



Father Anton's Words, of Wisdom:

With the summer winding down and school beginning this week, I've been thinking about my schooldays and the wonderful teachers that made a lasting impression in my life. Those of you who follow these columns regularly are aware of my childhood – but God placed many people in my path who allowed me to experience His care and love – many of whom were teachers.

In my early childhood I remember well Miss

Mentis. She was my grade two teacher at LJ Atkinson Public School in Garson where I grew up. My grandfather was also the Custodian. Miss Mentis always had a caring manner and encouraged me at a time when my confidence was lacking. I heard so many times how stupid I was from my parents that I soon began to believe it – but she challenged my thinking and helped me to be confident and to understand as she put it, “God doesn't make junk.” That stuck with me throughout all my years at school.

Moving from Garson to Sudbury, my new school was Sacred Heart, and Miss Kozak is the teacher I remember most. She was patient, and offered a lot of her own time after school to help me with parts of the day where I didn't understand something or just didn't get it. She was also nurturing – building my confidence and reminding me that it didn't matter how many times I got something wrong, it was more important that I tried – and eventually would succeed. She was a good example of unselfishness and genuine caring.

From Sacred Heart we went to a new school that was just built down the street call Cyril Varney Public school – and for the couple of years that I was there, I would have to say that all my teachers were great – many providing me with milk and often a sandwich or treat here and there since our lunches as kids often consisted of just bread and margarine.

I think my best experience was when I moved on to what they called then “Junior High” Grade 7 and 8 were at Churchill Public School where we already started rotating classes to prepare for high school. Mrs. Johnstone our librarian, Mr. Barr my math teacher, Mr. Mailloux my home room and French teacher, Mrs. Mckinnon my English teacher, and Valerie Barr my music teacher are the ones who stand out most. This was probably the most trying time during my young life and it is these teachers who made the difference. Mrs. Johnstone was like a grandmother – finding chores for me in the Library and slowly gaining my trust so I could share with her what was going on at home. Mr. Barr was well aware of the situation since my godmother was his housekeeper, and often he would pass clothing on to me through her to save me embarrassment. Mr. Mailloux just made learning French fun. His enthusiasm and encouragement gave me something to aspire to. Mrs. McKinnon showed much concern and offered to help in tangible ways through these times. I would often miss three to four

months of school every year from the time I was nine or so to stay home and care for my siblings while my father worked and my mother was away almost years in what then called the “San” in the psychiatric ward. Mrs. Mckinnon offered to take me for groceries, and assist in any way she could. She showed genuine concern and I knew I could rely on her if there was a need. Mr. Barr was also patient with me. Although I was good with basic math, algebra and integers just seemed a waste of time – and missing so much class time I could hardly grasp the mechanics of them. He made it interesting and fun – and knowing how much school I missed – once he knew that at least I understood even though my answers wouldn’t always be right gave me a passing grade so I could move on. His wife Valerie gave me a love for music – and encouraged me to sing. And sing I did! I didn’t care if I had a good voice or not – I sang all the time. From the time I got up in the morning, walking to school, doing chores – it didn’t matter what... I was always humming for singing – I never really thought about it. I came to understand that God sent all of these wonderful teachers as instruments to help me on life’s journey. I was about 7 or 8 when I understood well that God works through human hands and hearts – and I have never been disappointed. Jesus was a teacher. He taught not only by word but by example just as my teachers did. He taught us that life with God is about love and not fear; that living is about joy and not despair; that the sun shines even behind the darkest clouds; and that faith can conquer anything. I thank God for the wonderful school teachers that helped me along life’s way and for the many others who witnessed to Gods’ presence in my life without knowing it. I also thank Him for a wonderful grandmother who said to me once as a small child “GOOD, BETTER, BEST... NEVER LET IT REST... UNTIL YOUR GOOD IS BETTER... AND YOUR BETTER BEST.” That is how I have tried and continue to live my life - to never stop learning and to strive always to honor the examples of those who helped me on my journey.

Yes, school is in – but life is a school that never stops teaching and God continues to send others into our lives to challenge us and to help us grow in wisdom. Let us be grateful.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, as this new school year begins; bless our children and grandchildren with a hunger for knowledge. Bless our teachers with patience and wisdom as they help to form their lives. May we also always be aware of the greatest teacher of all time... Jesus your Son. May we seek His wisdom, imitate his love, and live lives of gratefulness. Amen.