

# The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship  
November – December 2005

## National Conference 2006

“The Icon of Faith”

July 27 – 29, 2006

San Antonio, Texas

Mark the dates on your calendar

## Regional Conferences

Honolulu January 14

Phoenix January 21

Shreveport January 28

## The Gift Catalog

This issue is a catalog of gifts – not to buy – but gifts that already have been given to you in order for you to give away. And in giving them away, you multiply them. Ironically, as God always seems to do – the more you give them away the more you seem to keep them.

## Gift Number 1 The Holy Days

We are coming to that time of year when we celebrate two of the great holidays of our lives – Thanksgiving and Christmas. Interestingly, we might consider them one holiday a month long. The feasting, the merriment, the joy, the excitement, the family and the gifts all blend into one long, warm feeling of well-being.

It is easy to see why a secular world, on one hand can embrace it, while on the other wants to denude it of all its “spiritual” meaning.

It is a good thing to be thankful. It helps us to be a little less self-centered and a little more grateful for all of the blessings we receive. But if we count our blessings to whom do we give thanks? That is a critical question in life. To whom do we give thanks? And how do we say thanks. When we answer those two questions, it changes our lives. Acknowledging Him places someone else on the throne of our lives and gives us a purpose greater than existence. There is a simple answer to how we say thanks – but a difficult application. We say thanks to God “when we do it to the least of these our brethren.”

Now that is the challenging part. “When did we see you hungry, naked, sick or in prison?” That is our call to do what we can as well as support those ministries and individuals who are meeting the needs of hunger, sickness, prison etc.

But just as significantly, it is a call to observe those around us. For those of us in Montessori, those words may come as a surprise. Observe. We are supposed to be observers. Observation is a key tenet of Montessori pedagogy. Observation is part of the “science” of Montessori. So how does observation become part of the “Holy Days” and part

of our daily ministry? It is learning that not all hunger is physical nor is all sickness. For many, prisons exist without bars. And not all nakedness deals with clothes. Jesus asked Peter, after preaching a hard message, “Will you also leave me?” And Peter replies, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” It is our daily observation of those around us that allows us to see – with spiritual eyes – the spiritual hunger, the spiritual sickness, the spiritual nakedness and the spiritual prisons that people live in. And we have His words of healing, of comfort, of nurture and freedom to share if we can but see the hurting world around us.

## **Gift Number 2 Observation**

Mark 8:18 cautions us about having eyes that fail to see. There is a big difference between looking and seeing. It is a question of observation - the ability to see what is actually there. Often it is to see what is not readily apparent.

A baby in the womb has eyes but they don't “see”. Once the baby is born, they begin to see. It takes time for the baby to learn to focus. It will take time for that focus to turn into comprehension. Being born again is similar in regards to spiritual eyes. We must learn to focus and then turn that focus into comprehension.

In a Montessori environment, we have an intersection of both natural and spiritual eyes. Our challenge always is to see. First with the natural eyes to observe the outward manifestations of actions and then to see with spiritual

eyes the motivations and the heart behind those actions.

## **Gift Number 3 Following the Child**

The ability to follow the child is a gift. The confusion (and the criticism) over following the child results from thinking that the child “knows” better than the adult. What the child “knows” he cannot articulate; he cannot formulate; he cannot even make a plan for it. What the spirit of the child knows is implanted by God. It is not even a knowledge – it is a blueprint of how “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) the child is. It is the “hard-wire” of the child's very being.

Our challenge in life (for ourselves as well as our children) is to know who God made us to be. Who we are in Christ is an eternal question and quest. Who He made us to be in time is the work and quest of a lifetime. To fulfill our calling is to receive the highest accolade of heaven – “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

So few of us have received the informed encouragement and wisdom of our parents and mentors. We've failed to receive the guidance we've needed because of a lack of understanding of what Proverbs 22:6 really means. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” The word train can signify start or initiate. It also comes from a primary root “to narrow”. Train also contains the concept of discipline. Discipline, meaning focus, as in the discipline of literature or history.

Following the child has never been about letting the child do “what he wants” in the sense of being undisciplined but about guiding the child in the way that child is bent - in the way the Creator made that child to learn and to be.

Our challenge in following the child is to study the child. On one hand, not to prepare the child for life is a total disservice to the child, to society and to God. On the other hand, not to help the child find his own “sensitive discipline” is to condemn the child to wander the earth looking for his purpose and passion. Blessed are you when your work is your play. A legacy of Montessori education and nurturing has to be this “Aha!” moment of life when everything makes sense, when everything fits, when God is truly in His heaven and everything is right with the world. When I have found my place in the world, not a place dictated by man, or circumstance but a place envisioned by my Heavenly Father for me – just for me, then the words of the Lord’s Prayer are fulfilled – “Your will be done on Earth as it is (intended) in Heaven.”

The ability to follow the child is not only a gift – it is a calling.

## **Gift Number 4**

### **The Icon of Faith**

#### **Part 3**

God gives us the child as a gift. Not a gift to do what we want with but a gift that shows us the way to our Heavenly Father. Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” And in the child, God gives us an icon, a model of what faith is in its purest and most simple form.

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.” In Luke 18:16-17, He repeats the same words and goes on to say, “I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

To begin to understand how the child becomes this icon of faith – this representation – we need to explore what the kingdom of heaven is and how we enter into it.

Matthew 13:31 “He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.’ ”

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus refers to having faith as small as a mustard seed. What is it about this mustard seed that so represents faith and that the child is in possession of this kind of faith?

The classic understanding of this parable is the smallness of the seed. Even the smallest appropriation of faith – something so simple that even a child can do it – can move mountains.

The parable speaks of a man planting the seed in his field. The field is a prepared environment ready for the seed. And when the seed grows, it is the largest of garden plants. The garden speaks of not only an environment but of a protected place, a place of beauty. And this seed, this faith, grows into the largest of the garden plants. It becomes a tree (a tree planted by the waters?) where even the birds find shelter. Jesus asks (Matthew 10:29) Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one

of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father...So don't be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows."

So the image of faith as something so small, yet so potentially powerful also must speak to the image of the child as being so small and yet so powerful not only in potential but in actuality. Jesus admonishes us (Matthew 18:10) "See that you don't look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."

We can't leave the parable without pondering the place that mustard itself might play in the question of faith. We know of mustard's spiquancy, its sharpness of taste. It gives spice when it is added. Might the child's faith have some of this same spice and potency to it? An abandonment of blandness and a throwing of oneself totally on God. A walking on water without a second thought.

Interestingly brown mustard flour when chewed or mixed with water (the Word?) causes a chemical reaction and produces an oil that is not present as such in the plant. In brown mustard, this action yields the volatile oil of mustard which has a pungent odor and an acrid taste.

In medicine, mustard has been used as a stimulant, diuretic, emetic and counter irritant. Might not some of the same properties be a part of faith?

## **Gift Number 5 Insightful Teaching**

### **The Secret of Childhood**

Numbers in parenthesis are page numbers from Ballentine Books edition.

## **Chapter 27 Two Different Kinds of Work**

"Civilization has slowly withdrawn the natural environment from the child. Everything is regulated, rapid and confined. Not only has the accelerated rhythm of adult life proved to be an obstacle to the child, but the advent of machines has swept away his last places of refuge like a whirlwind." (190)

### **The Work of the Adult**

"An adult has his own task to perform, that of building up a transcendent environment." (191)

"There are ..laws pertaining to work rooted in nature itself...One of the laws ..is that of the division of labor. Among men it is indispensable since they cannot all produce the same things. There is another law that has reference to an individual's work. This is the law of minimum effort, according to which one seeks to attain the maximum productivity with the least expenditure of energy..It represents not so much a desire to do as little work as possible as to produce as much as one can with the least effort." (191)

"He (the child) is a stranger to that artificial world which men have built above nature. A child comes into the world as an asocial being since he cannot adapt himself to society nor contribute to its productivity nor influence its structure. He is rather a disturber of the accepted order. A child is asocial in that he is a source of disturbance wherever there are adults, even in his own home. His lack of

adaptation to an adult environment is aggravated by the fact that he is naturally active and constitutionally incapable of renouncing this activity.” (193)

“Adults are inclined to repress a child’s activity. Since they do not want to be disturbed or annoyed, they attempt to make the child passive.” (193)

### **The Work of the Child**

“A child is also a worker and a producer. Although he cannot share in the work of adults, he has its own difficult and important task to perform, that of producing a man.” (193)

“It is solely from a child that a man is formed. An adult cannot take part in this labor. An adult is more definitely excluded from a child’s world than the child himself is from the transcendent social world of the adult. A child’s labor ..is an unconscious labor brought about by a spiritual energy in the process of developing.” (194)

“All the powers of the adult flow from the potentialities which the child has of fulfilling the secret mission entrusted to him... He is engaged in active work... A child grows through exercise. His constructive efforts constitute a real work which takes place in an external environment.” (194)

“By means of his constant efforts, experiences, sorrows and conquests of difficult trials and struggles, a child slowly perfects his activities. An adult can assist in shaping the environment, but it is the child that perfects his own being.” (195)

### **A Comparison of the Two Types of Work**

“Both child and adult carry on an immediate, conscious and voluntary action upon their environment that may be regarded as work in the proper sense of the term. But here the comparison ends since they each have a different goal to achieve which is not directly known or willed.” (195)

“When a child works, he does not do so to attain some further goal. His objective in working is the work itself, and when he has repeated an exercise and brought his own activities to an end, this end is independent of external factors.” (196)

“A child does not follow the law of minimum effort, but rather the very opposite. He consumes a great deal of energy in working for no ulterior end and employs all his potentialities in the execution of each detail. The external object and action are in every case of only accidental importance. There is a striking relationship between the environment and the perfecting of a child’s inner life.” (196)

“A child does not look for gain or assistance. A child must carry out his work by himself and he must bring it to completion. No one can bear a child’s burden and grow up in his stead. Nor is it possible for a child to speed up the rate of his development.” (197)

“A child ..does not become weary with toil. He grows by working and, as a consequence, his work increases his energy. A child never asks to be relieved of his burdens but simply that he may

carry out his mission completely alone. His very life consists in the work of growth since he must work or die.” (197)

“ ‘ Help me to do it alone.’ And these words reveal their inner needs.” (198)

“An adult must assist a child in such a way that he can act and carry out his own work in the world.” (198)

“It is therefore not enough to prepare objects for children adapted in size and shape to their needs: adults must also be trained to help them.” (198)

## **Gift Number 6**

### **Educational Principles of Montessori**

#### **11. Respect for the Child**

The concept of respecting the child seems so foreign to society. We are stronger, wiser, smarter, more important and in control. Children need to learn obedience and discipline. One of our fears of “respecting” the child is our fear of spoiling and not training the child.

The disciples in their zeal to protect Jesus from “needless” disruptions did not accord respect to the child as they would have to more powerful people. Mark 10:14 says that Jesus was indignant with the disciples over this. What is the lesson for us? Again, “When you do it to the least of these.”

Respect for the child starts with our attitudes, proceeds through our words and results in our actions. Our first challenge is to rid ourselves of the disrespect of low expectations. God has given children amazing abilities – they

learn to walk and talk and so much more without our help. Our challenge is to let the nature of the child unfold. God has already endowed them with the gifts for their lifetime. Our real mission is to help them discover those gifts and how to apply them effectively in God’s honor.

It is a balancing act between respecting the nature of the child and the spirit of the child – born in sin yet born in the image of God. And compounding this challenge is learning to respect the individuality of the child (and not what we think he should be) and respecting God’s plan for the child.

Our confidence can never be solely in our knowledge. As much as we learn about children in general and specific children in particular, we need to maintain the attitude of handling holy things. (What can be more holy than to be entrusted with a “child of God”?) And that calls for us to be ever mindful in prayer and spirit about our opportunity to bless the children.

Furthermore, there are two other major things that respect for the child calls for – encouragement and time. Children (adults?) need all the encouragement they can get. Genuine encouragement. Not encouragement to manipulate but encouragement to lift the soul.

And the ultimate respect is that of time. They need time to grow, time to play, time to learn, time to absorb – time to be. One of the great blessings of a Montessori education is that children are given the right amount of time to accomplish their goals. How do we know it is the right amount of time? Because it is the time it takes to complete the task at hand. It is the respect of letting them finish. The

incredible feelings that come with accomplishment are a gift we give our children when we respect them enough to give them enough time to finish the goal.

Ultimately, our role needs to be that of the timekeeper. Giving them not only the time but the tools and directions to meet those internal God given goals that each of them are born with.

Respecting the child is more than giving respect to the child; it is giving respect to their Creator and to the plan that He has for each of them.

## **Gift Number 7**

### **Humor**

#### **What is Love?**

“Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.” Elaine Age 5

“Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.” Mary Ann Age 4

“You really shouldn’ t say ‘ I love you unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.” Jessica Age 8

## **Gift Number 8**

### **The Christian Montessori Fellowship**

The Christian Montessori Fellowship is a gift our Heavenly Father has provided for His children. For the “new” old-timers – those that have been in Montessori for the last 30 -40 years – remember when there weren’ t many Montessori schools and you didn’ t know

about another Christian Montessori school anywhere.

God has been gracious over the years as more and more Montessorians have not only rediscovered their spiritual roots but have begun implementing them in their schools. The rise of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Godly Play have been instrumental in deepening this understanding of the Christian spiritual heritage of Montessori.

This summer the Christian Montessori Fellowship will hold its 24<sup>th</sup> annual conference. When we started the fellowship in 1983, we didn’ t know about other Christian Montessori schools. Most people were Christians working in traditional Montessori settings. Now some twenty years later there are over 240 Christian Montessori schools all over the world. We have found schools in Romania, England, Nigeria and India. And individuals in Hong Kong, Namibia, Kenya and the Caribbean.

We need your help to keep prospecting, exploring, and networking with those who want to share the wonderful message of Jesus with their children in a Montessori setting.

Please take a part in the work of the fellowship by becoming a member. Even though you get the membership certificate, it will be the children of the world who will receive the gift of the Gospel. Before the holiday rush please take time to buy a gift of membership that will bless hundreds if not thousands all over the world.

## **Heads of School Seminar**

The Ten P’ s at the Heart of Management

Come share three days with other heads of schools. Gain new insights into the challenges of creating the finest schools possible.

January 17 - 20

January 23 - 26

For more details, visit us at [www.crossmountainforum.com](http://www.crossmountainforum.com)

### Regional Conference Cost and Registration

**Seminar Fee**                    **\$150**  
**Early Registration**        **\$125**

(Three weeks before Seminar)

**Membership discount**      **\$25**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Registration may be paid by check or credit card.

### Order Form

Membership	\$25	_____
Directory	\$15	_____
Conference		_____
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Worth	\$ 7	_____
Total		_____

Make checks payable to the Christian Montessori Fellowship or use your Visa, Master Card, or Discover card.

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