**The transcendent in Grace and Courtesy**

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| Thinking about Montessori in God's termsTranscendent = above and beyond normal/physical human experience  When we explore the transcendent in Montessori, we are acknowledging the God-breathed inspiration of the work of our hands. We are called back to consider Isaiah 55:8-9. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."The daily miracle of the child forming themselves and becoming who God has called him/her to be can be lost to us if we are blind or insensitive to the miracle. "Having eyes to see ..."One of the transcendent foundational principles of Montessori is the concept of "Grace and Courtesy."In Montessori we run the phrase grace and courtesy together as a complete concept not stopping to separate the words into individual parts.Mostly, we think of grace and courtesy as good manners – which is a big part of it – but not all. We quote our scriptures about preferring others before ourselves, regarding others with honor and we certainly talk about respect and not offending our children. And all of this is a major foundation of Montessori and a major difference in the educational system we embrace.The courtesy part, the good manners is certainly transformative – it changes not only the environment but the children as well as the adults. However, it is the grace part that creates transcendency. Our understanding of grace as unmerited favor that God gives us is not our default attitude neither for children nor adults. For this grace to become real it has to be recognized and experienced. Then grace needs to be practiced. Even though we may be courteous do we exhibit grace as well?The word grace might be expanded to include the word gracious. It is good to be courteous but even greater is to be gracious. Graciousness is to give beyond that which is required. People hardly seem to expect courtesy today but when they are lavished with graciousness it changes their world. All of us have received graciousness at one time or another. It might have been something as small as a store letting you in at closing time or something consequential like having more time to finish a project or to pay a huge debt.Teaching our children graciousness (that which is not expected) transforms who they become and how they act. Teaching them to look for ways to be gracious puts the life emphasis on giving instead of receiving. Gracious people also attract graciousness to themselves.There is a further level to graciousness (the unexpected) and that is when graciousness is accompanied by kindness. Kindness is offering that which is not required. Kindness becomes a mindset when we allow this “fruit of the spirit” to operate as part of our grace and courtesy. Timothy is reminded in the Bible to stir up the gift that was within him. Courtesy is a great gift and it leads to grace; and grace leads to graciousness; and graciousness leads to kindness. And this kindness, blessed by God, inspired by God, begins the work of the kingdom and blesses all who are touched by it. It is transcendent.  |