

ARTICLE 66

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

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Modesty: Formation of New Families

The Happy Themes Of The Spring Of Life

We have been looking at Pope Pius XII's address to the Latin Union of High Fashion. This pope, contrary to what the world would have us believe, is no prude. He says, "This penchant for the adornment of one's own person clearly derives from nature, and is therefore legitimate."

There is nothing wrong with dressing stylishly and well, and the pope continues, "Over and above the function of clothing which hides physical imperfections, youth asks for clothing which has an attractiveness and splendour that sing the happy themes of the spring of life, and which facilitates, in harmony with the rules of modesty, the psychological prerequisites necessary for the formation of new families. At the same time, those of mature age seek to obtain from appropriate clothing an aura of dignity, seriousness, and serene happiness."

Attractiveness and Splendour

Read again that piece about young people. "Youth asks for clothing which has an attractiveness and splendour that sing the happy themes of the spring of life". Once more we see a beautiful, almost poetic expression in a papal address which recognises the joy of youthfulness. But the pope points out that this desire for adornment in youth has a purpose, which is to facilitate marriage for the formation of new families. Children come into the picture yet again, the great blessing of marriage and family life and the primary end of marriage.

Those who Marry for the First Time, should be Virgins

The secondary ends of marriage, which include that mutual attraction between the sexes, are ordered towards the primary end of marriage which they serve. That is, to increase God's kingdom through the begetting of children within marriage and for whom God creates a new and unique soul of immeasurable value and worth. How young people dress should also serve marriage and family life, and it is obvious how immodesty, which tends to lead on to impurity in both mind and body, constitutes an attack on marriage. Those who marry should arrive at the church on the day of their marriage as virgins. The likelihood of this happening in a culture where immodesty is rampant sadly, becomes very slim.

Immodesty in Young Women Commonplace and Hard to Avoid Seeing

I recently had to collect two of my sons from a friend's house shortly after ten o'clock at night. There must have been some party going on somewhere for, as we approached the roundabout near the town, a group of about twenty or thirty mostly young ladies in their late teens were crossing the road. It would be easier to describe what they were not wearing than to describe what they were wearing as there was so little of it. I had to avert my eyes and to tell my youngest daughter who was in the car with me, not to look as the girls were dressed immodestly. When I collected my two teenage sons, I drove home by another route to avoid the scandalous spectacle.

Those who uphold Modesty are thought Mad

In today's society, I guarantee you that most people would think me mad, and would probably say that there is no harm in it, that the young ladies are just having harmless fun on a night out. But we cannot totally blame these young ladies for how they were dressed because nobody gives instruction with regard to modesty any more. How many of their fathers have instructed their daughters in the art of modest dressing? How many of their mothers are like the mother's mentioned by Fr Mateo when he said "Today they smile, careless of the consequences; tomorrow, alas! their tears will choke them!."

When I was researching this subject of modesty I came across an article by a Father Thomas G Morrow titled, "Revealing dress exposes women to objectifications". Fr Morrow relates a story about Monsignor Roncalli who became Pope John XXIII.

"When Eve ate an apple, she realized she was naked"

"Msgr. Angelo Roncalli once found himself seated at a banquet next to a woman who was dressed with little regard for the virtue of modesty. Others observed him, wondering how he would deal with his predicament, given his moral convictions and his reputation for diplomacy.

After the dinner, Msgr. Roncalli took an apple and offered it to the woman in question. She declined his offer. Nonetheless, he persisted in his offer, to the point that the woman asked why he was so interested in having her eat the fruit. He responded with a twinkle in his eye, "Because when Eve ate an apple, she realized she was naked."

Many Catholics fail to deal with Immodesty

Fr Morrow goes on to point out something that I have noticed myself. This is the fact that many Catholic groups are not willing to deal with the matter of immodesty in the way that the Church has dealt with this subject. Fr Morrow mentions several Catholic groups and says that, "the concept of modesty seems lost on just about everyone, including some of these very same people".

He then makes another point similar to one that I made in an earlier article.

We are Prolonging the Denigration of Women

"If we promote chastity out of one side of our mouths and, by our silence, give tacit approval to the immodesty in our midst, we are kidding ourselves. By saying nothing about the immodest dress among women (not to mention among men) we are perpetuating the image of women as objects of enjoyment. We are prolonging the denigration of women."

So why are so many Catholics silent on this most important of topics, or dealing with it in a way that does not seem to teach the full truth? Again, I mentioned that how we dress is a very personal matter which if not understood correctly becomes closely connected with our vanity, and we are liable to take offence and to react in a personal manner to someone who points out any errors in how we are dressing. Nobody likes to be on the receiving end of a bad reaction to personal correction, and most people, naturally, would like to avoid provoking such a reaction.

To Advance Your Salvation

Another priest I came across who gave a sermon on this topic, a Fr Hathaway, began his sermon by saying, "But let me preface that I did not wake up this morning thinking, 'I wonder how I can ruin their day?' I do not want to make you mad, but only advance your salvation. Our dress can be a touchy topic... but all of us should want to correct errors should they exist." Fr Hathaway seems to have some experience of how people react when their immodesty in dress is brought to their attention.

But we must be very careful to heed God's warning in the scriptures. I am referring to the book of Ezekiel chapter 3 verses 17 to 18

I Will Hold You Accountable

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.”

We Catholics, have a moral duty to speak out against immodesty. We have a duty to promote the virtue of modesty by how we dress ourselves, and to teach others, particularly the young, about this virtue. If we are truly merciful we will not be afraid to admonish the sinner and to instruct the ignorant in a manner both charitable and true.

In my next article, I hope to go back once again to the garden of Eden to summarise the lessons God teaches us from this journey.

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