

Paul's Notes # 20
Dear Families,

The primary skill for us as Montessori Parentcators or Educators will always be our ability to be observers of the child right there before us. I speak from personal experience when I tell you that this is not an easy thing to do. We were not schooled to be scientific, objective observers. Our own thoughts, feelings get in the way. We are in the unfortunate habit of mostly seeing what we want to see. There are those old maxims: "*He sees through rose colored glasses.*" – or worse: "*...through a glass darkly.*"

One of my favorite observers of life, G.K. Chesterton, once wrote:

"Children and grass, alas, there's too much of them. If we could see but one blade of grass, we would think it as fair as the lily. And if we could see the first child, we would think it God himself come down on earth!"

Dr. Montessori told her trainees that for her to be able truly to see the child, she had first to become a "*nobody.*" I know that when I first began my career as a "gardener of children", I was much too vain when I was there in front of them to be a "*nobody.*" I was surely a "*somebody*" – a "*big somebody*" – a "*big shot*" there in front of all these youngsters. After all, I was the adult, and the kids were only kids. And so for a time I was not in touch with the truth of this child or that child. I was acting out of an abstract rendering of my idea of children who were there -- but there in my shadow. *I was failing to witness the true potential of this natural force of personal individual life developing before my very eyes,* and so blinded by my vanity had not a glimmer of just what the particular child needed from me –perhaps to get out of his way. I was just seeing grass and stepping all over it. I was just seeing children and saying, "Be quiet and follow my lessons."

Being a philologist as well as a Montessorian, I have always been helped understanding deeper meanings by the knowledge of the ancient roots of words. Above I just confessed that at one point of my life I was "*failing to witness...*" Well, the ancient root of the word "*witness*" is "*with-ness*" meaning to have gained a true knowledge by being actually *with* the person or happening. So if I was to have any hope of witnessing the true child, I had to humble myself so to be *with* him or her. I had to become with Dr. Montessori a "*nobody*" to discover the truth and power that is the child. It was then I became filled with respect and joy to be in such good, innocent company. To go on though any given day *with* each child, I had to become a companion -- just as a gardener is a companion to the plants of the garden. In human life, it is truly a matter of one person *being for* another person.

Peace,
Paul