

Tuesday, March 16

Life is Like an Ice Cream Cone

Read: Matthew 22:19-21

Throughout my forty-plus years as a public school teacher, I have taught in two states and the District of Columbia in a number of school districts working for many principals and even more chief executive officers (a.k.a. superintendents and chancellors). From the sixties through the eighties I saw myself as a round peg snugly ensconced in a round hole. Teaching was seen as an art, and I loved every minute of it.

In the late nineties, however, the shapes of the holes began to change more and more from year to year. Teaching appeared to be becoming less of an art and more of a science. I was still well rounded, but it became necessary for me to give and take a bit here and there. In the early 2000s I was expected to change shape from month to month, and as the decade ended the changes began occurring weekly and occasionally daily. Admittedly, adapting to the changes was difficult in the nineties, but it was even more challenging in the 2000s.

In my current circumstance teaching is seen only as a science. The concept of teaching as an art has been pushed asunder much like whole language and sustained silent reading. Consequently, I devote a tremendous amount of energy in an attempt to transform myself into the district chancellor's and my building principal's ideas of what my shape should be.

It isn't easy. How do I cope? I recall a Charles Schultz statement, "Life is like an ice cream cone; you have to lick it one day at a time."

That's what I am presently doing with a vengeance! Every day I listen to and/or read the latest directives and arduously begin wiggling and jiggling my roundness into the seemingly ever changing shapes of the newly established holes.

By the grace of God and the support of an ardent prayer group, I continue to follow Jesus' decree to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." As for the "things that are God's," I deal with them on my own terms by continuing to demonstrate to my students that teaching is indeed an art.

Prayer: *Thank you, God, for the call to service. Be with all people that you have tapped to teach as they strive to educate children. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

- Stephen R. Roberts