

# The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

July – August 2007

## The Foundations of Christian Montessori

People will often ask what is the difference between Montessori education and traditional education. And some will ask what is the difference between Christian Montessori and regular Montessori. The partial answer to both questions lies in the following six foundational concepts:

1. Christ-centered
2. Stewardship
3. Respect
4. Observation
5. Modeling
6. Principles

These concepts form Montessori education long before we get to the traditional answers about Montessori being hands on with a prepared environment etc. The first two on our list – **Christ-centered and stewardship** – are definitive markers between parochial and non-parochial Montessori education. **Respect** which is a hallmark of Montessori should be a standard in Christian education. But this profound respect is often conspicuous by its absence. Needless to say, this sad phenomenon of lack of respect happens in Montessori as well when we lose sight of the overall function and goal of this way of nurturing and educating.

The purpose of the fellowship is to gently remind us monthly (in the midst

of all of the turmoil of real life) what our real goals and purposes are.

**Observation** is unique to Montessori in the pedagogical field. In traditional school we tend to have our minds made up (and our curriculum) and we deliver both without a seeming regard to or input from the student in front of us.

It is the next foundational concept – **modeling** – that is often overlooked in all forms of teaching. Dr. Montessori's emphasis on modeling is a major component of a teacher's preparation.

## Modeling

Ironically, many of the great lessons of life are not communicated verbally. Much of the most profound teaching that children receive comes to them by **observation** and not by hearing. James 1:22 tells us to “be doers of the word and not hearers only.” Which also means to be doers and not just speakers. Talk the talk, walk the walk but most importantly walk the talk.

Dr. Montessori was given a unique insight in that most presentations are to be given with few words – unlike most traditional teaching. This is a type of “isolation of difficulties” which allows the child to focus on what is being done and not be distracted by the audio presentation. When the guide is trained the emphasis is on precise and specific movements. It is this precision that is modeled for the child. It is this precision that the child is expected to produce.

Montessori “instruction” is based largely on this type of modeling for the student.

Sometimes our children are too precise in their production per this classic story. A little girl was observed washing dishes and every thirty seconds or so would fling some water with her right hand over her left forearm and thirty seconds later would fling water with her left hand over her right forearm continuing like this until she was finished with the exercise. Needless to say, the guides were puzzled until one day Sister Mary was observed giving the dishwashing presentation. As Sister Mary was concentrating on washing the dishes the sleeve of her habit descended into the dishwater. Smoothly, she moved her right forearm over the descending left sleeve and pushed it back out of the water. In a little while, it was the descending right sleeve that was pushed out of the water by the left forearm, and this continued throughout the exercise. AHA! The power of observation and modeling!

The challenge for us is that our children model themselves not just on our presentations but on all of our actions. A parent once shared with my wife that her little girl would line up her dolls and teddy bears and read them a story (like Mrs. Fidellow). The parent asked, “But why in the middle of the story does she go ‘ah, ah, ah’ and then continue?” Barbara laughed recognizing her action of trying to correct a child whose fingers were being introduced into his nose. (She found another way to deal with that.)

We forget that they watch us, not only when we make presentations, but in every action and attitude. It does no good to tell them to do what we say when they cannot ignore what we do.

And we fool ourselves if we think that only our actions are copied, even our words and attitudes are precisely engraved into the minds, hearts and actions of our children. We can’t hide from our children. We are transparent to them. Our only saving grace is that they do not yet know that our less than desirous qualities are really not desirous and that is not what they need to model. So it puts us on a tightrope. If we choose to be guides we submit ourselves to a higher calling of action, words, and attitudes.

In teaching, we not only have to look around us but within us as well. Psalm 51 is a guide for the guides. “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place” (v.6) “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (v10) “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” (v12) “O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.” (v15) “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (v17)

Montessori teaching is more than education – it is life itself when you fulfill the call to meet the child’s needs – intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Dr. Montessori spends a great deal of time talking about the spiritual preparation of the teacher. That preparation is both in training and in the daily entry to the classroom. If we treat our classrooms as holy places (wherever God is – is holy) then our behavior changes, our preparation changes. Matthew 18:10 reminds us, “See that you don’t look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my

Father in Heaven.” We tend to forget that we touch eternity everyday. It is tough to remember with all of things we have to do and all of the things we are concerned with for today.

Interestingly, there are “sensitive periods” all around us and not just the ones Dr. Montessori identified. We might consider them “critical periods” not just for a child’s development but for a child’s life (and adults too!). Who knows at what point a child is making judgments of who they are, of who they are to become? Who knows at what point a child’s self-image becomes indelibly stamped – pretty, ugly, smart, dumb, class-clown, nerd, beauty queen, jock or a myriad of other determinations?

Our modeling of Christ’s heart, His love, His acceptance can make all the difference in a life yet to unfold. I wish I had known all this. I want you to know it now. We are involved in more than “just” teaching. Sure, we teach but we also impact. Once upon a time I would have said we mold the children but the child already has a God-given mold, one that has been DNA’d into him by His creator. What we do in our worst moments is to deform that mold and hinder that development and in our best moments we co-operate with a heavenly plan. Our best moments often are the quiet moments of our modeling – the ones we don’t know they are watching but you know they are. (And their angels are watching too and telling God on us – hopefully, they are telling Him the good things.)

Ultimately, it is not “Do as I say.” But “Do as I do.” – which they will do anyway!

**Notes from the National  
Conference  
July 26-28, 2007  
San Antonio, Texas  
“Celebrate the Inspiration  
Continue the commitment”  
100th  
Anniversary of Montessori  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christian  
Montessori Fellowship**

“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere’ ... we spent three days in His courts.”

Don Barber, Newfields, NH

“I got the spiritual shot in the arm I need to begin the new school year. I can’t wait to apply all the practical information at my school.”

Debbie Thompson, Shreveport, LA

“Thank you so much for a refreshing and informative three days. I enjoyed the spiritual fellowship. This was just my second conference – I felt like I was home.”

Mary Jane Bittle, Chambersburg, PA

“Everyone was great. Betty Golightly was outstanding!!”

Betta Kym, Milford NE

“I’m leaving so inspired for the New Year. It was most amazing how the topics God brought to this year’s conference were so timely for so many people. God’s agenda and perfect timing.”

Carolyn Ely, Lewisville, TX

“Once again the conference has richly blessed my life and ministry to the children. It was so wonderful being with

my family of Montessori teachers again.  
What a joy!”  
Cindy Creel, Shreveport, LA

“The love of Christ shines through each person who attended and how he works through the Montessori method.”  
Christine Jenschke, Fredericksburg, TX

**2008**  
**Christian Montessori Fellowship**  
**Conference is set for**  
**July 31<sup>st</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**

Now is the time to plan to attend!

Explore Montessori from its Christian roots, base and inspiration. Come away with practical applications to use in your classroom, with your children, your parents and for yourself.

Many Montessori conferences will give you excellent educational insights but the national Christian Montessori conference will not only give you excellence but will give you coherence for your educational and spiritual life. There is no other conference like it!

**Funding**  
**Gourmet Coffee**

A way to fund your attendance or to fund other projects is to consider our new Gourmet Coffee program. In conjunction with Hazelnut Coffee and Tea Co. we offer you the opportunity to use their offerings for a fundraiser or an entrepreneurial program for your older children.

In our school, the elementary students operated their own gourmet coffee company - taking orders, keeping track of inventory, delivering product and

understanding how free enterprise provides income and profit.

The unique advantage of this program is that 6 different gourmet coffees are offered in a gift box. They make great Christmas presents, birthday presents or thank you gifts. However to start (and increase) your sales, you may offer individually wrapped packets of gourmet coffee, a great way for people to taste various blends before buying a pound of coffee. From there you can build a market of parents who will not only enjoy great coffee but support your program at the same time with a recurring source of income.

**Funding**  
**Bear Program**

“Monty” the Montessori bear will help you celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Montessori. He will also help you fund your teacher education and materials acquisition. Monty and his brothers and sisters from the Beary Thoughtful Company are a different way to generate funds. A small school with 40 students raised over \$1000 during the summer. Visit our web site for more information.

**Funding**  
**T-Shirts and more ...**

You may also visit our website [www.crossmountainpress.com](http://www.crossmountainpress.com) to see unique items for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. They are great for fundraising and make great thank you gifts for teachers and volunteers. T-shirts, sweat shirts, mugs and banners. We also have monogrammed shirts and hats.

## **Funding Melaleuca**

Melaleuca products (made from tea tree oil which is a natural fungicide) make great cleaning products and products for personal use. We used the products throughout our school. We used the anti-bacterial soap, both in our restrooms and with the exercises of practical life and reduced the incidence of illness in the school. The Melaleuca program is a great source of recurring income but is not a “fundraiser” as these are products that people need and want. We are still receiving income from the program which we started almost 15 years ago. Contact us for more information.

## **Planning for next year**

Now is the time to begin planning (and raising funds) to attend the national Christian Montessori Fellowship conference.

## **Training program**

At the national conference, it was announced that we will offer our first Christian Montessori training program next summer. While there are many wonderful excellent training programs available, none approach Montessori education from its Christian spiritual base. A director shared with me recently that she had sent her staff off to training. After two weeks one of the trainees reported that she couldn't figure out what was missing. And then it dawned, there was no Christian spiritual emphasis at all in the training.

When you deal with the philosophy of Montessori education you either embrace or ignore the Christian spiritual underpinnings of Montessori.

Dr. Montessori's inspiration for this way of teaching is a God-breathed revelation. Truth is truth whether you acknowledge the truth-giver or not.

For many, the new training program will create a conflict with old loyalties and associations. However, our purpose is not to compete with the wonderful programs in existence but to create a program that will help evangelize the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ – and that will require a generation of transformed learners and doers.

Our ultimate goal is to make this available in a “distance” format that can be accessed from all over the world. We continue to receive new calls for help as we find new schools and make new contacts around the world. Liberia and Nigeria, South Africa, Romania, Latvia and on and on go the calls for help. If you would like to be part of this process of creation, please let us know and join with us. We are looking to take the best of what has been taught, what has been learned and what needs to be shared.

There are thousands of Christian schools that are looking for this kind of education but don't know what it is called. Help us spread the word and bless thousands of children with this great way to learn.

If you would like to be a part of this creation process please let us know. We value your input.

## **Who is my Neighbor?**

This is one of the great questions of the scriptures which lead Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. In our

busy, but meaningful worlds, it is a challenge to look beyond our immediate horizon. Yet, the scriptures tell us "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" John 4:35.

Right now, we have people in Liberia who are interested in starting a Christian Montessori school. Do you have extra copies of Montessori's books that you could share? Let us know and we can give you mailing details.

[Fidellow@swbell.net](mailto:Fidellow@swbell.net) 210-698-1911

### **Membership**

Your membership is vital as we reach out to more and more teachers and schools. Every child should have a Christian Montessori education. And your support will make more of it happen. Please take time to join today.

### **3 Reasons to smile (if not laugh out loud)!**

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales.

The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah".

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him".

A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl: replied, "They will in a minute."

A Sunday school teacher: was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to "honor" thy Father and thy Mother, she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy: (the oldest of a family) answered, "Thou shall not kill."

### **Parenting**

One of the most significant ways to help your students is to educate their parents about Montessori. The booklet "Getting Your Money's Worth Your investment in Christian Montessori" is a great investment in parents. Visit the website.

[www.crossmountainpress.com](http://www.crossmountainpress.com)

# Christian Montessori Fellowship

## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Level you teach: \_\_\_\_\_

(Mark all that apply.)

Are you a: teacher \_\_\_\_\_

administrator \_\_\_\_\_

owner \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

What is your church affiliation?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Interests

What is your interest in Christian Montessori?

To teach in a Christian Montessori school \_\_\_\_\_

To start a Christian Montessori school \_\_\_\_\_

To transform an existing school \_\_\_\_\_

To be a better teacher where you are now \_\_\_\_\_

Not sure at this time \_\_\_\_\_

Are you familiar with hands on Bible curriculums (Godly play, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd)? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Do you have an interest in being a regional representative for CMF? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you in a position to host or help host a regional CMF seminar?

Host \_\_\_\_\_ Help \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Benefits

1. Discounts at conferences, seminars and forums.
2. Membership certificate
3. Free advertising in the Cobbler
4. Discounts from selected vendors
5. A nice warm feeling knowing you are not alone and are not the only one seeking to return to the true spiritual roots of this unique education.
6. Your membership will help you, and many others, to serve your children better in Christ's name by providing opportunities for fellowship, learning and encouragement.
7. We have found a "pearl of great price" and your support of the Christian Montessori Fellowship will help spread this "good news" so many more children might truly be nurtured intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually and come to know the Good Shepherd personally.

Join and support the fellowship by making your check for \$25 payable to: The Christian Montessori Fellowship or use your Visa, Master Card, American Express, or Discover.

Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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