

The Great Teacher is one supreme example of . . .

# The Nobility of the Teaching Profession

SOMEONE once said: "If you can, go ahead; if you cannot, then teach."

The implication of that utterance was, of course, the attitude of not a few people towards the teaching profession. They liken it to a spacious camarilla where those who fail in other lines of human endeavor can easily retire and still be a success. They look upon teachers as frustrated or would-be lawyers, doctors, nurses or pharmacists—as the residue of what might have been career men and women with abbreviated titles prefixed to their names. To them, teachers are the lowest class of white-collared people who can easily be pushed around according to the whims of politicians.

Ladies and gentlemen, fortunately for us who believe otherwise, the teaching profession shall always be the noblest. It is the background of all careers of note and distinction, the gateway to numberless opportunities, the master key to a nation's peace and progress.

I recall a little anecdote of a priest, a lawyer, and a teacher. The three were engaged in an argument as to which of their callings was the noblest. The attorney claimed that law was "it" because after all, he said, ours is a world of cause and effect, of rights and obligations, of order and disorder, of natural, divine, and human laws. Therefore, he argued, a lawyer's counsel is necessary for the maintenance of peace, justice, harmony and equity. On the other hand, the priest said his vocation was the noblest, contending that ultimately man's world is not this but the next, and because man has only a bit of knowledge of the life that is to come, he has to be led, guided and shown the way to that after-life, by the priest—the shepherd whom God assigned to earth to look after His flock.

Lastly, the teacher said that it is his profession which in its own way is the maker of priests and lawyers, and all the professionals put together.

Ladies and gentlemen, the argument, if it was one, is worth the contemplation of those who look down upon the men and women who earn their daily bread inside the four walls of the classroom, who teach but who do not get rich, who teach just the same for the satisfaction of serving the world that often forgets the virtue of gratitude.

Until now, teaching has not been fully appreciated or adequately paid, yet teachers go on doing their noble work. A linotypist in a printing press, with comparatively less training, receives more per hour than the average university professor. The same is true with others who are commonly known as skilled laborers. They command better pay in wages than teachers can get in salaries. It would thus seem that it is better to be a skilled laborer, for while professorship requires skill, the recognition seemingly stops there. It has not gone far in the way of fully ameliorating the lot of the teacher and of raising the dignity of the teaching profession to a point where it shall cease to be a mere springboard to some other calling. Moreover, the teacher's working hours do not end in the classroom, because deep into the night at home he has to do things connected with his work the following day.

Yet without amelioration of his lot and with hours of drudgery, the teacher goes on. He does not descend to the level of the laborer to join strikes and pickets for want of salary increases and other benefits. He considers teaching too noble a calling for sit-down strikes. He stays in the classroom through the years, for to him teaching is less a labor for wealth than it is of love.

He is convinced that teaching is an investment, the returns of which are not measured in cash or in kind, but in personal satisfaction. It is work, service—not to one man alone but to humanity itself, and it lays aside gross materialism for the finer things in life.

By Germina Q. Aurillo

Jesus Christ, the Greatest Teacher, did not receive a single centavo to teach the human soul to be charitable and kind, to forgive those who trespassed against Him and against us. From Nazareth to Calvary, by precept and by example, He lived the life of a teacher.

Such is the teaching profession. Molding of the young mind is a tedious process which only the patient and self-sacrificing can long endure. It takes a strong heart to build a temple, not of stones and bricks and tiles, but of a child's immortal life.

In conclusion, let me quote a poet (anonymous) who wrote of the architect and the teacher:

"An architect builded a temple,  
Pillars and groins and arches  
He wrought with care and skill—  
Were fashioned to suit his will  
"Men said when they saw its beauty:

It shall never know decay.  
Great is thy skill, oh builder,  
Thy fame shall endure for aye.

"A teacher builded a temple  
With loving and infinite care,  
Planning each arch with patience,  
Laying each stones with prayer.

"None praised her unceasing efforts;

None knew of the wondrous plan  
For the temple the teacher  
builded

Was unseen by the eyes of man.

"Gone was the builder's temple—

Crumbled into the dust,  
Pillars and groins and arches—  
Food for the consuming rust.

"But the temple the teacher  
builded

Will last while the ages roll,  
For that beautiful, unseen temple  
Is a child's immortal soul."