

## To Our Readers



An end-of-year message almost naturally invites one to look back and reflect on the events and happenings of the past twelve months. What makes certain things stand out

more than others in one's memory? What makes one remember?

The Italian author Primo Levi in his book *The Drowned and the Saved* said 'Human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument.' This simple sentence, expressing a powerful thought, has always struck me with great force. A pensive mood overcomes me when I consider the many definitions of *memory*. Memory comes in so many shapes, sizes and senses. I particularly like the idea of 'the memory of colour', which is how each individual remembers colour. The memory, apparently, can be quite different from the actual colour itself and is a uniquely personal experience. One only has to think about the lovely Colour Boxes designed by Dr. Maria Montessori for the three-to-six year-old children and wonder what each child's individual memory of colour will be.

In English, and no doubt in all other languages, there are many words akin to the word *memory*, like memorial, memoir, or memento. Finding synonyms and related vocabulary makes an exciting pursuit for all six-to-twelve year-old children, when the imagination is inflamed and the power of reason is acute.

And then, what is it that is fallacious

about memory? Is it the fact that it is essentially a personal recollection of an experience or event?

What is it that is marvellous about memory? It can delight, save and protect us. It is a treasure trove of experiences, both beautiful and salutary.

And what about collective memory? Around the world there are commemorative days both in official and unofficial settings, both publicly and privately, which tell of historical events so that we may recall jointly or individually. Very often those official days bear a connection to the struggle for freedom, for independence, which paradoxically often involved violence and war. We strive for peace, we wish to remember peace, but as Maria Montessori writes 'Verily, I believe that laws and treaties are not enough: what we need is a world full of miracles, as it seemed miraculous to see the young child seeking work and independence, and manifesting a wealth of enthusiasm and love. A new world for a new man: that is what we sorely need to-day' (Maria Montessori, *Peace and Education*, 1932).

Heeding Montessori's constant emphasis on the importance of a science for Peace, and that 'establishing peace is the work of education' (*Education and Peace*, 1949), two conferences in North America this summer were devoted to that theme—the conference organised by the Montessori Society of Canada and AMI-USA's National Conference. This issue features the lectures given by Sandra Giralto and Renilde Montessori on those occasions.

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General Secretary