

ARTICLE 58

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

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Marriage! The Virtue of Modesty

God Made Clothes for Them

After God passes the sentence on Satan, on Adam, and on Eve, He then banishes Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. In a previous article I mentioned the incredible statement at the end of the second chapter of the book of Genesis whereby we are told that Adam and Eve were naked. We now have another remarkable statement in contrast to that first statement.

“And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)

Their Nakedness Must be Covered

After the fall, Adam and Eve's eyes were opened and they realised that they were naked. They sought to hide their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together but this is obviously not enough for God Himself fashions clothes for them out of animal skins. It seems to me that Adam and Eve were immodestly dressed in their fig leaves and that God lets them know that they need to cover themselves more. From now on they will be subject to temptations of a sexual nature which they were immune to prior to the fall, and so they need to dress in a way that reduces this temptation not just for themselves, but also for others that will follow.

Most People Fail to Tackle Immodesty

In my last article there was mention of 'war' between the sexes. But if you really want to start a war, then begin to tackle the issue of immodesty which is so prevalent in our culture today. My wife and I have tackled this issue on a number of occasions in the past where we felt the need to call attention to immodest dress and on most of those occasions, people have, understandably, been upset. But this is an issue that we must tackle and we need to realise that in the area of dress, people get upset because how we dress is directly connected to our vanity which is a milder form of the sin of pride.

To be Pro-Life, You Must Speak Out publicly against Contraception

God Himself clothed Adam and Eve before putting them out of the garden of Eden and so, if this is an issue which God addressed with our first parents, then we ignore it at our peril. I would make the following comparison. Immodesty is to impurity what contraception is to abortion. If you really want to rid our society of the scourge of abortion then you need to help people to realise that they must avoid contraception. The general pro-life movement in Ireland will continue to fail until the main organisers are prepared to stand up and proclaim Church teaching on the intrinsic evil of contraception. To fail to address this issue is to fail to preach Christ.

You Cannot Maintain Purity without Modesty

The same is true of immodesty. Catholic youth organisations in this country will not adequately protect our young people from the dangers of impurity until they begin to insist on a modest dress code at their gatherings and at their social functions. By and large the issue of modesty is ignored despite being brought to the attention of the organisers of some of these events.

But I am getting a little ahead of myself. Let us first take a broader look at the virtue of modesty. Too often modesty is seen simply as being about the way that women dress in public. Modesty however, is concerned with much more than this, and we need to look at modesty in its broadest sense in order to promote it properly and to arrest the growth in immodest living which is a plague upon our society.

So What is Modesty

The online etymology dictionary gives the following definition of modesty.

Modesty (n.) "freedom from exaggeration, self-control," from Middle French *modestie* or directly from Latin *modestia* "moderation, sense of honour, correctness of conduct," from *modestus* "moderate, keeping measure, sober, gentle, temperate," from *modus* "measure, manner"

From this we can see that modesty has to do with temperance and self control. In this regard modesty, not only concerns how men and women dress, but also how we speak, how we behave in public, what we look at and what we listen to. Modesty concerns our dignity as children of God and it is about reflecting that dignity when we go about our general duties.



A Picture of My Father.

Take a look at the above photograph. This photo was taken around 1950, and shows the staff of the Radio Eireann, Moydrum transmitter in Athlone. The handsome man, third from the left in the back row, is my father, Seán Lacken. He is 21 years of age and he works as a technician with Radio Eireann. But what I want you to notice is how these men are dressed for their daily work. Each of them is wearing a shirt and tie, each of them is clean shaven, each of them is dressed respectfully. These were poor times, but there are no jeans and tee shirts here, there is no so called 'casual' dress.

In Morally Casual Society, People will Dress Casually

Do not be surprised to find that the preponderance of casual dress within our society is a true reflection of the casual living standards now adopted by this same society. Do not be surprised when I tell you that there is a connection between the two. I myself was a casual dresser for many years slumming about in jeans and tee shirts. What changed me was a sermon that we were given on an Ignatian retreat. The priest spoke about how we dress for Mass. He first reminded us what the Mass is, and then he said that we shouldn't dress for Mass in the same way that we dress if we are going to a football match.

To Dress with Dignity

I am blessed to be able to attend Mass at eight O' clock most mornings and so therefore I always dress now in a shirt and tie. Not just to honour God, but also on account of my new found awareness of myself as an adopted son of God, an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven, an ambassador for Christ and for His Church, and because of my dignity as a man, created in the image and likeness of God. If that's not worth getting dressed up for and taking time over to present myself well, then what is?

Today's Generations are Probably the Most Enslaved of all Time

So you see, modesty is about our dignity as human beings. Our dignity as men and women created in the image and likeness of God. The devil, that master of lies who sought to corrupt our first parents in the garden of Eden, today tells our young and not so young people, that it really doesn't matter how you dress. He tells us that the standards of modesty have changed, that in the past women were frumpy and prudish and men were too stiff. He speaks with a lying tongue of freedom; freedom of expression; freedom from rigidity; freedom from the shackles and puritanism of the past. But look around you. Today's generations are probably amongst the least free of any generation that has ever existed since time began. We are slaves to our employers, slaves to fashion, slaves to technology, slaves to our government, slaves to the media manipulators, slaves to our social media, our 'facebook', our 'snapchat', our 'whatsapp'. But most of all, in this era of instant mass communication, we are slaves to the oft' times ill informed opinions of others.

And so, at the risk of escalating the war, I am going to look at what the Church teaches on modesty and then come back to the beginning of chapter 4 of the book of genesis before summing up the lessons to be learned from our journey back to the beginning.

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