

ARTICLE 63

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

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Marriage! Need for Vigilance

All Ireland Roadshow

Last week, myself and Anthony Murphy began our 'roadshow' around Ireland with talks in Derry and in Belfast. Just before the talks began, on Friday morning, I found out that my wife Naomi, who had been in hospital for several days, was scheduled for abdominal surgery on the morning of Saturday 28th May. This left me with a little dilemma. Should I cancel the talks? I had also noticed in my own personal life, some failures to correspond with God's grace which left me in need of confession.

The Gift of Friends

I contacted some friends who were delighted to have my three youngest children stay with them for a few days, and so on Friday 27th May, I gave my first talk in Derry. The following day I travelled back to Castlebar to visit my wife after her surgery and then, in the sure knowledge that the surgery had gone well, I travelled up to Belfast and gave my talk there, albeit a little late. Both talks were well received and Naomi is recovering well from her surgery.

Now, I am a great advocate for the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, particularly those given in silence over five days at Ards Friary in Donegal by the Benedictine monks of St Joseph's Abbey de Clairval. I am a Benedictine Oblate of this abbey and one of their priests is my spiritual director. They will give the retreats again this year, from Sunday 17th to Friday 22nd of July. This retreat is for men only and I highly recommend it to anyone who would like to get serious about living a holy life in accordance with God's will. The monks will also give a retreat for women over two days from Friday 15th to Saturday 16th July 2016.

Discerning the Spirits

The reason I mention this now is because St Ignatius was a master in the art of discernment of spirits and he teaches us to be always on our guard in order to be able to hear the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and also to be on the lookout for the wiles of our enemy. On reflection, I now realise, that in the week prior to my giving these important talks on the Traditional Catholic Family, I had dropped my guard and allowed myself to become spiritually lax. Yes, there was the fact that Naomi had to be admitted to hospital and that this put me under pressure and upset my daily routine but the psalmist tells us in psalm 140 line 4 "*Incline not my heart to evil words; to make excuses in sins*".

We Tend to Make Excuses for Our Failings

We humans find it so easy to make excuses for ourselves. Had I been on my guard, I would have expected some turbulence in my spiritual life that week on account of the fact that I was going out to proclaim the Gospel. I would have increased my prayer life and not allowed it to decline as I did. I would have abandoned myself to God and cried out to Him for help rather than putting all my trust in my own exaggerated efforts which left me over tired and vulnerable to the enemies assaults. In short I would have sought first His kingdom in the sure knowledge that He would provide all that was necessary for me to accomplish His Will.

We Have an Ongoing Need for Daily Conversion of Heart

The reason I am being so candid about my failures is to try to highlight our ongoing need for daily conversion, for daily humbling ourselves before God, for daily admitting to Him that we are useless without Him, and for asking Him for our daily bread in order to sustain us in the mighty struggles for the salvation of souls that we face in these uncertain times that we live in. John Lacken's opinions can only be of value if they correspond to the Word of God, and if they lead people to conversion of life. St Thomas Aquinas, towards the end of his life had a vision which left him saying that all he had ever written was only so much straw and he never wrote again.

Pope Pius XII on Modesty

And so after that little detour, back to the subject of modesty and Pope Pius XII. There was a group formed in the 1950s called "The Latin Union of High Fashion". At one time, they asked the Pope for advice about how they should proceed with the aims of their organisation and he addressed them in November of 1957. He outlined the problem thus

"You propose to examine from the Christian point of view and with Christian intent, a problem which is as delicate as it is complex. Its moral aspects cannot be ignored. It is a constant object of attention and anxiety for those whose task it is, by reason of their duties in the family, in society, and in the Church, to preserve souls from the snares of corruption and to protect the whole community from moral decadence: the problem of fashions, especially women's fashions."

The Danger of Worldly Women's Fashions

Pope Pius XII recognises the danger within the world of women's fashions that could ensnare and corrupt souls leading to moral decadence. He then gives three reasons for clothing; hygiene, decency, and adornment and deals with each of these reasons in turn. Hygiene is a simple matter of making sure that our clothing does not present a danger to our health. The Pope also alerts us to the fact that this cannot be used as an excuse for 'deplorable licence', that is immodesty. He then moves on to deal with decency and there are some interesting points to consider here.

"Natural decency in its strictly moral sense, whatever its origin may be, is founded on the innate and more or less conscious tendency of every person to defend his personal physical good from the indiscriminate desires of others so that he may reserve it, with prudent choice of circumstances, to those wise purposes of the Creator which He Himself has placed under the protective cover of chastity and modesty."

Chastity and Modesty are a Protection for Purity

So chastity and modesty are a protection. They are a defence against the indiscriminate desires of others particularly in the area of sexuality. In our fallen world, which today is rife with unprecedented levels of pornography, it is very important for women to understand both the reason for and the need for modesty in clothing. Modesty protects women from the lustful glances of fallen men. When modesty is properly understood, it protects a woman's chastity because she is not dressing in an overtly sexual way, which would advertise her as an object of purely sexual attraction. If she is immodestly dressed, then men will admire her for her body and not for her personality.

Physical Attraction to the Opposite Sex is Designed for the Creation of Children

Men are naturally physically attracted to women and vice versa, but this physical attraction is primarily for the purpose of marriage which in turn is ordered to the procreation of children. If we separate sexuality from the good of children, whom God desires to be born within holy wedlock, then the body becomes a plaything, an object of pleasure and desire, and our clothing will reflect

this degradation by becoming immodest. An immodest woman becomes an advertisement for sex which is divorced from the moral order. She denigrates her own femininity, she denigrates motherhood which is the purpose of female sexuality, she denigrates marriage which is the only place wherein human sexual activity is morally permitted, and she damages the society in which she lives by her denigration of these other goods.

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