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A Letter from the Community of

# ST. TIMOTHY'S

Leading Students to Reverence Truth, Desire Goodness, and Rejoice in Beauty

Fall 2009

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## Wonder in the Early Years of a Classical Education By Christine Edmonds

Our kindergarten letterhead at St. Timothy's reads, "Old nurses do not tell children about the grass, but about the fairies that dance on the grass, and the old Greeks could not see the trees for the dryads" (G.K. Chesterton). What place, one might ask, does such a whimsical thought have in a discussion about the earliest years of a classical education? It speaks to the need to encourage, to fan into flame so to speak, something that exists in all small children, something that we would hope not to lose were we successfully to raise children strong both in their faith and in their use of reason; it is a sense of wonder.

What is wonder? The dictionary defines it as a feeling of surprise and admiration, caused by something beautiful, unexpected, or unfamiliar. The classical educator, Charlotte Mason, refers to the young child's delight in acquiring knowledge as "intelligent curiosity." Why does this trait matter? For Mason, "The question is not -- how much does the youth know? when he is finished his education -- but

how much does he care? And about how many orders of things does he care? In fact, how large is the room in which he finds his feet set? And, therefore, how full is the life he has before him?" A child who wonders, who feels astonished and engaged will care about what she learns. It is of little use to know all the parts of a bird if one does not care about birds, or if the first robin of spring doesn't present itself as a happy occurrence. Wonder is what will make science interesting for it keeps the imagination open to creative acts, orients the heart towards God, and develops an observant posture.

How is wonder fostered at school? What does it look like during the day? In general, it is an atmosphere created throughout the school day. However, an outside observer might best catch a glimpse of it specifically at story time and in Nature study.

First, the reading of good literature is a foundational part of the school day at St. Timothy's and a time of great pleasure and wonder. Wonder is seen in the children's response to story, in

*Continued on page 2 ... Wonder*

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## A Parent's Perspective By Anna Dominique

*Pussycat, pussycat, where have you  
been?*

*I've been to London to visit the  
queen.*

*Pussycat, pussycat, what did you  
there?*

*I frightened a little mouse under her  
chair!*

The rhyme comes drifting up from the basement playroom with lyrical rhythm as Jess recites to her little sister. They're playing 'school' at the moment and during these "academic" sessions I hear mention of Van Gogh, counting practice, butterflies, Bach and a variety of storylines read over recent weeks.

Jessica is thoroughly enjoying Kindergarten at St. Timothy's. Painting (we have her version of Van Gogh's Sunflowers on our wall) and reading (with dramatic recreations) seem to be the highlights of the day's format. The small class size allows for lots of interaction and she often comes home talking about interesting things learned from the other children; "Miriam told me today she's from China. Where's China, Mom?"

The class atmosphere is gentle and fun. The teachers are firm but understanding and give the children good boundaries within which they can wander freely. There is daily time outdoors for exploring and learning in the fresh air. I am excited to see my daughter developing and enjoying such a wonderful experience.

### *Wonder...Continued from page 1*

their faces as they listen, in their comments, and in their interpretation of what they have heard as they re-enact stories. It is revealed in the sense of anticipation when the elves return the second time to help the cobbler, and in the girl who exclaims "Oh, Billy found a real gray spotted pony for Tommy." Wonder is cultivated in a group of children piled under a silk scarf, quivering with excitement as they wait for the sneeze that will send them all sailing across the room when the mitten bursts its seams.

Another of the best places to develop a sense of wonder in a child is in the observation of nature. Nature study in the early years is the drawing of children's attention to what they pass by. It requires hours out of doors and lays down a foundation of knowledge for, "All the time he is storing up associations of delight which will come back for his refreshment when he is an old man." The teacher's role is also clearly defined: "Our constant care must be to secure that they look, and listen, touch and smell; and the way to this is by sympathetic action on our part: what we look at they will look at ..." (Charlotte Mason).

And so during Nature study, innumerable expressions of wonder are expressed on a daily basis. An astonished five year old finds the berries on a holly where flowers were found months earlier. Eventually she makes a connection between the two for she will have discovered angiosperms all around her, in shrubs and trees and flowers, by the time she is given their

scientific names in the fifth grade. Or, a group of children watch wide-eyed as a newly emerged Monarch butterfly tests its wings. Meanwhile a boy watches as a snail lays a trail of slime across a table and touches its tentacles to see the eyes retract. Other children coddle rosehips -- though they are pretending that they are rosehip children -- wrapped in Lambs Ear sheets and Hydrangea leaf blankets. A boy looking up at a newly defoliated tree that he has played under every school day says, "Oh look, he's gotten himself ready for winter." It is the eager investigation of whatever natural object is found on the nature table, from a perfectly preserved cicada, to a composter filled with worms that have eaten through last week's apple core.

By fostering wonder in our students in these ways we begin an educational journey that will set their feet in large rooms.

**Christine Edmonds is a teacher and a parent at St. Timothy's Classical Academy.**

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**If you are interested in finding out more about our Senior Kindergarten Programme as well as our Grade 1-8 Programmes please consider attending our information evening which will be held in early March. The actual date, time, and place will be posted on our website. Also, do not hesitate to contact the school for further information at any time.**

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**Transition: One Student's Movement  
from St. Timothy's to an Ottawa Public  
School**

**By Kerry & Emily Kronberg**

It was with mixed thoughts and feelings that we recently decided our daughter, Emily, would leave St. Timothy's and begin grade seven Late French Immersion in an Ottawa public school. She first came to St. Timothy's at the beginning of grade four. Early in her St. Tim's experience, I remember Emily saying, "Mom, it's like I am a car. I was running out of fuel at my old school and at St. Timothy's I am being refuelled."

Today, when I ask Emily what she gained most at St. Timothy's, her response is: "confidence, friendship, an opinion of my own, insight into my strengths." Thanks to Mr. Klaassen's instruction, she is keen to engage in logical discussion and argument and is quite surprised to realize that others are unaccustomed to forming their own opinions. "St. Timothy's helped me know who I am," declares Emily. Self-knowledge and confidence in God are important given the atmosphere of moral ambiguity and peer pressure in her new setting. Emily notes that there are many words spoken in her playground to which Mrs. Bloomquist would have an aversion! She is often comforted and encouraged by the words of scripture, memorized under the guidance of the teaching staff at St. Timothy's. Most recently, Emily integrated Mr. Tingley's teaching on the virtue of courage into an assignment on bravery.

As Emily's parents, we believe St. Timothy's has helped Emily hold on to her childhood while at the same time allowing her to acquire wisdom. She fondly remembers games played in the simple Bromley Road parking lot and laments the difficulty she has influencing her new classmates toward similar play. She comments, "There are things people in my class are struggling with, thinking about or being oppressed by that I have not had to face." She attributes some of her protection from such heavy burdens to her time at St. Timothy's and is grateful. "I don't have to recover from things that have brought some of my new friends down."

St. Timothy's has made a great deal of difference in our home and in the lives of our children. We are truly grateful to God for how he has used this small classical school to lead our family to reverence truth, desire goodness and rejoice in beauty.

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*"I am the light of the world.  
He who follows Me shall not walk in  
darkness,  
but have the light of life."  
John 8:12*

At St. Timothy's the families receive a weekly letter home from the teachers describing the academic week and upcoming assignments. The final section is entitled "Smiles of the Week." Here is a selection for your enjoyment:

"It was very nice to see one of our Grade 2 students sitting on the carpet during some free time with a circle of Grade 1 students around her as she read them a story." - Mrs. King

"One highlight at school these past few weeks was to witness all the stages of the monarch butterfly. Mrs. Edmonds brought a monarch caterpillar to live in the SK classroom. Very soon after its arrival, the caterpillar secreted the substance to wrap itself in a cocoon and hung from the plastic wrap. Only days after this, the changes within began to be apparent and the dark wings of the butterfly could be seen through the walls of the cocoon. We witnessed with wonder the emergence of the butterfly, the drying of its wings, and finally, its release outdoors. A window on metamorphosis...a hope-filled way to begin the school year." - Mrs. Bloomquist

"It seems that there is no clear line between academic and non-academic events at St. Timothy's. Here are some pieces of conversations overheard on Friday afternoon at the park.... As they walked along, one student turned to another and asked him, "Do you prefer a monarchy or a republic? I think I prefer a republic." Three others ran by with wings flapping, "We are Snowy Owls looking for a juicy mouse to devour"...Another, whose team was down a couple of points in soccer, was heard calling out to his opponents, "If you have even the best players in the world but have not love, you are nothing!" - Mrs. Bloomquist

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## The Reader's Nook

### Picture Books for Children

#### Dahlia

by **Barbara McClintock**

This is a delightful story of a little Victorian girl's play (mud pies, wagon races, make believe gardening) as she initiates the rather prissy-looking doll given to her as a gift from Aunt Edna. The ending is beautiful and the drawings are magnificent. Every child's library should have a few McClintocks.

#### Mr. Gumpy's Outing & Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car Ride by **John Burningham**

Burningham's illustrations bring to life these two little outings - one down the river by boat and the other across the field by motor car. Your two year old will request this story over and over again delighting in the animals he finds therein.

#### The Rooster and the Fox

by **Helen Ward**

"Ward uses Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Nun's Priest's Tale' as the basis for this splendid picture book. The haughty rooster Chanticleer allows his vanity to interfere with caution and he is captured and carried off to the forest by a cunning fox. The realistic paintings feature a bevy of barnyard denizens, all of which are carefully catalogued by the illustrator in notes at the back of the book." (School Library Journal)

#### For Our Older Readers: Freckles

By **Gene Stratton-Poter**

When orphaned Freckles gets a job watching Mr. McLean's valuable Limberlost timber, he thinks that he has at last found a home. But the Limberlost gives him much more than that--a lasting knowledge of nature, a woman who loves him, and the secret of his birth.

A beautifully written book that introduces pre-teens and older to the beauty of nature,

romance, and coming of age.

#### Sister Wendy's Story of Christmas (Adventures in Art Series)

"...Sister Wendy opens the eyes of young readers to the very different ways twenty artists have depicted elements of the Nativity over a period of 800 years, drawing the reader into the scene and adding glimpses into the artists' lives and backgrounds."

#### For the Surfer In You

[www.littlelambbooks.blogspot.com](http://www.littlelambbooks.blogspot.com)

Margaret Perry is an avid collector of children's books and reviews books from her collection at the above blogsite. A good resource for both old and new children's books. She has an article in this month's First Things.

#### [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

Margaret Perry's article is called "Wonderous and Silly."

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## St. Timothy's Notice Board

✦ Most of our students have come to us by word of mouth and so we encourage all our supporters to please talk about St. Timothy's and share our website with others ([www.st-timothys.ca](http://www.st-timothys.ca)).

✦ St. Timothy's now has a development team that will be meeting with pastors of local churches in January and February. If anyone is interested in setting up a meeting please contact Brian Dijkema at [brian.dijkema@st-timothys.ca](mailto:brian.dijkema@st-timothys.ca).

✦ Please keep in mind our information evening in early March and consider committing to inviting two families who might be interested. This would be a tremendous help to our development team.

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## Please Pray for Our School

✦ That the Lord Jesus Christ will always be the light for our school.

✦ Thank the Lord for His care for our bodies during times of sickness, for minds to think, and hearts to love.

✦ Pray that our students will cover all their relationships with love and grace and forgiveness, and that all our students will find St. Timothy's a safe and happy place to be each day. Pray for any who are experiencing challenges in this regard.

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