

## ARTICLE 58

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

First Published in '*The Catholic Voice*', Ireland, March 2016



#### 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 respectably. 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.

## ARTICLE 59

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! Modesty and Vocations

##### **I do not belong to the Fashion Police or the Modesty Squad**

I have had some interesting responses to my last article whereby I indicated that I intended to take the risk of escalating the war between the sexes by dealing with the issue of modesty in the context of Catholic church teaching. In all of these responses, the people who responded mentioned how they themselves dress. And so I need to make a clear statement in response to this.

I do not belong to the fashion police! I do not belong to the modesty squad! How you dress is, generally speaking, your own business. I do not go around looking to see how people are dressed, though of course I have eyes and therefore I see things. Of late I tend to keep my eyes closed during Holy Mass as it helps me to listen better, to pray better and to avoid distractions. In these articles, when I speak of the things that I do personally, I am not saying that everyone should do likewise, I am merely sharing part of my own life's experience in the hope of prompting discussion and thought, and in the hope the it may help somebody else.

##### **You Should do this, You Should do That**

In the course of our busy married life, I have identified a class of person whom I affectionately named the '*should dos*'. These are usually well meaning people who you meet at a gathering and who at some point of the discussion begin a sentence saying 'Do you know what you should do?', or in discussing a particular issue they will say '*you should do this*' or '*you should do that*'.

What I found was, that when we were busy raising a family which at one stage had eight children under the age of thirteen, these suggestions would have placed a further burden on us as we were struggling just to cope with our daily family life. We needed people who could come and lift the burden for a while rather than suggest an extra devotional practice, or an extra routine to be adopted which, while perfectly good in and of itself, would have put us under further strain. Married life with children is tough and married couples need our support.

##### **Proclaim The Truth with Charity**

I mention this in the context of modesty because, bluntly pointing out to a person, who in all likelihood is completely unaware and oblivious to the fact that the way they are dressed may be immodest, is not helpful. When I mentioned that myself and my wife have dealt with this issue, it was on some very rare occasions, and because we felt that there was a danger to our children, particularly to our older boys, from which they needed to be protected.

##### **Modesty Concerns Women in a Particular Way**

One man who wrote to me, and I am very grateful for his letter, said that while he agreed with what I had written, he felt that I may be a bit wide of the goal posts because, "by far the greater difficulties caused by immodesty is by women on men". I agree with him, but I believe that there is a need to take a look at the term modesty in its broadest and classical sense first, before narrowing it down to its current day meaning, which deals primarily with matters of purity.

## **Modesty and Vocations**

In discussing this topic, someone said to be sure to mention the effects of immodesty on religious vocations! This is something that I had never thought about, that immodesty could negatively impact religious vocations. Since then, I have seen at least two aspects to this subject. One comes under the traditional understanding of modesty which has to do with dressing according to our state in life. In this context, priests and religious brothers and sisters should dress like priests, and religious brothers and sisters. In just the same way that when a guard calls to my house, (not often by the way), he is dressed like a guard. Now I am also painfully aware that there are religious sisters and probably others out there, who would love to wear the habit of their order but who are forbidden to do so by their superiors.

## **Clerical Dress Promotes and Encourages Vocations to Religious Life**

I recently came across an interesting article on the New York Times website which noted the increase in vocations to the Dominican order in Ireland. After pointing out that many religious orders had stopped wearing religious garb the article quoted Fr Gerard Dunne O.P. “We made a conscious decision a few years ago to wear the habit because we had no vocations and we were in a bad way. If we didn’t present ourselves in an authentic manner, who would join us? And that meant going back to the fundamentals.” The article then notes that going back to the fundamentals, which included the wearing of the habit, has led to a substantial increase in the number of vocations to the Dominican order in Ireland. How we dress, has an impact on others for good or for ill.

## **Immodesty and the Lure of the World**

The other aspect of immodest dress that probably negatively affects religious vocations is the lure of the world. When immodest fashions become the norm, then living a life clothed in a religious habit tends to seem extreme. Perhaps this is why so many religious orders seem to have compromised with the world and have abandoned their traditional religious habit. Perhaps they are afraid of scaring the young away.

So I think that this matter needs to be approached very delicately, but it is a topic that needs to be dealt with in the fullness of truth particularly as concerns women. It seems to me that most Catholic women who dress immodestly are unaware of the fact. We should not be surprised at this, for when is the last time you heard a sermon on modesty?

## **The Gentle Approach of Jesus**

I am also reminded of Jesus' approach to the woman caught in adultery found in St John's Gospel, chapter eight. At first Jesus says nothing, but begins writing in the sand. Then He addresses the accusers, reminding them of their own sinfulness, at which point they depart. He then addresses the adulteress, using the name given to her by Adam in the garden of Eden, “Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee”. In using the term 'woman', Jesus restores to her the feminine dignity that she has lost through her sinful life. She replies that no man condemns her and then Jesus tells her that neither does He condemn her. So, Jesus firstly causes her accusers to depart, He then restores her dignity to her, He then tells her that He does not condemn her, and it is only after he has done these things that he addresses her sinfulness, “Go, and now sin no more”.

There is much that we can learn from this approach of Jesus.



## ARTICLE 60

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! Purity requires Modesty

##### **The Church Speaks on Modesty**

So, what does the Church say to women regarding modesty? Are there any official guidelines concerning dress and what can and cannot be worn? Has She anything to say about fashion? The Church, being a good mother, has of course dealt with the question of modesty.

Let us look first to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism deals with the subject of modesty, in section two under the Ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife". It then speaks of purification of the heart quoting the sixth beatitude "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," and goes on to talk of the 'battle for purity' reminding us that after baptism we must struggle against 'concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires'. Then follows paragraphs 2521 to 2524

**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."*

##### **Modesty is an Essential Requirement for Purity**

Here we are told that modesty is an essential requirement for purity. As it is the pure in heart who are promised that they shall see God, we cannot underestimate the importance of modesty. Given that we live in a pornographic culture where immodest fashions are the order of the day within all age groups, there is a need, particularly by the fathers of families, to focus on this most delicate of topics in order to help to bring those under their authority to a correct understanding of this virtue and gift of the Holy Spirit. This education concerns women and girls in a particular way, but men and boys must not be excluded from a proper understanding as we are all affected by immodesty in dress.

This paragraph of the Catechism also introduces the concept of veiling. In our Judeo Christian heritage, veiling was reserved for that which is Holy and Sacred. I remember one time putting up posters near the border during a general election campaign. I made a habit of calling into Churches along the way to say a quick prayer. In two of the Churches which were close to the border, I saw something which I had not seen before and which I believe used to be quite common. The tabernacles in these churches were covered by a cloth lace veil. The tabernacle should also have a veil on the inside as well, because the tabernacle contains He who is Holy.

##### **The Body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit**

In earlier years children were taught in school that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should thus be treated with great reverence and respect. It is from this concept of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit that the teaching on 'veiling' or covering the body appropriately is developed. The bodies of the unmarried belong to God whereas the bodies of the married are given in marriage as a gift to the other spouse for God's greater glory and to enlarge His kingdom. St Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians "For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Cor 7:4)

In this regard a married woman who dresses immodestly offends against both God and her husband and she gives bad example to her children and to her neighbours. This fact once again underlines the need for a clear understanding of what modesty is.

### **No Excuse for Immodesty**

Now when one brings up the subject of modesty with regard to women's dress one is apt to hear a comment like "we can't all be expected to dress like the Amish or like nuns". This comment in itself is very interesting for it shows that people recognise both the Amish and nuns as being modestly dressed. However let us entertain the false dichotomy for a moment. If a woman is reduced to two choices of what to wear, the one being an unfashionable though modest dress made of old potato sacks and the other being an immodest though fashionable blouse and short skirt, which one should she choose?

The answer will depend on whether or not she desires to serve God or self. If she desires to serve God, she will not offend Him with immodest clothing and will be humble enough to wear the potato sack dress in the sure knowledge that God looks first to her heart and her desire to please Him.

Now of course such a choice is improbable and with a little bit of effort it is always possible to find something modest to wear as long as one has the desire to please God in the way one dresses. It is always possible for modest dress to be stylish in keeping with our dignity as human beings. God did not give us our imaginations and creativity for nothing!

### **The catechism continues**

**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."*

### **The Mystery of Persons**

Here we are given a very Catholic thought, 'the mystery of persons and their love'. In treating of the subject of modesty and clothing we are in the supernatural realm of the mystery of our being. We are created as composite beings consisting of body and soul, in the image and likeness of God. This is a key to correctly understanding the virtue of modesty. We dress decently and discreetly on account of our great dignity as sons and daughters of the King of Kings. We were not created for the world of fashion, money and politics, we were created for the Heavenly Kingdom and it is with this Kingdom in mind that we should make all of our life's decisions including how we dress. As the Catechism further explains,

**2523** *"There is a modesty of the feelings as well as of the body. It protests, for example, against the voyeuristic explorations of the human body in certain advertisements, or against the solicitations of certain media that go too far in the exhibition of intimate things. Modesty inspires a way of life which makes it possible to resist the allurements of fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies."*

**2524** *"The forms taken by modesty vary from one culture to another. Everywhere, however, modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. It is born with the awakening consciousness of being a subject. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person."*

Once again the 'spiritual dignity' of man and 'respect for the human person' is mentioned. We will look at some specific Church documents in the next article.

## ARTICLE 61

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! The Importance of Modesty



#### The Popes on Modesty

In order to see how important the virtue of modesty is, and to see just how deplorable the sin of immodesty is, let us look to what some of the Popes have said on this subject. On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1921, Pope Benedict XV, issued an encyclical letter called '*Sacra Propediem*' on the Third Order of St Francis. In it he identifies two dangerous passions that affect people

#### Pope Benedict XV

“Now there are two passions today dominant in the profound lawlessness of morals - an unlimited desire of riches and an insatiable thirst for pleasures. It is this which marks with a shameful stigma our epoch; whilst it goes ceaselessly from progress to progress in the order of all which touches the well-being and convenience of life, it seems that in the superior order of honesty and of moral rectitude a lamentable retrogression leads it back to the ignominies of ancient paganism. In that measure, in truth, wherein men lose sight of eternal goods which Heaven reserved for them, they permit themselves to be more taken in by the deceitful mirage of the ephemeral goods here below, and once their souls are turned down towards the earth, an easy descent leads them insensibly to relax themselves in virtue, to experience repugnance for spiritual things, and to relish nothing outside the seductions of pleasure. Hence the general situation which we note: with some the desire to acquire riches or to increase their patrimony knows no bounds; others no longer know, as formerly, how to bear the trials which are the usual result of want or poverty; and at the very hour in which the rivalries we have pointed out set by the ears the rich and the proletariat a great number seem to wish to further excite the hatred of the poor by an unbridled luxury which accompanies the most revolting corruption.” (*Sacra Propediem* 18)

#### The Thirst for Riches and Pleasures

This thirst for riches and pleasures has continued unabated since Pope Benedict XV wrote this encyclical, and in order to maintain a certain level of comfort and to avoid poverty, many will resort to contraception and to abortion because the presence of a defenceless child is now seen as a threat to prosperity. Men have lost sight of the eternal good of the soul of each new child.

Pope Benedict XV, following on from his point about the loss of the sight of the spiritual realm, then speaks sadly of the immodesty of women.

#### The Blindness of so many Women

“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)



## **Men and Women are no longer Shocked by Immodesty**

The sad thing today is that most men and women are no longer '*shocked*' by immodest clothing. We have become so used to it that we no longer blush and avert our eyes from immodesty. Pope Benedict then addressed himself to the Tertiary Sisters of the Third Order of St Francis stressing the importance of '*holy modesty*'.

“In what concerns specially the Tertiary Sisters, We ask of them by their dress and manner of wearing it, to be models of holy modesty for other ladies and young girls; that they be thoroughly convinced that the best way for them to be of use to the Church and to Society is to labour for the improvement of morals.” (Sacra Propediem 21)

## **The Crusade against Immodesty**

Pope Pius XI succeeded Pope Benedict XV and in 1928 he launched a crusade against immodesty. As part of this crusade standards were issued by the Cardinal-Vicar of Pope Pius XI, Cardinal Pompili, on 24 September 1928 which stated in relation to women's clothing.

“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.”

## **Those who dress Immodestly should not be admitted to Holy Communion**

What may shock the women of today is that in 1930 a letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Council was issued which stated, “the immodest fashion of dress adopted by Catholic women and girls, which fashion not only offends the dignity of women, but conduces to the temporal ruin of the women and girls, and, what is still worse, to their eternal ruin, miserably dragging down others in their fall.”

The letter was addressed to the whole world and included in the letter were some instructions which included the following.

“The parish priest should command that feminine garb be based on modesty, and womanly ornament be a defence of virtue. Let them likewise admonish parents to cause their daughters to cease wearing indecorous dress.”

“Teachers must not receive in their colleges and schools immodestly dressed girls.”

“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.”

## **Immodesty is Gravely Offensive to God**

Today there are those who falsely argue for the admission of the divorced and civilly remarried to Holy Communion. How many realise that one should not approach Holy Communion if one is immodestly dressed? If immodesty is a sufficient cause to be barred from Holy Communion, then it is clear that immodesty is gravely offensive to God. How many priests are failing in their duty to the flock and to the salvation of souls by not pointing this out?

## **Catholic Fathers are the Guardians of Modesty in their Homes**

Catholic Fathers, you need to study the mind of the Church with regard to modesty and you need to have a conversation with your wife and with your daughters in order to encourage them to dress with dignity. Catholic Mothers and young women, you too need to study the mind of the Church with regard to modesty and you need to have a good look in the mirror to make sure that you comply with this most important of virtues. Catholic young men, you need to study the mind of the Church with regard to modesty and you need to make sure that you learn 'custody of the eyes' so that you protect your chastity and do not encourage immodesty in the young women that you socialise with.

Pope Benedict XV's words to the Tertiary Sisters apply equally to us. We need to promote modesty by our dress and manner of wearing it. We need to be models of holy modesty for others and together, we need to labour for the improvement of morals.

## ARTICLE 62

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! Respect for Women Declines



#### Rome Life Forum

Since I wrote my last article I have been over to Rome for the third annual *'Rome Life Forum'* and I walked on the *'March for Life'* in Rome. It was a very interesting and informative weekend and some of the talks have been reported in this paper. I recommend people to check out 'The Voice of the Family' website on [www.voiceofthefamily.com](http://www.voiceofthefamily.com) for more of the talks.

On my return I had to catch a train from Dublin to Ballyhaunis and during my visit to the train station I came across a situation which I think is related to what I have been saying about the importance of modesty in recent articles. I had occasion to visit the gents bathroom at the train station and I was surprised to find that there was a cleaning lady, who happened to be a foreign national, trying to clean the bathroom whilst men were still using the facility. I came across this very situation three years ago in same train station and I made a formal complaint but I see that nothing has changed.

#### Certain Work Practices Are Offensive to Women

To put a cleaning woman into a situation where she is expected to do her work whilst men relieve themselves at the clearly visible urinals, is an offence against the modesty and the dignity of the woman. It offends against the modesty of the woman, and it offends against the modesty of the men. That this situation arises at all, is a clear indicator that in our so called modern society, respect for women is in decline. Again this lack of respect is directly connected to the lack of modesty within our society.

#### Men Have Lost Respect for Women

No man who has respect for women, would go to the toilet in public in plain view of a woman. That men continued to use the toilet facility whilst the female cleaner was present shows that lack of respect for women is now quite common. No employer who respects women, would accept a situation whereby female employees are put into this situation.

I spoke with the woman cleaner and I apologised to her for the degrading way in which she was being treated and I told her that I would make a formal complaint. The poor woman was worried that she might lose her job if I complained about this situation. This woman probably does whatever she is told because she does not have job security. Once again we see what happens when Catholic moral principles are abandoned in the workplace.

Please God my complaints will be listened to this time and please God this practice will be corrected.

#### Pope Pius XII Continues the Crusade Against Immodesty

In the last article we looked at what Pope Benedict XV had to say about modesty and we saw that his successor, Pope Pius XI, launched a crusade against immodesty. Pope Pius XII was the next Pope, and he continued on with the crusade against immodesty. He addressed the matter specifically on a number of occasions.

## **Sacra Virginitas**

In his beautiful encyclical on Sacred Virginité, '*Sacra Virginitas*', Pope Pius XII speaks about the dangers of the passions. *"Hence we must watch particularly over the movements of our passions and of our senses, and so control them by voluntary discipline in our lives and by bodily mortification that we render them obedient to right reason and God's law"*. He then quotes Christ's teaching that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart and he instructs us to be vigilant and to flee the temptations of the passions.

He notes that there are those who teach falsely that, in order to build up resistance to these temptations, one should be exposed to them and he describes such teaching as wrong and harmful. He then speaks of the need to keep those who live the religious vocation separate from the tumult of the world during their years of formation before he directly speaks on the subject of modesty.

## **Educators should inculcate Christian Modesty in the minds of the Young**

"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."

## **Parents should teach their Children about Modesty**

This teaching is not just for young clergy as we are all called to perfect chastity within our state of life. Pope Pius XII next speaks to parents, warning them that there are some teachers who seek to initiate innocent boys and girls into the secrets of human generation.

"Modesty will moreover suggest and provide suitable words for parents and educators by which the youthful conscience will be formed in matters of chastity. "Wherefore," as We said in a recent address, "this modesty is not to be so understood as to be equivalent to a perpetual silence on this subject, nor as allowing no place for sober and cautious discussion about these matters in imparting moral instruction." In modern times however there are some teachers and educators who too frequently think it their duty to initiate innocent boys and girls into the secrets of human generation in such a way as to offend their sense of shame. But in this matter just temperance and moderation must be used, as Christian modesty demands."

Who today is unaware of the false and pernicious sex education that is being promoted in all of our schools? Sadly this corruption of our children, even in Catholic schools, goes largely unopposed. The Pope then speaks of humility and of having an abhorrence for sin.

## **Modesty is Nourished by the Fear of God**

"This modesty is nourished by the fear of God, that filial fear which is founded on the virtue of profound Christian humility, and which creates in us utter abhorrence for the slightest sin, as Our predecessor, St. Clement I, stated in these words, "he who is chaste in flesh should not be proud, for he should know that he owes the gift of continence to another." How important Christian humility is for the protection of virginity, no one perhaps has taught more clearly than Augustine. "Because perpetual continence, and virginity above all, is a great good in the saints of God, extreme vigilance must be exercised lest it be corrupted by pride. . . The more clearly I see the greatness of this gift, the more truly do I fear lest it be plundered by thieving pride. No one therefore protects virginity, but God Himself Who bestowed it: and 'God is charity.' The guardian therefore of virginity is charity; the habitat of this guardian is humility."

Pope Pius XII then speaks of the other helps needed to maintain chastity.

**Sacraments, Penance, Holy Eucharist**

“Moreover there is another argument worthy of attentive consideration: to preserve chastity unstained neither vigilance nor modesty suffice. Those helps must also be used which entirely surpass the powers of nature, namely prayer to God, the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, a fervent devotion to the most holy Mother of God.



## ARTICLE 63

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

First Published in *'The Catholic Voice'*, Ireland, June 2016



#### 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> to Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> 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.

## ARTICLE 64

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

First Published in '*The Catholic Voice*', Ireland, June 2016



#### Marriage! Modesty, Essential to Chastity

##### Modesty Guards Purity and Chastity

In my last article I returned once again to the subject of modesty. Perhaps there are some readers who wonder why I am spending so much time on this particular matter. The reason is simple. Modesty is the guardian of the gateway to chastity and purity. Without modesty; purity and chastity will be virtually impossible. Without purity and chastity, marriages will be defiled.

##### Jesus the King of Love

Yesterday, I picked up one of my beloved books, 'Jesus the King of Love' by Fr Mateo Crawley-Boevey. This is the book dedicated to the enthronement of the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the King of family homes. I realised that I had not read all of this book and so I opened it to where I had left a bookmark and I was surprised to find that Fr Mateo also deals with the subject of modesty. He writes about immodesty under the heading 'Scourging by Friends' and he is quite strong in what he says. I think it is worth quoting several paragraphs from the saintly Fr Mateo as so many Catholics appear to have fallen asleep with regards to the seriousness of this issue which leads many souls to perdition. The following is from Fr Mateo.

##### To Ignore Immodesty is Cowardice

“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.”

##### Immodesty Wounds the Sacred Heart of Jesus

“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.”

##### Disregard for Immodesty will bring a Curse

“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!.”

### **Catholics are also Guilty of Immodesty**

“I am not alluding to evil-minded, worldly people, I am lamenting an inconceivable aberration on the part of persons who are actually frequent communicants. May Our Blessed Lord pardon them! How are we to explain this incredible blindness, this tenacity in following indecent fashions, in a professedly good Catholic woman? Is this depravity on her part? No, but she loves herself much more than she loves Jesus Christ. Hence the absurd anomaly of her wearing an immodestly low-necked dress and yet displaying a medal of the Immaculate Virgin or bearing within her heart the Sacred Host”

### **Prayer to Jesus**

“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.”

### **Prayer to Our Lady**

“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 deplors 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.”

### **Immodesty is Worse Now than in the 1930s**

Fr Mateo was writing in 1932, and the disregard for modesty in dress, particularly amongst women but also amongst men, has continued to our present day. Today's fashions however, are much worse than in Fr Mateo's time. One could trace a trajectory, beginning with a relaxation in the teaching on the primary end of marriage and the exaltation of the secondary ends above the primary end. Through a false 'liberation' of women from their domestic chores and childbearing, through contraception, through immodesty in dress, through widespread sexual activity amongst the unmarried, through infidelity, abortion and right on towards homosexual unions and the false theory that there exists a multiplicity of genders.

### **To Depart from God's Teaching on Marriage is to bring Chaos on Society**

Once God's teaching on marriage, which was from the beginning, is altered in any way or denied in even the least detail, the very fabric of our society begins to unravel and we head towards chaos. We can never come up with a better ideal for marriage than God's original plan which He initiated in the beginning. The evidence for this is all around us and causes so much unnecessary pain and human suffering. And yet, we must never lose hope, but at the same time, we must move on from just complaining about how bad it all is. We must strive to come to a full understanding of what the Catholic Church has always taught about marriage and family life, and then we must strive even harder to implement these teachings in our own lives and in the lives of our families. We must help others to recognise these truths and we must begin to re-build our society father by father, mother by mother, and family by family. It is a long and arduous task, but it will not get any shorter or easier by prolonging the start date.

### **It Begins with Me, in My Home**

This change begins today with me, and it begins today with you who are reading this article. Tomorrow we must begin again, and the next day, and the next, until we have once again transformed our society into one where Jesus Christ is recognised as the King of Kings. There will be times when we will fall, when we will fail to live up to what Christ expects of us, but at these times we must gather ourselves and humble ourselves before God joining with the psalmist when he proclaimed



**Psalm 31**

“Because I was silent, my bones grew frail  
Amid my groanings all the day long  
For day and night Thy hand lay heavy upon me;  
I tossed in my grief, yet the thorn remained  
Then I confessed to Thee my sin,  
And no longer concealed my guilt.  
I said 'I will confess to the Lord my injustice'  
And Thou forgavest the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 31)

## ARTICLE 65

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

First Published in '*The Catholic Voice*', Ireland, July 2016



#### Marriage and Fashion

##### Latin Union of High Fashion

I want to finish off this look at modesty by returning to Pope Pius XII's address to the Latin Union of High Fashion of November 1957. That the Pope agreed to address this group shows us that modesty and fashion are not mutually exclusive ideas in Catholic thought. The portrayal of modesty as frumpy and old maidish is another lie of the devil which is used to steer people, particularly women, away from modest dress. Let us not allow ourselves to be fooled by these deceitful tactics of the enemy.

##### Clothing: - Hygiene; Decency; Adornment

We have seen that Pope Pius XII notes three reasons for clothing; hygiene, decency and adornment, and we have seen that he describes decency as a “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.” The Pope continues,

“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 is a Bulwark protecting Chastity and Purity

Again we see the importance of modesty as the bulwark and the rampart which protects chastity. In military terms, modesty is like the wall that surrounds the castle of the body. It has a drawbridge to allow intimate access in the case of those who are married. However if that drawbridge is not kept secure through the wearing of modest clothing, then the wall of chastity can be breached, leading to impurity in those who are affected. Modesty governs and dominates the sensual passions in order to keep them under control. We live in a world of fallen men, and we ourselves are fallen, which means that our passions are no longer perfectly subject to our intellect and to our wills. St Paul speaks of this battle to the galatians.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:16-24)

## **Modesty – The Forward Sentinel**

Pope Pius XII continues “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.”

## **Modesty is not restricted to Clothing**

Here we have a powerful exposition of the virtue of modesty. Modesty is not restricted to just clothing but it is a way of living and of acting. The gifts of the body, in particular that gift which allows man to partake as a co-creator with God in bringing forth new human life, are precious possessions which need to be protected from all harm. In this regard the Pope gives to modesty “an authority prevailing over every other tendency and every caprice”. When one hears a Pope speaking so eloquently of modesty and of the importance of this virtue, one can only wonder as to why this virtue has been virtually ignored in our present times amongst all age groups.

## **Modesty is a Crucially Important Virtue**

Some of those who do speak on this issue seem to downplay its importance or to loosen the regulations surrounding modesty. Whereas the Church has spoken of women's clothing reaching mid-calf, that is a few inches below the knee, some Catholic groups now state that for sporting events mid-thigh is acceptable. That's a whole lot more exposed flesh than the Church would traditionally allow. In the not too distant past, Catholic girl's schools, would have insisted on the divided skirt which covered the knees, for young women who partook in sports in order that modesty be preserved. Mixed sporting events and mixed bathing would have been prohibited for obvious reasons. Nowadays, such regulations are seen as too restrictive and yet, the problems that we experience in modern society as regards unchastity, such as unplanned pregnancy, abortion, adultery, contraception and the like, are far greater than in the times when these dress codes were the norm. There is a connection between how we dress and the moral conduct of our society.

## **Adornment**

Pope Pius XII next speaks of Adornment with an explanation as to why he uses this specific term. “In order to avoid restricting the scope of this third requirement to mere physical beauty, and, even more, to avoid associating fashion with lust for seduction as its first and only reason, the term adornment is preferable to beautification.”

## **Modesty is not Prudish**

This Pope knows what he is talking about. Today's fashions have largely become associated with the “lust for seduction”. Women are meant to look 'sexy', that is 'sexually desirable' to all who see them. It is no longer deemed necessary to restrict human sexual expression to those who are married. Our Lord's admonition, that to look at a woman lustfully is to commit adultery with her in your heart, is cast aside in favour of seductive clothing which leads many souls astray, and which is often the gateway to pornography and to pre-marital sexual behaviour in our young men and women.

In my next article I will continue this look at Pope Pius XII's address on fashion, because I believe that it is extremely important that we get the Catholic concept of modesty correct so that we can become models for modest living and dressing within our culture. We must become the modest leaven within our society, and the older generations must lead the younger generations in this area by our good example and by our good taste when it comes to matters of clothing.

## ARTICLE 66

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

First Published in '*The Catholic Voice*', Ireland, July 2016



#### 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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