

Sunday, August 13, 2016
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

The Three "R's"

Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic still form the core curriculum of literacy. They are necessary skills which enable us to count, learn, and interpret, offering individual autonomy and progress.

Reading is crucial. Without reading, we are left to the opinion of others as our chief source of information. Reading excites and inspires, as well as educates and clarifies, but one must read with an open mind, not just to confirm one's own point of view. Reading introduces new vistas and interpretations, in a similar way that that travel does. Less TV and more reading would make America a better educated country, capable of appreciating the complexities of reality instead of demanding easy fixes. International and national affairs are often as messy as any individual's personal or family life.. Reading invites introspection and fosters thinking, antidotes to quick and impulsive decisions. Reading, however, doesn't have to have any specific purpose. It is a joy and entertainment, a source of rest and contentment, even an escape from the worries of life. It refreshes and renews, restoring our minds and spirits so we can continue the tasks of life.

Writing is the communication of ideas, information, and opinions, perhaps the highest of human achievements. Writers shape people's minds and influence the course of history. Consider your own favorite authors and those of o the great classics, including the Bible. Writing comes in a variety of forms. It is descriptive, imaginative, factual, spiritual, and polemical. Not all writing is credible or meant to be read literally, not even the Bible. There is hyperbole, irony, suggestion, parable, folk lore, and myth, literary forms which invite imaginative and intelligent interpretation. Writing also serves as a personal introduction, e.g., a resume or an essay for entrance into college. Learning how to write, therefore, is an important skill. Those who cannot write are at a decided disadvantage because they can't express themselves or outline their ambitions and goals. Writing is not just for the famous.

Math is essential in almost endeavor of life, in both small and big matters. It is a component of music, fashion, high tech, weather, geography, and, of course, business. It also is a necessary personal skill. Credit, for example, is a universal feature of contemporary life. It is convenient and useful, but also risky, for both individuals and business. For business it allows expansion, improvement, and profit. It affords the ordinary person the possibility of a house, car, and education. It is impossible to live without credit or credit cards nowadays. Not even governments can survive without credit, despite the protestations to the contrary. Spending, of course, is easy but saving is even more important, as security against the unforeseen and preparation for future possibilities. Saving is often difficult but if a regular amount of money is automatically deducted from a paycheck, it will not be missed because it has never been seen. Saving, however, should start early. Parents can model it for their children, saving as soon as they are born, and teaching them to put aside part of their allowances each week. Parishes likewise ought to practice saving for it demonstrates sound stewardship.