

24 August 2018

### **“The Intuitive Mind”**

School begins for all of us soon! It is curious but only those who have suffered under all the teaching and reading and instruction are in a position to appreciate the gift of a good education. I recently re-read a quote I copied from Frank McCourt’s book *Angela’s Ashes*:

You have to study and learn so that you can make up your own mind about history and everything else, but you can’t make up an empty mind. Stock your mind, stock your mind. It is your house of treasure and no one in the world can interfere with it. If you won the Irish sweepstakes and bought a house that needed furniture, would you fill it with bits and pieces of rubbish? Your mind is your house and if you fill it with rubbish . . . it will rot in your head. You might be poor, your shoes might be broken, but your mind is a palace.

I have always been a great advocate for education. But there are people who are formally uneducated who have a deep understanding of reality that defies education. I know people who have only finished 3rd grade but have a unique kind of wisdom that one cannot get in a classroom.

There is a kind of learning that is more important than factual knowledge, as important as facts may be in the big scheme of things. There is a kind of learning that is more essential than the frailty of human reasoning, as important as reasoning may be. It does not defy reason; it confounds—because it surpasses it. It is akin to faith; it resembles insight, and approaches intuition. Many years ago, I heard William Muehl, professor at Yale tell a story that says it well.

Back in the days when New Bedford, Massachusetts was a major seaport, scores of ships involved in the whaling industry went out from there each year. They often spent years away from their home base. Of all the captains made famous for their seamanship, none were more highly regarded than Elieasar Hull. He went out farther, stayed out longer, brought back more whale oil, and lost fewer men than anyone. When asked to explain his almost uncanny gift of navigation, Captain Hull would answer, “Oh, I just go up on the deck, I listen to the wind in the rigging, I get the drift of the sea, I take a long look at the stars, and then I set my course.”

Times changed as they always do, and the owners of Captain Hull’s vessel were informed that the insurance underwriters would no longer agree to cover a vessel that did not carry a formally trained and certified navigator. They were then confronted with the problem of

how to break the news to Captain Hull. He must either sign on some young up-start fresh out of school or go to navigation school himself. When they broke this news to Captain Hull he greeted the announcement with no particular emotion. He said he had always been curious about this new-fangled business of scientific navigation, and he would be glad to have a chance to study it. At the expense of the company, he went to navigation school and he graduated at the top of his class. Then he shipped out for two years.

The day Captain Hull returned to port after this first voyage, half of the population of New Bedford was on the docks to greet him. The first question asked was how he had liked the experience of navigating by scientific means. He said, "It was wonderful. I don't know how I have gotten on without it all of these years. Whenever I want to know my location and how to get where I want to go, I go into my cabin, get out my charts and tables, and work the proper equations, and after about an hour I set my course with scientific precision. THEN I GO UP ON THE DECK AND I LISTEN TO THE WIND IN THE RIGGING, I GET THE DRIFT OF THE SEA, I TAKE A LONG LOOK AT THE STARS, AND THEN GO BACK AND CORRECT MY COURSE FOR ERRORS IN COMPUTATION."

If we do not know about the wind in the rigging, the drift of the sea, and the long look at the stars, we suffer a kind of ignorance that no amount of education can cure. So, let's do our homework but never forget the marvel of God's world.

Come, Worship  
Stay, Learn  
Go, Serve