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Faith of Our Fathers

Not long ago, Marcella Dillard told me of a very happy moment in the life of her family. One-day Marcella's six-year-old daughter, Mary, noticed another little girl with a small cosmetic mark centered on her forehead, which symbolized her Hindu heritage.

Mary asked what the mark meant, and her mother replied that it signified her religion, which Marcella did her best to explain. Then Mary asked if the little girl knew Jesus. To which Marcella replied that because the little girl practiced another religion, probably not. Later in the car, after some reflection, Mary responded, "Well that little girl should get to know Jesus because he really is a good guy!"

Marcella told me of this happy moment in praise of Mary's Sunday school teacher. It was her teacher this year, and those of years past, who had taught her about Jesus, whom she knows now, simply and delightfully, through the heart and mind of a little child.

In the years to come, as Mary grows older, it will be of the greatest importance that her Christian Education increases along with her maturity in years, up through her confirmation, and beyond into adulthood. Christian education will be the primary factor in the formation of her knowledge of God. She will learn more about the person of Jesus and the teachings of his Church: theological, moral, and liturgical. In short she will grow up as a Christian, seeking with all of God's children what St. Paul calls "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Next to faithful participation in the worship of the Church, next to the remembrance of our Lord in Word and Sacrament, as Fr. Ralston wrote about in last week's paper, Christian education is essential to our understanding of the Christian religion and our place in it. With such learning, there is actual growth in the knowledge of what we remember.

From the sacred memory comes the ever-increasing understanding of what is given primarily in the Bible and then in the wisdom of the church's teaching preserved in the Prayer Book. In addition to these are the authors in history who anticipate or succeed the centn\1 revelation of the Bible. In the past, classes in our Parish have been offered on Homer and Plato, Augustine and Dante, Shakespeare and Donne, Eliot and Lewis, and other luminaries of our history. These are studied in relation to our faith, and help form who we are. From these

authors our knowledge, collecting and dividing, forms a mosaic of truth and beauty, which is God's gift.

Because of the importance of Christian education, our hope is to enhance our church school building. *This is the second part of our preservation campaign.*

In addition to an endowment for the maintenance of our properties, *we intend to preserve the teaching of the Faith of our Fathers that has been passed down from generation to generation.* For this purpose, not only do we plan to redesign the interior of the present building, but also we hope to add an additional floor. The new building would be called the Christian Education Building, a new name for a more comprehensive purpose of Christian Education *for Parishioners of all ages.*

There are three reasons, I would suggest, we should embrace this vision. First is the need for more classroom space, a library, an elevator, adequate restrooms, and storage. At present, we do not have permanent classrooms for several age groups ranging from the very young, to teen-agers, and to adults. We have no place where we can put books and materials for all ages and comfortably use them. A small library would meet this need. We also have need of an elevator for disabled and elderly members of our church. And we certainly want to improve our restrooms, again with the specific needs for both the young and old in mind. Finally, the burden of inadequate storage space, with which we have lived for years, would be removed, and adequate space provided.

The second reason for the complete refurbishment of the present building, and adding a third floor, is the need for a permanent Parish hall. Parish suppers, Parish meetings, activities like the bazaar, and those of various community groups require a place set aside for just those purposes. Currently we make use of the same room that is used for classrooms on Sundays, and therefore it must be cleared out and assembled before each event, and then cleared out again and reassembled for classroom use. Permanent classrooms and an ample Parish hall are more desirable.

The third reason to redesign our building comes from the nobility of Christian Education itself. Next only to our worship in the church, there is no higher purpose for our congregation than growth in the knowledge and love of God. A building, whose primary purpose provides for education in the kingdom of God, should reflect this glorious task in its architectural structure. In this way, this building ought to compare in dignity to our other buildings. Our neo-gothic Church is grand, fine, and exquisite, and draws the worshipper into the presence of the "beauty of holiness." Our Parish house is charming and elegant, gently enclosing the special purposes for which it is used. So also should our Christian Education Building display the same kind of dignity. It should stand noble, handsome, and strong, immovable in its purpose to seek the truth and to do the good. It should in its very appearance reflect the high calling to form the minds and hearts of God's people inwardly and finally to love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength, undivided and whole.

Please consider thoughtfully and prayerfully how you can best contribute to the preservation of our buildings and our education in the

Faith of our Fathers.

(Next week we will consider the third part of our preservation
campagin.)

The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker

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