



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

February and March 2006

From the Director

This past week, a five year old drew a picture using oil pastels. It is a picture of three people whose bodies, arms and legs are formed by the outline of a cross. The child explained that it is a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Mary the mother of God. She went on to say, "These are people who are really great. They died, and they have crosses so people can see how good they are."

In my mind, this drawing represents the heart of Montessori and of CFMS. This picture is art, spiritual reflection, history, and language all spontaneously woven together and profoundly expressed through the hands and heart of a 5 year old.

In January, Ms. Judy did standardized testing with the 3rd-6th grade classes. During the practice test with the 3rd graders, there was a question about the meaning of the phrase, "all men are created equal." The children all agreed that the right test answer was that all people should be treated the same. Then one of the children said, "But they're not."

For me, this 5 year old and this 8 year old are manifestations that CFMS is indeed a place "where children will be prepared to meet the academic, social, and moral challenges ahead of them." For this, I am truly thankful.

Peace,
Wendy

From the Director of Religious Education

All the atriums continue to work with the themes begun in January and described in the January newsletter: kingdom parables in the primary atriums, moral parables in the lower elementary atrium, and the study of Abraham and Sarah in the upper elementary atrium.

So I'd like to use this newsletter to focus on the heart of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: the child's relationship with God. Our assumption is that your children's relationship with God began with life. There was never a time in your child's life that God did not communicate God's love to him or her. And we believe that your child's ability to return that love also began very early in life. The children come to us at age 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ already full of love and hunger for God. So our work is not to introduce God to the child, but to give the child language and images and signs that will nurture the relationship that already exists.

We use materials for this work. For example, the figures of the Good Shepherd and sheep represent the parable of the Good Shepherd told by Jesus. This parable is full of images of mutual love. The shepherd knows the sheep by name, the sheep know the shepherd's voice. The shepherd leads the sheep, the sheep follow the shepherd. The shepherd offers "life to the full", lays down his life for the sheep, and promises that one day "there will be one flock and one shepherd".

We read the words of the parable to the child as we introduce the material. This allows the materials to "hold" the parable in the same way the Bible holds the parable. Just as we adults return to the Bible to reflect on the parable, the children return to the

material to reflect on the parable. The adult is not needed for this ongoing reflection, so it is truly a conversation between God and the child. Thus the material both nurtures and respects the child's relationship with God.

Every material in the atrium "holds" the good news in a similar way. Each one represents either texts from the Bible or prayers from the liturgy. Each one is developmentally appropriate for the children who receive them. Together they announce the many ways that they are loved by God and that they may love God in return.

Catherine

From the Primary Classes

From Kristi

Sometimes, I must admit, I look at the piles and piles of artwork spilling out of cubbies and onto our floor, and think, "For goodness sake! Couldn't you children please, PLEASE, pick another work, ANY other work that isn't drawing." But then something happens—a child comes to me and explains a drawing she has just completed—and I am put firmly back in my place. These children are doing important work, and I can't always know what that work is or what connections they are making.

In the middle of our morning as I rushed between lessons and potential disasters, a child stopped me holding up a brightly colored oil pastel in front of my face. I stopped and asked, "Would you like to tell me about what you drew?" She replied, "These are all people who are really, really great." Carefully she pointed to the three human figures in her drawing, whose bodies were clearly constructed to look like crosses. "These people are all dead, and their bodies are made from crosses so people can see how good they are." She pointed again to the figures and said, "This is Martin Luther King. This is Rosa Parks. And this is Mary."

Sofia Cavalletti, the Italian biblical scholar who is one of the two developer of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, talks again and again about the young

child's intuitive understanding of things no one has told them. This child intuitively came to the understanding that we are the hands of God, with the power to create goodness in the world. She was exploring the concept of resurrection—these people are dead, but they live on through the good they did in our world. Within her drawing this child has synthesized several complex theological concepts, getting to the heart of them in a way that we as adults tend to dance around in our intellectual way.

It is important to protect the young child from the injustices of the world as much as is possible. Just as the Good Shepherd parable helps to root the child in the deep love of God, we want them to feel, above all, loved and safe. With these roots in place, the child's moral mind begins to develop at the age of six, and they can begin to explore the concepts of right and wrong within their world.

But the concept of peace is one even the youngest child understands, because it is so concrete to them. They know there are times when there is not peace in their immediate environment, or when they do not feel peace in their bodies. And they know the joy of peace when it does come to them, when they feel a deep sense of connectedness to those around them.

Lately we have been singing a freedom song that seems perfectly suited to those concepts that are familiar and make sense to the young child. The song, called "My Dog Loves Your Dog" was written and performed by the Nashville Quartet, a group that formed during the Civil Rights movement. As the song was introduced, we talked a bit about how a dog can love and be friends with any one, but sometimes, people can be silly. Also, this song is just really fun to sing:

*My dog loves your dog,
And your dog loves my dog,
And my dog love your dog,
So why can't we
Sit under the apple tree?*

*Dog-dog diggog, a digga dog-dog, digga
Dog-dog diggog, a digga dog-dog 2x*

*My little doggie was a playin' one day
Dog-dog diggog, a digga dog-dog
Down in the meadow with a bundle of hay
Dog-dog diggog, a digga dog-dog
Another little doggie came along
Dog-dog diggog, a digga dog-dog
Said, "Let's get together and eat this bone."*

From Lindy

Maybe you're at home getting dinner ready on a weeknight and you hear a continuous humming or perhaps you're traveling to grandma's house for a visit on the weekend and from the backseat you hear loud singing. You might be wondering what your child is singing? You might even think to yourself "that doesn't even sound like English?"

Well you might just be right! It's not likely that you're child has invented a new language, but rather they may be practicing one of several songs we sing in a foreign language.

Here are a few that we have been singing and the explanation for what they mean.

Una Tortalita

*Una tortalita para mi mama
Una tortalita para mi papa
Una tortalita para mi!*

*Otra ves?
Si, otra ves!*

*Una tortalita para mi mama
Una tortalita para mi papa
Una tortalita para mi!*

*Otra ves?
No, otra ves.*

(This song is done with hand motions that you can ask your child about. When translated this song is saying that there is a tortilla for mom, a tortilla for dad and a tortilla for me! Then it asks whether you want to do it again and the first time you say yes. The song

repeats and the second time it asks if you want to do it again you say no.)

Dite Moi

*Dite moi pourquoi la vie est belle
Dite moi pourquoi la vie est gai
Dite moi pourquoi chere mademoiselle
Est-ce que parce que vous me m'aime?*

(This song is French and it's about a man who has fallen in love and he's asking the lady he loves these different questions. He says tell me why life is so beautiful, tell me why life is so happy, tell me dear mademoiselle is it because you love me?)

Head Shoulders Knees and Toes in FRENCH

*Tête, épaules, genoux, et pied, genoux et pieds.
Tête, épaules, genoux, et pied, genoux et pieds.
J'ai deux yeux, un nez, une bouche, et deux oreilles.
Tête, épaules, genoux, et pied, genoux et pieds.*

(The translation isn't word for word to English, but pretty close and it goes to the same tune. Ask your child if they can sing this and the other songs to you. If it's not clear from them I'd be happy to sing it for you.)

So keep listening for these fun songs that you're children are singing and who knows if you aren't already bilingual or trilingual you might be able to learn a little of another language yourself ☺

From the Upper Elementary

Our class has many exciting things going on in March: preparing for the ELEVENT, enjoying visits from parents during observations, preparing for conferences, and participating in Operation Rice Bowl, as well as our usual fascinating class work!

Our ELEVENT (elementary evening of entertainment) is a benefit performance of songs, skits, scenes and one-act plays. Our tentative date is April 7 at 7:30 p.m., in the Hughes Room. This year's proceeds will be our class's contribution to the CFMS Capital Campaign, to help build our new home. We plan to include student-written skits, scenes from

Shakespeare plays, and other dramatic and comedic surprises. We could use parents interested in music and drama to help with scenery, costumes, staging and dialogue coaching - call me if you're interested.

Observations and conferences are approaching, and the students always enjoy the chance to have their parents visit. Please let me know if you need to set up an observation or conference time other than those listed on the sign-up board.

If you're reading this on March 1, then today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, and also the beginning of our annual Operation Rice Bowl program. This program is designed by Catholic Relief Services to help young people become more aware of the needs of the poor worldwide and in our own country. It also focuses on what people in poverty are doing to better their lives, and on what we can do to help. (More information about the program is elsewhere in this Wednesday envelope.) We will have our traditional Operation Rice Bowl bake sale at the Liturgy of the Light in April, and send the proceeds to CRS.

Curriculum themes in March include:

Art	Set design and costume design; Traditional Asian art
Biology	Flowers and plant reproduction
Geography	Weather; countries of Asia
Geometry	Geometry in architecture
History	Classical Chinese and Japanese culture
Language	Drama, preparing for the ELEVENT
Math	Fractions, ratio and proportions
Music	Harmonizing, preparing for the ELEVENT
PE/Fitness	Soccer and juggling

If you have any questions about our class, feel free to call me at school or at home. Thank you again for the privilege of working with your children.

Melinda