



From the Principal:

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Three Steps to a Whole New World

We live in a society that is quite different to how it was fifteen years ago, substantially different to that of thirty years ago and frighteningly different to the world of the 50 years ago. These differences can be linked to three technological 'advances': **television; the computer and the internet.** All three have had an impact on the amount of time we spend relating in meaningful ways to other people. They have also contributed to the amount of information we absorb every day, so much information that psychologists call a kind of exhaustion that afflicts many people 'information overload'. But the most dangerous impact on our social and moral consciousness is the sexualisation of our lives. In recent years this has particularly lead to the sexualisation of our children.

I want to comment briefly on all three. Firstly, **the amount of time we spend in front of screens of all sorts has meant that we have become better at looking on than interacting with life.** I think that the art of real conversation, of listening and responding with empathy and insight is becoming a rare ability. Texting in various formats is only adding to this, reducing the richness of language and the ability to express emotions in subtle and complex ways. The only thing that has really saved this aspect of human interaction is coffee and the proliferation of cafes and coffee shops! Thank God for coffee! It brings us together, it gives us somewhere to meet and talk, it makes us savor the day and enjoy going slow.

You may be familiar with the phrase, "Too much information!" Usually the cry of someone who doesn't want to hear the dreadful details of someone else's disasters. **However, we all suffer from 'too much information'**, in the sense that we rarely have space that isn't invaded by a constant stream of information. We not only invite it into our lives, but we have become addicted to it, and are constantly buying magazines, surfing the net or even watching the news on our phones. Most of this information is rubbish. It is trivia and whilst it may make us good at Trivial Pursuit, it does little to build wisdom into our lives. Knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Knowledge is not education. The getting of wisdom occurs when we are able to process ideas, reflect on them, understand them deeply so that they transform us and change our behavior and the way we perceive the world. My conviction is that it is better to learn about a few things deeply, to really understand and appreciate the rich complexity of one or two concepts at a time rather than filling our heads with million random facts and shallow ideas. That is why I am so passionate about active, hands-on learning, where children can be immersed in a subject and experience it through a range of senses and explore it at their own pace.

Finally, like frogs in a pot of water on the stove that don't notice a slow increase in heat until too late, **we have not noticed the subtle, but ultimately huge changes in the sexualisation of society, and most alarmingly, our children.** Well, some of you have. There is a strong movement of parents, good, caring, sensible and discerning people who are going, "Whoa, that is NOT RIGHT!" Advertisements are a major culprit. A satirical film like "Little Miss Sunshine" (which I personally loathe and find horrifyingly unfunny) hold up a mirror to our sick, dysfunctional society and its impact on children. Steve Biddulph a psychologist said recently, **"I think parents are growing increasingly angry. They feel like public space, roadsides, shopping malls are places they don't want to take their children. There is a new feeling against television (and the computer) and a new willingness to turn it off."** Biddulph is most concerned about the strategies used by advertising companies to market their products. He talks about **"a predatory marketing push using sex to get the attention of kids and using it for younger and younger kids to make them insecure"**, to make them seek approval by exhibiting a sexualised image of themselves. Let me encourage you to take a strong stand against this trend. Children need to be allowed to be children, and to 'grow up slow'. We all need to resist the pressure to objectify sex, and get back to building relationships with real people, not hiding behind an image that the world promotes as cool.

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