

ARTICLE 81

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

First Published in the '*Catholic Voice*', Ireland, February 2017

John Lacken – john@truedevotions.ie



Marriage! The Virtue of Modesty

Voices of the Church on Modesty

I am very much aware that many find the subject of modesty to be particularly sensitive and difficult to deal with. It can be embarrassing for those who choose to speak out, and for those who receive the correction. People get angry, they feel humiliated, or sometimes they just don't seem to care. One lady wrote to me recently and told me that she found one of the articles on modesty "challenging, but needed". There are others who disagree with what I write about modesty and who ignore or disregard what is said, as if I were just expressing my own personal opinions. Now I am quite happy to have my own personal opinions ignored, because they are not of any real value in the grand scheme of things. But what I write about modesty is drawn from the teaching of the Catholic Church, from the teachings of the Popes and from the teachings of the saints.

In Matthew 18:15-16 Christ tells us the following

"But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand."

So for those who do not hear what I have to say, I present the following witnesses. I am not putting forth my own opinions on this matter but the constant opinions of the Church, and if Catholics will not hear the Church, then pray tell, who will they listen to?

St Paul (speaking about how we should pray)

"In like manner women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire." (1 Tim 2:9)

St John Chrysostom

"You carry your snare everywhere and spread your nets in all places. You allege that you never invited others to sin. You did not, indeed, by your words, but you have done so by your dress and your deportment. ... When you have made another sin in his heart, how can you be innocent? Tell me, whom does this world condemn? Whom do judges punish? Those who drink poison or those who prepare it and administer the fatal potion? You have prepared the abominable cup, you have given the death dealing drink, and you are more criminal than are those who poison the body; you murder not the body but the soul. And it is not to enemies you do this, nor are you urged on by any imaginary necessity, nor provoked by injury, but out of foolish vanity and pride."

St Bernard

"How beautiful then is modesty and what a gem among virtues it is."

Jacinta Marto, (age 9 seer of Fatima)

"the sins which bring most souls to hell are the sins of the flesh. Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much... the Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same..."

"What is it all for? If they only knew what eternity is." (on seeing immodest and fashionably

dressed women)

St Alphonsus Ligouri

"We must practice modesty, not only in our looks, but also in our whole deportment, and particularly in our dress, our walk, our conversation, and all similar actions."

"A mortal sin of scandal is committed by women who go about with their bosom immodestly exposed, or who expose their limbs improperly."

St Francis de Sales

"Be neat, Philothea; let nothing be negligent about you. It is a kind of contempt of those with whom we converse, to frequent their company in uncomely apparel; but, at the same time, avoid all affectation, vanity, curiosity, or levity in your dress. Keep yourself always, as much as possible, on the side of plainness and modesty, which, without doubt, is the greatest ornament of beauty, and the best excuse for the want of it."

"Frequent not the company of immodest persons, especially if they be also impudent, as is generally the case; . . . "

St Augustine

"In all your movements, let nothing be evident that would offend the eyes of another."

St Jerome

"Either we must speak as we dress, or dress as we speak. Why do we profess one thing and display another? The tongue talks of chastity, but the whole body reveals impurity."

St Ignatius of Loyola

"Let your modesty be a sufficient incitement, yea, an exhortation to everyone to be at peace on their merely looking at you."

St John Vianney (Curé of Ars)

"A pure soul is like a fine pearl. As long as it is hidden in the shell, at the bottom of the sea, no one thinks of admiring it. But if you bring it into the sunshine, this pearl will shine and attract all eyes. Thus the pure soul, which is hidden from the eyes of the world, will one day shine before the Angels in the sunshine of eternity."

Pope Benedict XV

"From this point of view one cannot sufficiently deplore the blindness of so many women of every age and condition; made foolish by desire to please, they do not see to what a degree the indecency of their clothing shocks every honest man, and offends God. Most of them would formerly have blushed for those toilettes as for a grave fault against Christian modesty; now it does not suffice for them to exhibit them on the public thoroughfares; they do not fear to cross the threshold of the churches, to assist at the Holy sacrifice of the Mass, and even to bear the seducing food of shameful passions to the Eucharistic Table where one receives the heavenly Author of purity. And We speak not of those exotic and barbarous dances recently imported into fashionable circles, one more shocking than the other; one cannot imagine anything more suitable for banishing all the remains of modesty." (Sacra Propediem 19)

Cardinal Pompili (with an imprimatur and at the behest of Pope Pius XI)

"A dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers' breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows, and scarcely reaches beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent materials are improper."

Sacred Congregation of the Council (Vatican Congregation)

"Maidens and women dressed immodestly are to be debarred from Holy Communion ... further, if the offence be extreme, they may even be forbidden to enter the Church."

Pope Pius XI

"We lament, too, the destruction of purity among women and young girls as is evidenced by the increasing immodesty of their dress and conversation and by their participation in shameful dances."

Pope Pius XII

"Beyond fashion and its demands, there are higher and more pressing laws, principles superior to fashion, and unchangeable, which under no circumstances can be sacrificed to the whim of pleasure or fancy, and before which must bow the fleeting omnipotence of fashion. These principles have been proclaimed by God, by the Church, by the Saints, by reason, by Christian morality."

"When she was thrown into the air by a savage bull in the amphitheatre at Carthage, her first thought and action when she fell to the ground was to rearrange her dress to cover her thigh, because she was more concerned for modesty than pain." (Pope Pius XII, Allocution to the Girls of Catholic Action, speaking of St. Perpetua)

"How many girls there are who do not see any wrongdoing in following certain shameless styles like so many sheep. They certainly would blush if they could guess the impression they make and the feelings they evoke in those who see them."

"The most insidious of sophisms are usually repeated to justify immodesty and seem to be the same everywhere."

"But how can you know anything of the impression made on others? Who can assure you that others do not draw therefrom incentives to evil? You do not know the depths of human frailty. . . Oh, how truly was it said that if some Christian women could only suspect the temptations and falls they cause in others with modes of dress and familiarity in behavior, which they unthinkingly consider as of no importance, they would be shocked by the responsibility which is theirs."

"The good of our soul is more important than that of our body; and we have to prefer the spiritual welfare of our neighbor to our bodily comforts. . . If a certain kind of dress constitutes a grave and proximate occasion of sin, and endangers the salvation of your soul and others, it is your duty to give it up."

"The educators of the young clergy would render a more valuable and useful service, if they would inculcate in youthful minds the precepts of Christian modesty, which is so important for the preservation of perfect chastity and which is truly called the prudence of chastity. For modesty foresees threatening danger, forbids us to expose ourselves to risks, demands the avoidance of those occasions which the imprudent do not shun. It does not like impure or loose talk, it shrinks from the slightest immodesty, it carefully avoids suspect familiarity with persons of the other sex, since it brings the soul to show due reverence to the body, as being a member of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. He who possesses the treasure of Christian modesty abominates every sin of impurity and instantly flees whenever he is tempted by its seductions."

"This second virtue modesty, the very word "modesty" comes from *modus*, a measure or limit, probably better expresses the function of governing and dominating the passions, especially sensual passions. It is the natural bulwark of chastity. It is its effective rampart, because it moderates acts closely connected with the very object of chastity."

"Modesty makes man hear its warning, like a forward sentinel, from the moment he acquires the use of reason, even before he learns the full meaning and purpose of chastity. It accompanies him throughout his entire life and demands that certain acts, which are good in themselves because they are divinely established, should be protected by a discreet veil of shadow and the reserve of silence, in order to confer on them the respect owed the dignity of their great purpose. It is therefore just that

modesty, as the depository of such precious possessions, should claim for itself an authority prevailing over every other tendency and every caprice, and should preside over the determination of fashions in clothing.”

Fr Mateo Crawley-Boevey - (Great apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)

“Here I should like to bring to a close this talk on reparation; but it would be cowardice on my part if, when speaking of the sins of friends, I were silent about that one which has provoked sorrow and righteous anger in our Holy Father Pope Pius XI. I refer to the great sin of immodesty, of shamelessness among many Catholics and even as the Pope says, among the pious and devout.

I think, nay, I am certain, that the indignation of the Vicar of Christ exactly reflects the deep wound inflicted on the Sacred Heart, a wound rendered crueller still by the fact that so few have obeyed the Pope by changing their behaviour in this matter. This canker is eating away the best elements of Christian society, insensibly perverting and paganizing families which are by tradition Christian and religious; immodesty and frivolity mask a true carnival of sin.

I fear the wanton disregard shown by many Christians for the Pope's grief, and for his explicit pronouncements on decorum in dress, will bring a curse on those who are still grieving the Sovereign Pontiff. I hope I am mistaken, but I feel that I am not. Woe to those women who incur the responsibility of many a grave sin by going about insufficiently and immodestly clad! Woe to those mothers who tolerate these abuses in their daughters and let their little ones go about half dressed, thus accustoming them to a nudity which the Church condemns and who, on the pretext that their children are innocent, culpably disobey the Pope and Bishops. If such mothers only knew what they are laying up for themselves later on! But they foolishly imagine they know better than their Pastors. Today they smile, careless of the consequences; tomorrow, alas! their tears will choke them!.

Ah! Jesus, did they but truly love Thee with the passion of a bride for her newly-wedded spouse, or the rapture of a mother for her little babe, they could never thus offend Thee. A wife who truly loves her husband will never dress in a manner displeasing to him. But how few fear to offend Thee Jesus, the Love of loves.”

And then he offers the following prayer

“Oh Immaculate Queen, of thy mercy work a great miracle in Christian homes for the glory of Jesus and to close the gates of hell to so many souls. Tear away the thick veil which blinds so many women to this evil which the Roman Pontiff deploras so bitterly. But above all, O sweetest Mother, instil into their hearts a passionate love of Jesus that will lift them above the follies of the world which incites them to set even the lowest passions before thy Jesus, His Heart and His law.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2521 “Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate centre of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.”

2522 “Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled. Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet.”

St Paul of the Cross

'Avoid failing, not only against purity, but even against the least rules of an exact modesty.'

These articles are free to download, to print and to distribute provided that authorship is acknowledged and contact details for the author are provided as follows.

Author: John Lacken
Founder: Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family
E-Mail: john@truedevotions.ie
Website: www.truedevotions.ie