard - they get to give of themselves.

Christmas is a great time to give your child the insight, that if God, who loves us so much, gave us His son, born in a

manger so many years ago, then real love must involve giving and not just receiving. What a gift you give your child because in one package you are teaching him about what will make a successful marriage, a satisfying career, a valued place in the community and about a life worth living.

And the greatest reward you will get is that at the end of Christmas morning, surrounded by a mountain of presents your child will have learned so much about giving He won't look with dismay at his mountain of gifts and say "Is that all there is?"

Topics for consideration for next year's national conference.

We would like your help in setting the agenda for next year's conference. Below are a number of topics that could be presented – which ones would you be interested in hearing.

1. Montessori outdoors
2. Montessori day care
3. Art
4. Cooking
5. Circle time
6. Pets and animals
7. Practical life
8. Encouraging one another
9. Unit lessons
10. Health
11. Rainy day activities
12. Fundraisers
13. Hands on Bible
14. Summer camp
15. Discipline
16. Field trips
17. Geography

18. History
19. Math extensions
20. Entrepreneurship
21. Language cards
22. Children's spirituality
23. Public relations
24. Science extensions
25. Gardening
26. Emotional development
27. Social development
28. Toddlers
29. Music
30. Praise and worship
31. Story time
32. Parent communications
33. Record keeping
34. Prepared environment

What other topics would you suggest?

What topics would you like to present?

The Gift of Membership

We would like to encourage you to give yourself a very special gift this Christmas – the gift of membership in the Christian Montessori Fellowship.

What is unique about this gift is that it is one of the few gifts you can give yourself and at the same time it is a gift that will bless others as it will allow us to continue to minister to the Christian Montessori community. It will allow us to continue to network Christians around the country and the world and to introduce Montessori to Christian educators. Please put a gift of membership under your tree this Christmas.

**May you have a blessed
Christmas and a challenging
New Year**

Regional Conference Cost and Registration

Seminar Fee **\$150**
Early Registration **\$125**
(Three weeks before
Seminar)
Membership discount **\$25**

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Registration may be paid by check or
credit card.

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