

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
February 2006

National Conference
July 27 -29, 2006
San Antonio, Texas
“The Child – The Icon of Faith”

“On the Altars You’ve Built”
A reflection about Valentine’s

I awoke with that phrase on my mind as I awaited Valentine’s Day. Let me explain the significance of those words as it has to do with our concept of Valentine’s and love.

Valentine’s is a special day for many reasons. Though it is not an “official” religious holiday, its roots have come to be associated with a Christian Bishop, Valentine of the third century, who provided dowries for poor young women. It is a worldly celebration of love.

Since I remain an incurable romantic, Valentine’s has a special place in my heart. Having said that, I need to share with you three major thoughts about romance and love.

First, romance doesn’t mean unrealistic. It doesn’t mean blind (even though love is said to be blind). Romance is an illusion, a dream, a vision – in the best sense of each of those words. It is a reality yet to unfold - a doorway to a better reality.

Scripture says that without a vision the people perish. And without dreams do we really live? But dreams without plans do not lead to a new reality.

Second, the word romance holds so many meanings. We think of a “romance” as a story. We think of it as a courtship. We think of it as actions, as emotions – as a “lived happily ever after”. Paul Billheimer in “Destined for the Throne” (Bethany House Publishers isbn 0-87123-309-6) gives a whole new, different and dynamic perspective to “romance”. He says the church is the central object and goal of history. From before time began, God’s purpose was to have a bride for His Son. So every thing that happens in “The entire universe in its totality is cooperating with God in His purpose to select and train His Church as His Eternal Companion ... romance is at the heart of the universe and is key to all existence.” All of history is a romance of love.

Third, romance, like love, is a desire to please. It is a deliberate effort to set the stage for love.

Most of us have been raised with the idea that love is a feeling. Our songs, our novels, our movies give voice to this view. However, God shares with us that love is an action. “For God so loved the world He gave...” and, “Faith (love) without works is dead.”

We have to be careful that we don’t confuse the wonderful feelings of love with the much harder actions that love

requires. Interestingly, feelings will follow actions.

So where does the altar come in? First, we think of altars at marriage ceremonies, and that is a good place to put into perspective that love is one of God's great gifts to us. (We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19) But altars have also been created to mark places and times of God's deliverance and blessing and as places to worship.

Second, it is we who build the altars. Whether it is in the wilderness, the tabernacle or the temple, we construct the altars for worship and sacrifice. Sacrifice tends to have a negative tone. And yet sacrifice is defined as an act of offering to God of something precious.

Third, it is not the altar we worship but we worship at the altar.

And what altar has God created for you in your life? Where do you go each day and offer the best you have. Where do you do it to "the least of these" and you do it to God? Sometimes it feels like a sacrifice – and sometimes it is. At other times we are like Jacob working for Rachel's hand – "So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her." (Genesis 29:20)

The altar you've built is a holy place. That is where God meets you everyday as you love the children that surround you. Mother Teresa said it is not how big the work we do is but how much love we put in to it.

I told you earlier that I was an incurable romantic (also an incurable idealist). Barbara and I were married on a Wednesday evening so Valentine's would always be our anniversary. This year we celebrate 76 years of wedded bliss – that's 38 years for each of us. Guys will say that I've got it easy. I only

have to buy one present for Valentine's and our anniversary. But guys, it had better be fantastic or you're in double trouble.

One final note from the romantic. One anniversary, fifteen or twenty years ago, I woke Barbara up on Valentine's day singing to her "Happy Birthday to me, Happy Birthday to me ..." "Silly, it's not your birthday, it's our anniversary." She said. To which I replied, "Honey, I wasn't living until I married you."

Happy Valentine's to all of you and Happy Anniversary honey.

Cross Mountain Press

Cross Mountain Press continues to publish materials that are effective tools to help you and your parents.

Getting Your Money's Worth is a great guide to help parents appreciate and participate in the activities of the classroom.

The Lakemont Toddler Handbook is an effective outline to set up or enhance your toddler program.

This month we are publishing two CD's
A Character Reporting System
An easy to use, downloadable system that will help you focus on the observation of character traits in your children and to share these insights with parents.

Public Relations

An audio CD with practical ideas and strategies to help teachers help parents to better understand the value of the education their children are receiving.

Who is involved in Public Relations at your school? Everyone.

All of these are available at our web site www.crossmountainpress.com

Staff Meeting Teaching

At your next staff meeting pass out a sheet of **Educational Principles of Montessori** and ask your staff to take this alphabetical list and put it into priority order. It will generate an interesting time of discussion and thought about what is essential in the makeup and attitudes concerning the environment. (This is one of the exercises that we do at a Cross Mountain Forum for school management.)

1. Aesthetics
2. Child centered
3. Christ centered
4. Development of self-control
5. Discovery
6. Environment
7. Hands on
8. Individualized (learning at their own rate)
9. Isolation of difficulties
10. Joy of learning
11. Mastery - finishing what you start
12. Observation
13. Order - orderly thinking, orderly environment
14. Respect for the child
15. Role of the teacher - as model – not master
16. Self directed (making wise choices)
17. Self-correcting

Web Sites

We would like to exchange links with all of the schools that have websites. It will be tremendously helpful to the Christian Montessori community to be able to view the wonderful websites that have already been created to become inspired to create a web site or to improve an existing one.

We will create a button on the Christian Montessori Fellowship web site to display this treasure chest of information.

Please email your links to Fidellow@swbell.net

Why You Should Attend The National Conference

There are many wonderful conferences offered each year by the various Montessori groups. Each of them offer excellent teaching and encouragement. However, there are three additional benefits that you will gain from attending the Christian Montessori conference. First, is the coherence of Montessori presented intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Second, is the fellowship of Montessorians who share, not only your passion for Montessori, but your passion for Jesus. Third, the expertise you gain will come from practitioners who have successfully re-integrated the Christian spiritual foundation of Montessori into the Montessori environment.

Let's let three of last year's participants share with you about the conference.

"It's so refreshing – like going into the atrium from the "busyness" of the classroom into a very special place where we learn new things, are reminded

of old and experience God's and each other's presence."

Carolyn Ely, Lewisville, Texas

"It is such a blessing to gather in unity as Christians and Montessorians and discover that the two are one."

Don Barber, Newfields, New Hampshire

"We were blessed coming in and blessed going out! Refreshed and renewed in spirit, filled to overflowing with new ideas, creative ways to teach the children and enhance their classroom environment. I experienced the love of God and for God with my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. What joy and fun."

Cindy Creel, Shreveport, Louisiana

Our Goal

Our goal is to get one person from every school to attend the conference. We are looking for pathfinders to come and blaze a trail and to take back new inspiration, ideas and commitment to share with their school.

This is an ideal worth sharing with parents for their support because their children will be the beneficiaries of the enthusiasm and insights gained.

Attending the conference is an investment, not only in the future of your school but also in the lives of your teachers and students.

The Icon of Faith

Part 5

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 13:44-46 offers two parables that seem to be a contradiction of what Jesus normally taught. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

The contradiction seems to be in the accumulation of wealth. (Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal." Matthew 6:19) For Jesus real treasure is never "treasure". It is beyond the physical. The deeper meaning of the parable rests on the object, the actions and the attitude.

For one man, the discovery was accidental. For the other, it was a deliberate search. However, both men's reaction to the discovery of the treasure, the thing of great value, was the same – they sold all they had to possess the treasure. We also have to note the attitude "in his joy" went and sold all he had.

They are remarkable stories detailing single mindedness. A total abandonment of everything else to possess the treasure. This is what children do with their faith. Totally believing, totally giving, totally living. Children will spend hours, days and weeks immersed in a project of passion – single mindedly.

Our challenge is to seek God with this same kind of passion as the merchant and as the child – selling all to possess the “treasure”.

One further thought about abandoning all. It takes the same kind of passion to pursue the unique calling that God creates within each of us. Our unique personalities are the gift of God. And to fulfill that calling (artist, scientist, etc.) is to find that joy that God intends for life. Irving Stone in the novel, “The Agony and the Ecstasy”, the story of Michelangelo, has his teacher telling him “Talent is cheap, art is expensive. It will cost you your life.” To which Michelangelo replies, “What else is life for?”

It is that personality which is the calling. Montessori says (The Child in the Family), “The first duty of the educator ... is to recognize the human personality of the young being and respect it.”

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.

February 20 -23

March 6 -9

April 3 -6

For more details, visit us at
www.crossmountainforum.com

National Conference

San Antonio, TX

July 27 – 29, 2006

Conference theme
“The Icon of Faith”

Topics include
Classroom Management
Hands on Bible
Details of Montessori
Toddlers
Elementary
And More

Conference cost
\$350 (\$325 if paid by May 1st, an additional \$25 discount for CMF members. Conference includes 3 lunches, morning and afternoon breaks and Saturday dinner,

Location
Menger Hotel
1-800-345-9285

www.historicmenger.com

Lodging costs \$119.09 (tax included) per night

Double or single

Rates good if you register by June 27th

Alternate Hotel
Crocket Hotel (across the street from The Menger \$99.24 per night (tax included)
1-800-292-1050

Your membership is vital for the work of the fellowship. Join today!

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 _____

www.christianmontessorifellowship.com

fidellow@swbell.net

Membership Benefits

1. Discounts at conferences, seminars and forums.
2. Discounts on CMF tapes and literature
3. Membership certificate
4. Reduced advertising costs in the Cobbler
5. Discounts from selected vendors
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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, or Discover.

Credit card number _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

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