

Archive for October, 2009

October 20th, 2009

Membership

Your membership in the fellowship is critical to help the advancement of Christian Montessori. Visit www.crossmountainpress.com to give your support to this ministry. Your membership includes an index of all the articles in the *Cobbler* for the last seven years, a directory of Christian Montessori schools and discounts on conferences and seminars. Please pray about your support of this vital effort to bring Christian Montessori education to more children around the world.

October 20th, 2009

What I wish I knew before I started Part 3

It is Ok for the student to do nothing (but not forever.)

Thinking looks a lot like doing nothing! Talking and doing often preclude thinking. To think clearly (and see clearly) you often have to stop the action – and that looks like doing nothing.

“Look before you leap!” is certainly an old proverb that could be addressed to the impulsiveness of children. But giving children the ability (which is opportunity, permission and training) to look before they act is a significant Montessori operation.

Traditional education is focused on action and production. Montessori education adds a major refinement to this approach – contemplation and reflection. So much of our own educational experience has been to do what is asked without any thought about the significance (or even an understanding) of the project or product produced. Why do so many students hate history? Is it the regurgitation of facts and factoids without any meaningful application of understanding?

The absorbent mind is an ongoing phenomenon. The absorbent mind in many ways is like a camera lens recording what is present. Some things are in sharp focus, others less focused – yet recorded. The “depth of field” in photography changes, not what is present, but what is noticed. Dr. Montessori

records numerous instances of children noting minute details in situations or pictures that escaped the adult attention. Dr. Montessori states that normalization can only begin when the child’s attention and being are captured by some object or activity.

Often times doing “nothing” is a preparation for engagement. Is doing “nothing” worse than doing mindless activities that preclude meaningful intellectual engagement?

There are many reasons for a child doing “nothing.” And you can’t always determine the root cause. And you certainly can’t determine it if you do not observe and know the child. Some children are shy; others are insecure. Some insecurities are inborn, others have been conditioned by perfectionist or critical adults. Some children are perfectionists, not wanting to do anything until they can do it perfectly. Others aren’t sure what is wanted even when you show it to them. Some are more contemplative than others. Some want to think it through. Others are observers rather than actors. And then some are lazy.

A Montessori classroom becomes a safe and varied environment to enter the learning pool. And like the real swimming pools of life each of our children has their own style. Some enter the pool by jumping straight off the diving board. (Look before you leap? You’re kidding!) Some jump in from the side. Others get their feet wet and slowly immerse themselves while others just sit on the pool side until the allure of the water overcomes their inhibitions.

In the pool and the classroom (and in life) when the allure becomes irresistible you’ll find action. May learning become that irresistible force for our children.

October 5th, 2009

Christian Montessori Library

November 1st begins the publication of the audio and video archives of the Christian Montessori Fellowship. Over 25 years of conference tapes. (200+) Two years of video seminars. (20+) Montessori parenting tapes. (30+) Christian Conference tapes (36+) (Montessori

applied to non-Montessori settings.)
Montessori philosophy (20+)

An annual subscription to the library will allow for unlimited access for your staff.

The library will provide resource material for parent meetings, for staff meetings and for staff training.

The library will provide management help for the director and administrative staff.

What makes this library a significant resource (and investment) for your school? No where else can you find the depth and breadth of knowledge of Montessori (with a Christian base) archived and accessible for you from seasoned Christian teachers. The continued transformation of your school is built on the continued growth, development and transformation of your staff. The library gives you the tools to continue to create excellence.

Introductory pre-release offer \$79 per month or an annual fee of \$790

An endorsement from someone who just bought a training package.

"I just watched "What's Christian About Montessori" and I am inspired! It is excellent! Yes, I already knew these things but you have helped to order and focus these principles in my mind. I feel so privileged and called to have a role to play in the furthering of God's Kingdom. What a gift Montessori is to the world. I have the tools to transform the world for the Kingdom! Wow! Thank you. That lecture alone was worth the \$200. Every Montessori teacher should hear this at the start of every year of school. If they're not Christian yet, they will want to be." Myra Arnold

Attached is an inventory of lessons to be available.

The library will begin with 20 to 30 tapes. Each month 10 to 15 tapes will be added. Each year additional materials will be added to the library from conferences and seminars.

To order go to www.crossmountainpress.com

October 5th, 2009

Keeping Christmas

Dennis the Menace says to Joey, "It's almost Halloween." "How do you know?" "Because they have the Christmas stuff out." So Christmas invades the calendar and stakes a claim on our attention (and pocketbooks). The Holy Day has become a Holiday. Yet, that shouldn't surprise us because anything that becomes a ritual has the power to lose its meaning.

Our challenge is not to lose the meaning or if lost to regain it. Many of us spend our lives chasing goals that in the end are not the prize we thought they were. The classic Charles Dickens story "A Christmas Carol" relates one such account. The character of Ebenezer Scrooge has given rise to a prototype that has become shorthand for greed, avarice – and unhappiness. But it is through the lens of Christmas that his life is transformed and renewed. This same lens can help us focus on what is dynamic and important in life.

Most of us will never have as dramatic a "Christmas conversion" as old Ebenezer but the outcome of his conversion can belong to each of us. The singular thought from the end of the story was that it was said that Ebenezer Scrooge "knew how to keep Christmas well". And that is our challenge to keep Christmas well – not to lose it, not to ritualize it, not to commercialize it – but to keep it well.

I love Christmas. It is a time of year that evokes memories, hopes and dreams. It is a feast for the senses. The colors, the sounds, the smells create a world that is different (and more hopeful) than the other eleven months. Christmas holds the possibility of "peace on earth and good will to men". Christmas changes things. The real gift of Christmas is the possibility that it might change us.

I've missed a number of Christmases. Oh, I was there but the cares of life and the busyness of the season made it difficult to "keep Christmas". The season passed me by without touching my heart. So what is keeping Christmas about? Focusing on Emmanuel – God with us. It's not just the Babe in the manger. It is not just the mystery of God taking on human form but the mystery that God allows that Babe to be born into the manger of our hearts. To keep that Christmas

is to keep the mystery of God's love for all eternity.

I really love Christmas. It is a magical time of year. The decorations, the lights, the sounds transform the world with feelings that bless the soul, the senses and the mind. Acts of random kindness, a lessening of the edginess of life, the outpouring of good will and real charity makes you wonder about how to keep it. The anticipation of the season heightens the very essence of being alive. And eventually some Christmas season will mark a milestone – the milestone of the anticipation of giving rather than receiving – when you can't wait to experience someone else's joy.

God had great joy in giving us the gift of the Babe in the manger. And it is a similar joy that becomes ours when "keeping Christmas" means giving. We begin to become like Him when we joyously enter into giving – not just our gifts but our time, our dreams, our very lives. We model not only the wise men and their gifts but our very Heavenly Father.

It is our challenge (in being good fathers) to help our children to not only enjoy the magical time that is Christmas but to model for them how to enter the mystical time as well. Our challenge is to go from the magical to the mystical.

Economics may change this Christmas season – maybe for the better. In addition to (or maybe instead of) the gifts you are going to give consider what might be the most meaningful present you can offer. What you write on a piece of paper – not your usual Christmas card or Christmas letter – but a note or personal letter that shares with someone what their life has meant to you. Detail for them the character qualities that you admire. Detail their acts of love and compassion and their care for you and for others. Bless them with the same blessing you have received from your heavenly Father.

This one simple gift (which will be treasured for years) has the power to turn Christmas into Thanksgiving. You will not only touch the recipients heart but the very heart of God when we say to each other "I love you" with deeds and words just like our heavenly Father did millennia ago in a stable in Bethlehem.

"Keeping Christmas" is to enter the mystical part of Christmas – Emmanuel – God with us – God within us.