

Celebrating school - a career choice

The myth is, of course, that we are glad it's over for a while. We can't let our friends realize that we really do enjoy it, including learning the subject matter for itself alone. We tell ourselves that all this is necessary for a job or a career; but deep down we love it.

What a teacher is doing, of course, is educating, leading out from the student what he or she knows already without realizing it, and linking it up with the new knowledge that day. Much of that knowledge is just information, data, examples and the like; but its unity inheres in the ever-growing mind of the student. A form of asceticism for the teacher is to get out of the way as this process begins to take shape, while still fostering it all the while. The greatest days are not when you as teacher have wowed them, but when the best half dozen were led to carry the discussion for the whole period, without any artificial parliamentary apparatus but just spontaneously. Deep down, those are the days when the teacher hopes the inspector will sidle in at the back...

Without the intellectual formation of a good school, at any level, information itself will overwhelm us. No previous generation has been subject to the tide of input, pardon the mixed metaphor that assaults us at every stage of life. I think there are few greater favors one can do for his or her fellow persons than to help this formation of the mind, again at every stage of life. And people never altogether lose those capacities. This they will tell you at reunions and in correspondence over the years, often without meaning to.

So of course I am advocating teaching as a career choice. To my mind, it is right up there with health care; and the decision between the two can rest on a perception of one's gifts from a kind providence, of mind and spirit. I pity, for instance, the student whose teacher is unhappy in the profession.

In the church, a religious vocation is often fused with a service profession like teaching or health care; the best of two worlds. Any time is a good time for a young or not so young person to mull over choices like these, even second careers or late vocations. Fewer than ever of the population in a nation like ours are actually

engaged in making things, e.g. in factories, more than ever are in service professions, with the economy resting on global realities rather than exclusively local ones. As people need more education than ever in such a world, the choice of teaching for a career seems to me to make more and more sense.

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