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Pondering “the news”

A fair part of a recent weekend was devoted to extensive deliberation with one of our younger Sisters about media, the nearly overwhelming amount of “information” that comes to us through its various modes, and how to cope with it all.

It dawned on me some years back that what I actually know “for sure” is what I see and hear in the course of a given day. The rest I am taking on varying degrees of faith from other sources. Those sources include a range of newspapers as well as radio and television stations and not a little email and internet flow.

It also has registered with me that what I see depends on where I am standing/sitting or where I am looking. For the simplest of examples: audiences and presenters “see” different views in the same room.

At any rate, Sister Sue had some preparatory work to do before our conversation. She was to track the set of topics discussed on five news analysis programs on KET one Friday evening. She also was to reflect on the point of view of the report and the reporters.

She found that much quite overwhelming. But, as the July 20 Friday evening session moved along, some of the overwhelm dispersed.

There are some skills for sorting through such a volume of “information.” These include

✦ Realizing that for any election, state or national, the vast majority of the reporting is on the state of the horse race, how much money each candidate has raised and spent, how each candidate is performing in varied public appearances. Precious little is said about where each stands on a whole set of very important issues and why. Granted candidates often enough change positions when they actually get in

office, still their stances and the philosophy of government indicated by their professed issue positions are of importance, aren’t they?

- ✦ What important topics aren’t covered? That Friday there was no reporting on the weather or more importantly, weather patterns and the state of the climate. Yet there are new scientific reports coming out nearly every week, new major weather events. Why this silence? Who is deciding to keep silent about it? Who is hurt by the silence? Helped?
- ✦ What is the full cost of a given proposal? On the liquification and gasification of coal proposals and the big meeting with a humongous energy company July 25, are the pros and cons of those two processes being sought out and reported well? Are we ascertaining the full cost over time, environment and people of going these two routes to use some of the abundance of coal in this state? Who will benefit if the full costing isn’t done and published? Who will be hurt? Can we challenge media people to check this out well and publish it? Can we communicate our concerns and values to decision-makers?
- ✦ Our values. Overall, how do all these topics shape up with our concern for the dignity of every human person? What about God’s very special concern for persons who are economically poor? Any sense that we all are in the family of God with the concern for one another this entails? With our mandate to take good care of our Earth home? That if we have rights we also have corresponding responsibilities?

God is counting on us. “To whom much is given, much is expected” in listening to and evaluating all we are given to “know.”

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