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A Pearl of Great Price

Have you tried to explain the Christian base of Montessori to your pastor or church leaders and wanted some help in making the Biblical basis clear to them? A Pearl of Great Price will help you share this wonderful way of teaching in a context that they will be able to appreciate. Order your copy today at www.crossmountainpress.com

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Close Out on 100th Anniversary Materials

Wonderful opportunity to proudly wear a T-shirt or a sweat shirt commemorating the 100th anniversary of Montessori education. Visit www.crossmountainpress.com for great bargains T-shirts \$5, sweat shirts \$9, Monty bears are \$4 and banners are \$12. They make great gifts!

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Important Dates

National Conference San Antonio, TX July 30th - August 1, 2009

Christian Montessori Training San Antonio, TX June 21 - 26, 2009

Regional Conference Shawnee, Kansas (Kansas City) March 28th, 2009

Regional Conference Metuchen, NJ March 21st, 2009

Cross Mountain Forum (Management training) San Antonio, TX March 16 -18, 2009

Regional Conference Vista, CA (San Diego) March 7th, 2009

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The Counter Intuitive Life

Experience, book smarts, street smarts, intuition, common sense, your gut and a host

of other attributes are considered good tools to be able to navigate the challenges of life. And accordingly being naïve, inexperienced, too trusting etc are not good formulas for success. We hope our children (and us too!) will learn the best approaches to life and apply them. Everything that we tend to do is geared at protecting ourselves, not to leave us vulnerable, at peril or loss. And that is a normal response to the natural actions of life. But there is another way, a way that does not negate these but supersedes them.

Jesus calls us to a supernatural life, a life that is counter intuitive to the natural man. It starts with the very premise of Christianity - you cannot save yourself - you need a Savior. That alone strikes at our pride and independence. And the counter intuitive drumbeat continues when He says "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) We spend so much of our life trying not to deny ourselves anything that these words are truly a challenge. Jesus continues in the next verse with, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"

The natural human heart and experience does not embrace this counter intuitive life. Consider the life that Jesus calls us to:

Love your enemies.
Pray for those that spitefully use you.
It is more blessed to give than to receive.
You must be the servant.
Submit one to another.
The first shall be last.
Humble yourselves.
Return good for evil.
Do not be angry with each other.
Love your neighbor as yourself.
Unless you become like little children you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.
And the list can go on and on.

Our Christian walk is counter intuitive to the world we see about us and the nature we find within us. Therefore we have to conclude that Christianity is not just difficult - it is impossible - without Him.

That is why Jesus speaks about being born

again. Being born into a different kingdom, a different life – a supernatural life, where your eyes see life differently – clearly. It is a revelation from God’s Spirit to our own hearts.

There is another revelation that has been given to us that is also counter intuitive to our natural way of thinking. And that is the Montessori approach to learning. God gave Dr. Montessori unique insights into the nature of the child He created; unique understanding of how the child learns and becomes. Much of what she recorded as her observations are counter intuitive to what we’ve come to know as education. Consider some of the underlying philosophy and practices of Montessori that are counter intuitive to our own experiences from traditional society.

Movement is good (but it has to be trained.) Activity is learning. Children really want to learn. Children like work – hard demanding work. Children don’t want you to do it for them. They want to do it themselves. Efficiency is an adult concept. The doing (no matter how long it takes) is the effective part of learning and part of the joy of accomplishment. Carrots are not real carrots. Rewards are truly external to the satisfaction gained in the accomplishment and mastery of any endeavor. The feeding of self-interest (rewards) does not equal self-control. Silence is not really golden. Traditional silence is imposed from the outside not developed from within. It is a negation of the personality. The silence in Montessori is a deliberate achievement. Children “make” silence. Silence (quietness) is a by-product of concentration. Traditional silence does not equal self-control.

Much effective teaching is done without words. Silence communicates. Silence focuses. Slowing down speeds up learning. Children need time to assimilate the learning. You give freedom to get discipline. You give control to the student to make choices. Choice making involves consequences. Consequences are real life actions. Consequences are a positive teaching tool. (Sometimes the lesson you learn is that you don’t like negative consequences.) Choice helps lead to self-discipline. External discipline does not guarantee inner discipline. The environment is not an after thought. The environment is a teaching tool. Observation (doing nothing?) is a significant action.

The purpose of education is to aid the spiritual journey.

Normalization (conversion) happens in all areas – intellectual, emotional, physical, social as well as spiritual.

The life we’ve been called to both as Christians and Montessori teachers requires great faith. And that faith often leads to actions that are counter intuitive to our natural life. Jesus walking on the water inspired Peter to venture out – out of his comfort zone, out of his experience, out of the realm of what he knew to be “normal”. Peter said, “Lord, if it is you bid me come.” And Jesus said to Peter what He says to us – “Come!” It takes faith to walk on water. It takes faith to get out of the boat – especially when everyone else is holding tight to the gunwales. It takes faith to follow Jesus in the counter intuitive life.