

Sunday, March 20, 2016
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

Current Events

Focusing on current events, instead of choosing the usual pious sacrifices, will ensure more successful results in Lent. Emphasizing current events will keep our faith centered on realistic, contemporary situations and perhaps even motivate a stronger sense of altruism and compassion. I also believe that, despite all the obvious negative conditions that exist in the world today, current events also point to hopeful and positive possibilities. Iran, for example, contrary to current American politics, has just re-affirmed moderate leadership, rejecting the extreme religious ideology which has dominated for decades. Reasonable leaders, attuned to democracy, are in the ascendancy in Iran and need our support if they are to ultimately succeed. This change of political tenor, a welcome relief to most Iranians, is also a warning to other nations that ideology – religious, political, indeed of any kind – is always pernicious and paralyzes progress. The more authority resorts to either coercion or ideology, the less it ought to be trusted. Furthermore, noise or force always betrays truth. During Lent this year, then, perhaps we could relax our own rigidities, by toning down our opinions and passions, for truth is more faceted than just a single perspective or interpretation.

Current events also attest to the tragedies in our contemporary world. War and violence abound, much of it mindless, spiteful and, ultimately, unnecessary. People still believe that violence and war are effective solutions to intransigent situations; whereas, in fact, they only further exacerbate and extend conflict. Iraq and Syria are obvious examples. Tribal ethnicity and religion also are the cause of recent wars, e.g., Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Yemen, South Sudan, Turkey and the Kurds and, of course, Israel and the Palestinians. The international sale of weapons for profit, from which our country especially benefits, only abets and encourages war. Without easy access to weapons, nations would have to pursue peaceful options. Random violence also is an escalating problem. For one thing, it is too easy to purchase guns in America. It takes longer to obtain a driver's license than to get a gun permit. Guns should be automatically banned in all places of worship, schools, courtrooms, movie theaters and artistic centers. Violence is antithetical to culture, education and faith. Police violence is also worrisome, especially in American urban areas. While police rightly fear for their personal safety, just like soldiers, they cannot indiscriminately use weapons. Violence must always be considered as a last, not first, option. Physical – and sexual – violence is too common. While women are the most likely to suffer abuse and violence, men and children also are victims. Lent can make us more aware and sensitive to all these issues of violence and help us develop peaceful attitudes and strategies which will minimize anger and violence in our environments.