

JOY BORN OF TRUTH
Gaudium de Veritate

Monthly reflections on our PBVM School Mission, Philosophy, and Student Learning Expectations

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Teaching Through the Mission Statement: Change is Good!

By Mrs. Carrie Donahue

As a faculty member here at Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary School, I am pleased to reflect daily on what our mission statement celebrates. Certainly truth in teaching is a joyful and freeing experience, and the privilege of teaching in such a place as our school community is obvious. As I consider our statement, I am reminded that faith is in actions—those of the heart, mind, and body; that all good things come from God’s active presence; and that our students—our treasures—are both affected and effective.

Formed in Freedom for Excellence through Catholic Education

Our mission statement speaks to the sincerity of the families who attend our school; the formation of our children begins there. We are so very blessed to have such deeply faithful families who are protecting, nurturing, and sacrificing unceasingly so that their children might one day freely choose for themselves a liberating excellence. Our faculty works hard and prays even harder to deliver meaningful learning that can be used by our students to grapple with the challenges of their spiritual and temporal futures. This effort yields little, however, without the careful tending by our parents. This team effort is an honorable and vital partnership. Our children come to us not only with gifts, talents, interests, and a sense of natural wonder, but also—and most importantly—with the potential for holiness. We strive for excellence in the recognition that all that is excellent originates from a Perfect Source, and a desire for excellence is a desire first to acknowledge the Source of that pure goodness, then to recognize that goodness residing within, and finally to mirror this truth in daily expression and effort.

Transformed by Christ through Grace and Virtue

After parents entrust their children to our staff, our process must begin in earnest. *Daily.* We ask the Holy Spirit to dwell in our classrooms, protect our field trips, direct our discussions, and infuse our words and actions with meaning. We humbly ask only to assist in the transformative process of our students, to cultivate expressions of Grace in the children through their Virtuous actions. But transformation, thankfully, is not a tidy touch-up; rather it is a steady stream that soaks the sidelines. As we witness our students growing in Grace, we are moved as well. And why should we not be? Why should our children not be the ones to show us the Fruits of the Spirit? I am encouraged and lifted daily by both little events and big deals, frequent occurrences that come from these children through whom God chooses to work. It’s a pretty awesome process to witness, and it is one that makes me hopeful for the future.

Along with individual transformations have come many more encompassing changes to the school at large. This school has undergone, and continues to undergo, so many changes, at times obvious and at other times under the radar. But the movement is there—palpable and real—and frequently you just want to pick up your feet and let the current carry you. Sometimes the “new” is exciting, and sometimes uncomfortable; the process is not always lovely and often hard work. What shines through the difficulties, though, is the sincere commitment to be changed for the better, individually and collectively, professionally and personally, and always, through Christ.

Lived in Joy Born of Truth

This brings us to our current place: the active in the waiting, the still in the change. Be assured that we are committed to the sainthood of each student. Let me say here, though, that in no way are we willing to sacrifice academics to an inconvenient time frame, or that the study of Religion trumps all else; we believe in the excellence of academic balance. Our students have a variety of God-gifted talents, and God Himself is the Creator of the wisdom of math and science, the Designer of the communicative beauty of fine and language arts, the Author of Time in the study of social sciences, and the Physician who is interested in keeping the temporal body physically fit to serve. But that’s the beauty of living in the Truth; with a solid underpinning of belief there can be balance and exploration in a true and free pursuit of that which is good. One of my all-time favorite scriptural quotes is from Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

This verse reminds me always that these are the true conditions of our experiencing the Divine. This is our goal and our hearts’ desire. Living not just with this goal, but *in* this goal, makes for a joy filled existence.

Could we ask for more?

Formed in Freedom for Excellence through Catholic Education;

Transformed by Christ through Grace and Virtue;

Lived in Joy born of Truth.

Parent Support & Family Resources

PRESENTATIONS, RESOURCES, AND TOOLS ON THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE FORMATION OF THE CHILD

Family Read-aloud List

Reading together as a family can be a wonderful and very important part of your children's education. I hope this list will assist with that. I've tried to include books which are not too intense for little ones and yet interesting enough for the older ones. You'll still have to use good judgment in some cases as some children are more sensitive than others. Click on underlined titles to jump to their book review.

[Abe Lincoln](#) by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire
[Alice in Wonderland](#) by Lewis Carroll
[And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?](#) by Jean Fritz
[Andries](#) by Hilda Van Stockum
[Anne of Green Gables](#) series by L.M. Montgomery
[Beorn the Proud](#) by Madeleine Polland
[Bernadette, Our Lady's Little Servant](#) by Hertha Pauli
[The Book of Virtues](#) edited by William Bennett
[Caddie Woodlawn](#) by Carol Ryrie Brink
[Catholic Stories for Boys and Girls](#) (Neumann Press)
[The Chronicles of Narnia](#) by C.S. Lewis
[The Clown of God](#) by Tomie de Paola
[Columbus](#) by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire
[The Cottage at Bantry Bay Series](#) by Hilda Van Stockum
[The Door in the Wall](#) by Marguerite de Angeli
[Farmer Boy](#) by Laura Ingalls Wilder
[Fingal's Quest](#) by Madeleine Polland
[For the Children: Words of Love and Inspiration from His Holiness Pope John Paul II](#)
[Francis and Clare: Saints of Assisi](#) by Helen Walker Homan
[From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler](#) by E.L. Koningsburg
[Gettysburg](#) by Makinlay Kantor
[Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates](#) by Mary Mapes Dodge
[The Hidden Treasure of Glaston](#) by Eleanore Jewett
[The Holy Bible](#)
[If All the Swords in England](#) by Barbara Willard
[Just David](#) by Eleanor Porter
[The Lady of Guadalupe](#) by Tomie de Paola
[The Librarian Who Measured the Earth](#) by Kathryn Lasky
[Little House Series](#) by Laura Ingalls Wilder
[The Little Princess](#) by Frances Hodgson Burnett
[The Lord of the Rings](#) and [The Hobbit](#) by J.R.R. Tolkien
[Magical Melons](#) by Carol Ryrie Brink
[Miracles on Maple Hill](#) by Virginia Sorenson

[The Mitchells Series](#) by Hilda Van Stockum
[The Moral Compass](#) edited by William Bennett
[Mother Cabrini: Missionary to the World](#) by Francis Parkinson Keyes
[Old Sam: Dakota Trotter](#) by Don Alonzo Taylor
[Once Upon a Time Saints and More Once Upon a Time Saints](#) by Ethel Pochocki
[The Orphans Find a Home: A Story of St. Frances Cabrini](#) by Joan Stromberg
[The Railway Children](#) by E. Nesbit
[The Reb and the Redcoats](#) by Constance Savery
[Saint Anthony and the Christ Child](#) by Helen Walker Homan
[Saint Augustine and his Search for the Faith](#) (Vision)
[Saint Benedict](#) by Mary Fabyan Windeatt
[St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio](#) by Catherine Beebe
[Saint Paul the Apostle](#) by Mary Fabyan Windeatt
[St. Philip of the Joyous Heart](#) by Francis X. Connolly
[Saint Therese and the Roses](#) by Helen Walker Homan
[Swallows and Amazons](#) by Arthur Ransome
[The Swamp Fox of the Revolution](#) by Stewart Hollbrook (Landmark Series)
[Thomas A. Edison: Young Inventor](#) by Sue Guthridge (Childhood of Famous Americans)
[Where was Patrick Henry on the 29th of May?](#) by Jean Fritz
[Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams?](#) by Jean Fritz
[The Winged Watchman](#) by Hilda Van Stockum
[The Wonder Book](#) by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Note: Not all of the stories in *The Book of Virtues* and *The Moral Compass* are not necessarily appropriate for small children, but you'll find many, many good selections.

From: <http://www.love2learn.net/literature/booklists/readloud.html>

See *Schoolspeak* for a growing number of booklists and articles on the subject of Literature and the formation of the young.

A Week with Michael O'Brien: Artist, Author, Father, HusbandMonthly Reflections of the Role of Literature in the Formation of the Child **By Bridget Patton**

*J*ust remember this.....you are Frodo!"

These were Michael O'Brien's words to our Presentation School children as he told them that they have each been called to know their true story. Even with their flaws, Mr. O'Brien told our children that, just like Frodo, the little hero of JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, God calls them never to resort to evil means (like sorcery) even to fight evil, but only to use good means. This is what it takes to be a truly holy hero.

Right before the Thanksgiving Holiday, Presentation School and Parish were honored to welcome author and artist Michael D. O'Brien (<http://www.studiobrien.com/>).

Mr. O'Brien spent two days listening to and speaking with our children, teachers, parents and friends, leaving everyone inspired and informed. Here are a few of the main points that we will be unpacking in this "literature year" at Presentation School.

As parents and teachers, our work is to enable our children to become who they really are as unique works of God. Mr. O'Brien commented several times on the "open faces and clear eyes" of the children at Presentation. "God is at work here!" he exclaimed.

Children are delighted to taste the beauty and fulfillment of their true story as warriors in the great adventure of fighting for God's Kingdom. They long to hear this ennobling story and to see it portrayed in the stories they read and the movies they watch.

You Are What You Read

Michael spoke very lovingly to the

children about how "stories point to how we should live, how we should act, and how we should choose what to do next."

Word and image are very powerful in the formation of our children. As teachers and parents, we must recognize that the books our children read, and the films and media they watch, form their minds and hearts, for the better or for the worse.

The battle between good and evil has been the theme of storytelling from the beginning of time. In our day, however, we see fantasy storytelling offering a new and erroneous message to readers (especially our young readers). So often in the new fantasy of the last 40 years we read and see evil being combatted with evil means. We can take measure of this, says Mr. O'Brien, by asking ourselves what is depicted as "real" in a story. How does the hero overcome evil? Does he or she ever resort to evil in the struggle to overcome evil? Is the hero portrayed as a virtuous person or as selfish?

Teachers and parents must pay attention to the mental food their children digest. Are we teaching our children to read books and watch films that ennoble them and speak to us of wonder? Or are we allowing their appetite for thrill and entertainment to dictate their choices in media and literature?

We will be richly rewarded if we take the time and effort to seek out the **Good, True, and Beautiful** in those things that influence our children. These are the only things of lasting value in our human drama!

"How do we choose a good book?" asked a student of Michael O'Brien. O'Brien spoke of all the points above, but he also went on to say that we are always urged and invited to call upon the Holy Spirit to

guide us. "We will know that interior quickening as we come upon good literary food" said Mr. O'Brien. Just like Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, we have been given a sword that glows bright in darkness. This sword, the Holy Spirit, will help us discern our way through the cultural journey of our age.

Work hard to find excellent film and literature resources. Also spend more time reading aloud to our children (even those who already know how to read) and watching movies as a family. (Resources to follow).

Pray for guidance. Pray for the grace of that inner radar that alerts us, as parents and teachers, to the entry of unhealthy materials into our homes. The gift of holy discernment will clear anxieties away for us.

Reading and Resources suggested by Michael O'Brien

- *Ignatius Press* carries a very good listing of films. These can either be purchased or we can note the titles and order these movies from the library or Netflix, Amazon, etc.

- *A Landscape With Dragons* by Michael D. O'Brien gives a thoughtful study of what young people are reading and the possible impact such reading may have on them. He gives an analysis of books, films, and videos for the young that is incisive and detailed. This book includes a very good reading list for children from preschool and kindergarten through high school (loan copies available).

- *Family Read-Aloud List* (see page 2 and *schoolspeak* for more Literature Parent Resources)

November

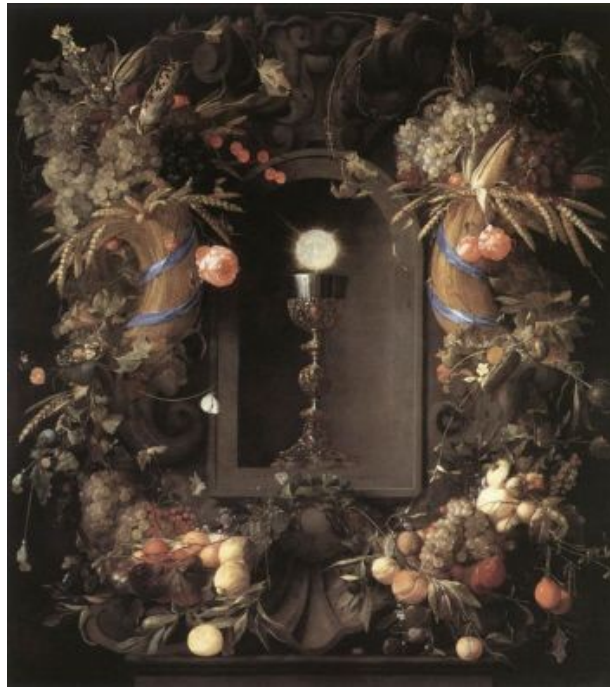
The Virtue of the Month

GRATITUDE

In the month of November we celebrate Thanksgiving and look back upon our lives and give thanks to our Lord for another year. This month at Presentation School we have been focusing on the virtue of gratitude. I have learned with the children that the virtue of gratitude hinges on the Cardinal Virtue (cardinal means “hinge”) of Justice. The great St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., centuries ago, expounded upon this virtue so beautifully. His teaching still applies today.

St. Thomas tells us that gratitude first of all recognizes the favor received. For example, the Thanksgiving holiday is a time to reflect on how grateful we are for our families. I recognize the wonderful family God gave to me – Mom, Dad, siblings, nieces, nephews, brother and sister-in-laws— pure gift.... Not something I could have ever earned, created, or constructed. The second step of gratitude is to express one’s appreciation and thanks. So, in this case – I thank God for the gift of my family and I take time to thank each of my family members for all they are and do. The third is to repay the favor when it is appropriate – at a suitable time and place and according to one’s means. So here I am with a vow of poverty miles from my family. This is great, because my life as a Religious *proves* that ‘repaying the favor’ is possible for any and all. As is appropriate to my vocation as a Religious Sister, I remain here with my Religious Community, my Mission (PBVM), and remain exclusively attentive to my Spouse, Jesus. Yet, in

my most sincere hearts of hearts, I can well up with prayers of love and Thanksgiving for my family. Moreover, my simple yet cosmic ‘repaying of the favor’ is offered most



profoundly at my Holy Communion offered up for them at Mass on Thanksgiving morning. I give them, my family, *God Himself* who gives Himself to me in the Sacred Host. And How can I repay God for His goodness to me? That is what the Mass is all about... first and foremost an act of Worship and Thanksgiving to Him, for Him. A Sacrifice in which He provides the “Lamb”.... That is, His very self. “For God so loved the World that He sent His only begotten Son...” The very word Eucharist means thanksgiving. As we receive Him in thanksgiving, such sacrificial love demands a response. We respond – “Amen”. Amen, I will sacrifice my life and all as you have sacrificed Your life and all for me, Oh Lord. It is the cosmic exchange of “Favors” and we get the

very generous and long end of the stick. How little is our return (our little lives with all our faults and failings) to His immense gift. Yet, He loves this gift of ours. He smiles upon this gift like a mama looking on the scribbled drawing of her three-year old son. He, like the Mother, accepts this gift with love and joy.

So, let us recognize His favor and give thanks to God the Father for His goodness to us, especially in the Holy Mass. Let us express our gratitude in the most perfect form—at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Let us repay His favor in perfect worship at Mass and with a response of self gift as we receive him in the Blessed Sacrament.

Next Month... Humility!

STUDENT LEARNING EXPECTATION

CARDINAL VIRTUE OF JUSTICE:

Faithful Worshipers willing and eager to give God His due in the perfect prayer of praise, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; demonstrating an understanding of what happens at Mass.

Responsible Stewards whose actions reflect the understanding that every good gift comes from God: informing all choices is the hierarchy of being according to God’s plan

Grateful Sons & Daughters who honor God, parents, and country and give appropriate respect to authority, superiors, and elders.