

# Morality

## Part Two. Four More Talks on LUST, PURITY and Parents

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### §V. OCCASIONS OF SINS OF LUST:

#### DRESS AND DANCING.

“Evil communications corrupt good manners.” (1 Cor., 15:33)

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

In childhood we acquire most of our knowledge by imitating what we see and hear our elders do and say. Even after our mental faculties are properly developed, it is estimated that less than five percent of the people think for themselves. The other ninety-five per cent continue, as in childhood, to accept what they see others propose, or do, for them. You can readily understand, therefore, what an influence for good or for evil our modern newspapers, magazines, books, theatres, school and daily associates exercise in moulding the thoughts and habits of the majority of our people. It is estimated that the eighty millions of people who frequent our theaters every week spend more money on this form of amusement alone than is spent in and for all the churches in the country taken together.

As stated before, these external forces are frequently occasions for grievous sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Bad example, then, is a fruitful source of many of our social evils of today. Even our recreation, our mode of dress, have come under their spell. I have, therefore, selected for our discussion today two other avenues of approach not heretofore mentioned, which Satan frequently employs as occasions that may lead to grave sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. They are two popular subjects, namely: dress and dancing.

#### Dress or Styles of Dress.

— Frequently, when an audience hears a speaker mention the subject of styles and dress, a certain resentment arises in the minds of many, who murmur to themselves: “Now, why should he bring up that subject again? Are not the styles determined by the designers of clothes? And must we not dress according to the time and the country in which we live?” Rather, would I ask you not to prejudge me as a radical on this matter. As intelligent Catholics and Christians, we should sooner ask: “Why do we wear clothes at all? Where do styles originate? Who determines styles, and for what purpose?” After these facts have been determined, we may perhaps have cause for censure or for praise.

#### Origin of Dress.

— The origin of dress dates back to the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve had sinned, their concupiscence was aroused; and they, for the first time, realized that they were naked.

In the Book of Genesis (3: 7), the first Book of the Bible, we read: “And when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons... And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife, garments of skins, and clothed them” (Gen., 3:7 & 21). It was God Himself, therefore, who dictated the first styles of clothing, and gave them to man. And it was modesty on man’s part that prompted him to adopt clothing to cover his body.

Later on, clothing was worn, as it is today, for protection against heat and cold, to preserve health, and to ward off disease. Styles were further adopted to distinguish the sexes, to mark the difference in office, occupation or social rank, and so on. Thus, we find the different uniforms for general, captain, sergeant and common soldier, and for the police in cities all over the world; also different church vestments for the different festivals.

But early in the history of the human race women were known to clothe themselves for the sake of adornment, also using jewels and cosmetics to enhance their appearance. Nowhere do we find the Church condemning this practice as long as it is done with proper decorum and in moderation. But in the course of time these adornments were used for vanity’s sake, and for other baser motives. Already we find St. Paul, for example (1 Tim., 2:9), refer to improper styles of dress amongst his converts to Christianity, over whom Timothy was to preside as bishop. In his final instructions to Timothy, St. Paul says this: “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 (for vanity’s sake).” In other words, he asked his convert women to dress becomingly and modestly. For “after this manner,” says St. Peter, the head of the Apostles, “heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves” (1 Pet., 3:5). Hence, ever obeying the mind of the Church, good Christian women clothe themselves with virtue; and virtue has always determined the styles or modes of dress for decent people.

However, on account of the constant contact with pagan nations, with their immoral principles and practices, the Church has been forced again and again to remind Christians in the words of St. Paul: “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor, 15:33). And corrupt morals invariably manifest themselves in the mode or style of dress that is adopted, especially in feminine apparel. It is easily seen, therefore, how our designers of modern styles of dress are governed by the same pagan immoral influences, unless checked by our open protests. The impelling motives behind modern styles are no longer modesty, protection against weather, or becoming adornment, but principally sex appeal. And the sad part of it is, that so many of our modern Christian women and girls often have no idea what a factor their dress (which to the wearer may seem harmless) is in arousing the sex urge of others who must associate with them.

It is for this reason that especially the last three Pontiffs, [Saint] Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XI, have deplored the modern styles of feminine apparel. Only recently, Pope Pius XI deplored the modern trend of fashion in the following terms: “The unfortunate mania for fashion causes even honorable women to forget every sentiment of dignity and modesty. The decrease of womanly reserve has always been a sign of social decadence. The vanity of woman causes the disintegration of the family. An immodest mother will have shameless children. A shameless girl cannot be a good wife. It is possible to dress with ladylike decorum, without imitating monastic severity.”

On January 12, 1930, the same Holy Father of Christendom instructed the bishops throughout the world to take active measures in behalf of decency of dress. He requests them to report to him on this matter every three years. The note of instruction enjoins not only bishops, but also parish

priests, fathers and mothers, directors of schools and institutions, and nuns conducting these schools, to remember their serious duty in giving all necessary instruction, and “insisting” on modesty in feminine attire.

It is, therefore, vanity of dress that the Church condemns. For, says Lavater: “She who studies her glass, neglects her heart.” And, continues Shakespeare: “The soul of the vain man is in his clothes.” Hence, no matter how innocent the girl’s intentions, no matter how good her motives, common decency forbids her parading before others to display the beauty of her form, instead of the “beauty of her soul and the loveliness of her virtue.” For, as Father Scott, S.J., expresses it: “God put the instinct of attractiveness in women, in order to induce honest love and marriage. The way some women dress induces only dishonorable love... It implies no esteem, no honest purpose, no idea whatever of true affection. Nothing fades so fast as the attraction founded on animal passion. The scandalous dress of some women exposes them to lustful eyes, generates false love, and lays the foundations of life-long misery.”

Dancing.

— From improper styles in dress, we go to improper dancing. The one, as we readily see, is the natural supplement to, or outgrowth of, the other. The vain person is not content with self-adornment, but wants to display this vanity before others. Social gatherings and amusements afford the best opportunities for this. Hence, those whose vanity centers in the sex appeal, find no better outlet than in our dance halls, where participants may be observed at close range.

Here again the doctrine of the Catholic Church on dancing holds fast to the principle: “Is it right, or is it wrong?” Unlike the puritanical attitude of those who condemn all forms of diversion and recreation — be it smoking, chewing, drinking, playing cards, games, theatricals, etc., even though practiced in moderation — the Catholic Church condemns no pastime as long as there is no sin connected with it. Many pastimes can be directly or indirectly utilized for health-building purposes. But, like in dress, so in dancing it is not the use, but the abuse, to which a thing is put that we condemn.

We know, for example, that in the Old Testament the Jewish people were accustomed on festival days to dance around the Ark. Even to-day, on great feasts in some countries, it is customary for children to dance before the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary. So, now we do not condemn respectable dances, where the participants are properly clad, proper decorum is observed, and the evening is spent together for recreation and innocent enjoyment. In fact, in most of our schools, we find instructors in this art, teaching the children rhythmical movements of their bodies and cultivating grace and proper bearing, all of which are conducive to health and happiness.

But what the Church does condemn is every form of sin and abuse in dancing. And today, as in the past, experience teaches that most of the public dance halls are hotbeds for sin and cesspools of vice. Hence, the Church forbids all public dances, where there is no restriction as to who attends. Whenever the advertisement reads, “Everybody welcome,” that should be a sufficient warning in itself. Secondly, the Church condemns certain forms of dancing, no matter whether conducted in public or in private. This includes such types as the “bunny-hug,” the “tango,” certain “foxtrots,” certain “round dances,” which, on account of the position and proximity of the participants, are considered immoral, and are therefore forbidden. Individuals again are forbidden every form of dance which they themselves find a proximate occasion of sin.

Against sinful dances we are warned already in the Old Testament, where we read: “Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and hearken not to her, lest you perish by the force of her charms” (Ecclesiasticus 9:4). And even though we sin at such dances only in thought, the gospel tells us that “he that lusts after her in his mind, has already committed the sin before God.” St Paul says: “Let no sin therefore reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.”

Even though one should not believe in the inspired word of God, we still have many other proofs from many other sources that confirm our attitude towards indecent dances. For example, Demosthenes, the greatest orator of pagan Greece, wishing to cast odium upon persons belonging to the army of King Philip of Macedon, accuses them of participating in public dances. In pagan Rome, to describe a woman without morals it was enough to say that “she dances more elegantly than becomes an honest woman.” Ovid, Aristotle, Plato, Seneca and Scipio, all profane writers, describe public dances in their times in a manner that cannot even be quoted here. Tertullian (the 2nd century Christian writer – died 220) represents the public dance hall in his day as a “temple of Venus, or a sink of obscenity.”

St. Ambrose (died 340) calls them “a choir of iniquity, the rock of innocence, the grave of shame.” And St. Charles Borromeo (died 1584) adds: “The worldly dance is nothing else than a circle of which the devil is the centre and his slaves the circumference; whence it hardly ever happens that a person dances without sin.”

Just listen to these two quotations of our own times from the Hobart College Herald and the New York University News, representing two non-Catholic schools for women in this country.

From the Hobart College Herald, I quote: “The outstanding objection to the modern dance is that it is immodest and lacking in grace. It is not based on the natural and harmless instinct for rhythm, but on a craving for abnormal excitement. And what is it leading to? The dance in the process of its degradation has passed from slight impropriety to indecency, and now threatens to become brazenly shameless. From graceful coordination of movement it has become a syncopated embrace. Even the most callous devotee of modern dancing cannot think with unconcern of the danger involved in any further excess. For American morals have undoubtedly degenerated with the dance. It cannot be denied that many who indulge in modern dancing do not realize the nature of the incentive which leads them to do so. They like to dance; it becomes a habit, a fascinating obsession. Were this thoughtless immodesty restricted to the ballroom, the danger would be great enough, but it is unconsciously carried into everyday life. Truly, then, it is imperative that a remedy be sought to arrest the development of the modern dance before this perilous state gets beyond control.”

Now, briefly from the New York University News: “Overlooking the physiological aspects of women’s clothing, there is a strong moral aspect to this laxity of dress. When every dancing step discloses the entire contour of the dancer, it is small wonder that moralists are becoming alarmed. The materials, also, from which women’s evening dresses are made, are generally of transparent cobweb. There is a minimum of clothes and a maximum of cosmetics, head-decorations, fans, and jewelry. It is, indeed, an alarming situation when our twentieth century debutant comes out arrayed like a South Sea island savage.” These, my friends, are words, not from a Catholic Priest, but from two groups of non-Catholic women, who still believe in decency and proper decorum. [What would they have to say of the clothing and dance styles of today’s fashion?]

Conclusion.

— With such an array of indictments, then, surely no normal-minded Catholic or Christian can refrain from vigorously censuring such forms of amusement. What surprises us so often is the fact that all upright and clean-living women do not rebel, and rise up in open revolt against the degradation that is being heaped upon pure womanhood everywhere around us. Why permit those enticing posters of nudity and unbecoming posture which we see upon display so frequently in front of present-day moving picture houses? Why permit the indecent display of their sex upon the shelves of our public news-stands? Shall we continue to tolerate such abuses, solely for lucre's sake, and the demoralization of our youth? It is said that if our Catholic people alone would unite and rise up in rebellion against these organized powers of evil, we could force every industry of vice into bankruptcy, and close the doors of our salacious haunts of vice and corruption. Once the start is made, all decent people will rally their forces behind us. Pray to God to give us strength and courage to marshal our forces against this present debauchery, and preserve for posterity holy purity, that anchor of all other virtues for which Christ Jesus came to earth, bled and died. Amen.

#### §VI. OCCASIONS OF SINS OF LUST:

##### UNDUE FAMILIARITIES, PETTING.

“He that loves danger shall perish in it.” (Ecclesiasticus, 3:27).

A religious survey conducted in 1926 at Villanova College, a Catholic boys' school, disclosed a surprising need of more explicit instruction upon the specific dangers confronting young people of our day. In reply to the question, “On what points of Catholic Doctrine do you feel you need more instruction?” purity and matrimony were mentioned more than any other point of doctrine. A similar questionnaire was given to my own high school pupils, and the same reply was received from both our boys and girls. Another similar questionnaire was submitted to 186 college graduates concerning their attitude on mixing socially with the better class of girls at dances, parties, etc., their attitude on ‘minor love-making’, their reaction from reading modern fiction containing realistic love scenes, from attendance at the average musical comedy and movies. Nearly all of these 186 men reported something disquieting in their conscience upon one or all of these points.

My friends — and especially you, my dear young men and women — the expressions of concern on the part of so many who answered these questionnaires, prove that, in spite of what others might think about these matters, a conscientious person is not entirely satisfied with the decorum observed by so many of our people today. It proves to us all that we see so frequently in modern fiction, on the screen, in our movies — the love scenes, those prolonged kisses, the undue familiarities between the sexes, the petting parties, and so on — do not prove to be innocent when put to an actual test. Our subject then for today will be as follows: “Undue Familiarities and Petting Parties,” as two more means by which Satan leads people to sin against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments of the Decalogue.

Upon this subject I would love to speak to you as a friend to a true friend. And I trust you will accept my words in this spirit. Many parents and teachers are often ignorant of what actually goes on in the minds of young people. In like manner, upright young men are often ignorant of what is really transpiring in the minds of ideal young women with whom they associate, and vice versa. I refer to the fact that boys and girls, and parents too, are generally ignorant of the essential difference of the sex instinct, as found in man and woman. The common notion is that it is about the same in all people, and that it differs only in intensity. But biologists and psychologists have done well in exposing this wrong notion. They distinguish two factors in the sex urge which all should

know. First, we have the psychic factor, that is, the craving of the soul for companionship, understanding and response. The second is the physical factor, which is inherent in the body, and which craves the sensuous phase of sex. It is well for all to know and remember this distinction.

In the boy it is usually the physical factor that predominates, while in the girl it is the psychic factor; and this not infrequently continues throughout life. Dr. Maurice A. Bigelow expresses it in this way: "The sexual instincts of young men are characteristically active, aggressive, spontaneous, and automatic; while those of the girl, as a rule, are passive, and subject to awakening by external stimuli, especially in connection with affection."

These facts should be of particular interest, especially to our young people. So often a good girl has no idea of the vehemence of the boy's passion. As a pure girl, she is conscious only of her love, and her desire to be loved in return. She often censures the parent or confessor for being too severe. She believes that the boy has the same innocent intentions as herself. And so she cannot understand what harm there could be in kissing and embracing. She knows that she has no evil intentions. She wishes merely to display her affection. She wishes nothing more, and expects nothing more. This is usually the average experience of the normal girl, who is so eager to have a boy friend and to go out with him. And thus she "makes dates with him," as she calls it.

On the other hand, the boy has no knowledge of the girl's attitude. He does not know or realize that the girl is different from himself. And when the girl is affectionate, he immediately concludes that she is just as passionate as he himself; that she is feeling the same physical urge as he. How many a pitfall, how many a fatal step, might have been avoided, if every boy and girl had known these differences in their sex urge earlier in life! Hence, Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical on the "Christian Education of Youth," warns parents and teachers in these striking words: "It is no less necessary to direct and watch the education of the adolescent, 'soft as wax to be moulded into vice', in whatever environment he may happen to be, removing occasions of evil and providing occasions for good in his recreations and social intercourse; for 'evil communications corrupt good manners'. (1 Cor 15:33.)"

I trust you will pardon me for my frequent quotations. I am doing this in order to drive home my point more forcibly, by giving you the opinions of other recognized authorities, besides my own. Twenty Catholic doctors, a few years ago, were asked their opinions on various topics in the Peck-Well's inquiry. I shall quote them only in part. They declare, that "love-making, petting and kissing ordinarily arouse passion, few are immune; some get disgusted when the girl makes too ardent advances; extreme liberties cause the height of sexual excitement, in perhaps 15% or 20% of the cases... Mixing socially with the better class of people disturbs the sexual emotion only with particularly sensitive boys; public dances cause much more trouble, both because of loose conversation, and because the girls frequently encourage close hugging, and the like; and the immoral dances, so common today, are nothing more nor less than sensuality set to music."

These, my friends, are the words of twenty experienced physicians; men who, in view of their profession, certainly cannot be accused of bias or undue sentimentality on the subjects. And yet, there are those girls who persist that they see nothing wrong in kissing and petting, with prolonged embraces in one another's arms. They belong to that class who, in the words of Dr. George W. Sandt (Lutheran), "paint and powder and drink and smoke, and become an easy prey to a certain class of well-groomed and well-fed high livers, whose chief business is 'to pluck the blush of innocence from off the cheek of maidenhood and put a blister there'." It is from this type of girls that the

startling evidence came to light a few years ago through judge Fred E. Bale, of Columbus, Ohio, who estimated that in one year 68,000 girls were reported missing in the United States. The majority of these girls, he says, were from good families and had “got in trouble,” and rather than face their parents or embarrass their families they simply “dropped from sight.”

And the young boy, too, who boasts of the number of girls he can kiss and fondle, is far from being a gentleman. Dr. Exner sets forth the true character of such a young man, addicted to petting. “The real lover,” he says, “aspires to personal development and perfection, in order that he may the more readily contribute to the happiness of his mate in love. The petter, on the other hand, seeks chiefly his own pleasure and uses other persons to that end as he would use a thing, each to be cast aside when it has served his purpose.”

This, my friends, is the sleek sheik who will dash to the curb in his auto and offer to take an innocent, unsuspecting girl for that fatal auto ride. Imagine a girl from a good home, coming to you with the question: “Father, is a girl allowed to give up her virtue before marrying the boy she is going with?” These are the scoundrels who try to make a girl believe anything just to attain their evil end. This is the dangerous type of young man, who cannot feel comfortable, or at ease, when he must keep company with his girl friend in the presence of her parents and other members of her family.

Of such the poet writes:

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,  
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!  
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,  
Betray sweet Jenny’s unsuspecting youth?  
Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling smooth!  
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled?  
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth?  
(Cotter’s Saturday Night by Robert Burns).

Now comes a fair question many a good girl is tempted to ask. It is this: “Father, can’t we girls have any friends at all then? Must we remain ‘wall flowers’ all our lives?” Our answer is that every good boy and girl should have their friends. In the world of today, as in past ages, as well as in time to come, all good people look for friendship. They pine for lack of it. The pagans held friendship as the very end and purpose of life. They declared it the most perfect gift of God to man. There is nothing else which gives so great joy in life as true friendship. Our Perfect Model had His friends. Jesus has His chosen twelve, including a special three; and of the three, an especial one, John, who is called the “Beloved Disciple.”

But what is true friendship? It is openness between friends, confidence, the absence of all reserve. Between friends there can hardly be any secrets. With each other, by silence as well as by the spoken word, they exchange their inmost thoughts. Unconsciously, they are allowing each other to enter into the depths of the heart, that is hidden by a thick veil from all others. And, to be genuine, friendship must reveal certain qualities. First, it must be loyal — no fair-weather friendship, nor such as allows an attack on one’s friend to go unchallenged. Secondly, it must be constant. Those who are always changing friends, one friend today, another tomorrow, know not what true friendship is. They have many acquaintances — yes; many friends — no! Thirdly, it must be frank. It must be based on sincere confidence and trust. Constant correction is not frankness in friendship,

but rather an overzealous attempt to reach the results of friendship. Next, it must be ideal friendship; that is, I must see my friend as he is and as I would like that he should be. Lastly, it must be respectful, that is, decent and modest. For passion destroys friendship by destroying respect, and debases the precious signs of love.

Conclusion.

— My friends, with these words I conclude my series of discourses on the occasions of sins of lust — or, as another has called them, “the Devil’s methods of approach” in leading people into the sins of impurity. These, we said, were principally through our senses — our thoughts, our desires, our eyes, our speech, and our actions. We included bad literature, theaters and the movies, bad companionship, sinful styles of dress, sinful dancing, and lastly petting parties, or undue familiarities with others. How well Satan succeeds in all these various methods of approach was revealed to St. Teresa of Avila, who, in a vision, was permitted by God to get a glimpse of hell. In this vision she saw impure souls fall into hell like flakes of snow in a wintry storm.

Yes, with such an overwhelming flood of temptations surrounding us, with false maxims and false principles of a pagan world confronting us, we may well be induced to cry out: “Lord help us!” And our loving Savior replies in the words He addressed to St. Paul, namely: “My grace is sufficient for you.” (2 Cor 12:9.) Yes, prayer and the Sacraments are our weapons to safeguard holy purity.

Speaking in the name of every priest, let me close with one more word of advice — never forget it! It is this: no matter what be your temptations, what your difficulties, never be afraid to go to your pastor, your priest, with your difficulties. To run away from our problems, to try to hide them, only makes matters worse. Let us face them together; and you will always find your priest a sympathetic friend. I still have great confidence in our young men and women of today. They have not lost their courage. In fact, they possess a refreshing absence of hypocrisy, unparalleled in earlier times. We admire their frankness and their sense of humor. When confronted with difficult problems, they would rather face and conquer them than try to avoid them. Therefore, when temptations against our holy virtue cross our paths, let us have a like courage, and exclaim with the Patriarch Joseph of old: “How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God I” (Gen., 39:9). And with St. Paul: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13.) Amen.

§VII. SAFEGUARDS TO HOLY PURITY:

MEANS OF PRESERVING IT.

“Wherefore, he that thinks himself to stand,  
let him take heed, lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Most people are self-centered to a greater or lesser degree. To the extremist, the world appears much like a large spider web. Everything gravitates towards him. He stands in the center, with every pleasure, every comfort, every other creature forming the various strands which constitute the web around him. With him, self and not God is the ultimate end of his ambitions. His law — not God’s law — is supreme. For such there is but one law, and that is self-gratification, be it in wealth, in pleasure, in lust, or in any other violation of God’s Commandments. In fact, he does not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. Untold numbers follow these principles, this doctrine.

To the true Christian, on the other hand, God and not the individual is the center of attraction. All other creatures form the various strands of this web, which is world-wide, and everything gravitates toward the center, which is God, the Creator of us all. To hold fast these various strands, God has



given us certain laws to follow — to irrational creatures the natural law, and to His rational creatures His positive laws, contained in the Ten Commandments. To safeguard our honor and the honor of our neighbor in relation to God, we have the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. To keep these Commandments, we cultivate a virtue. We call this virtue chastity or purity — purity of intention, purity of thought, word and action.

Keeping the two schools of present-day philosophy in mind, one centering everything in self and the other centering everything in God, we can better understand, according to our Christian ideals, the gravity of every sin — and especially of impurity, as we have demonstrated in our preceding sermons. Every Christian and Catholic, then, should desire to know what are the safeguards, what the means, of preserving purity or chastity in thought and deed. This shall be our subject to-day.

With purity all other virtues thrive: without it no others can. Purity is such a beautiful virtue, so delicate in nature, that it precludes any and every tampering with it, lest the lily fade and die.

Knowing this to be true, we must look for all the safeguards with which we may enshroud it and protect it. To discover these safeguards, God has given us understanding and free will.

But there is another modern school of thought which has a large following. Their doctrine originated with the so-called Reformation of the sixteenth century. They deny the freedom of the human will, our freedom to do or not to do a thing. With them there is no such thing as “safeguards” for holy purity. Reason and free will are mere myths, in their estimation. Martin Luther called reason the “Devil’s Harlot.” Denying the freedom of the will, he wrote to Erasmus: “The human will is like a beast of burden; if God mounts it, it goes and wishes as God wills; if Satan mounts it, it goes and wishes as Satan wills. Nor can it choose the rider it prefers.” In other words, man is not responsible for his actions, be they good or bad. Therefore, there is nothing we can do about it when temptations come.

We, on the other hand, say that we are responsible for our actions. God has given us understanding and free will. He has also given us the Commandments to guide us. When our reason and will act in conformity with these Commands, we say our actions are good. If not, we say they are bad. In regard to holy purity, then, we have two classes of safeguards to preserve it. The first class comprises those means to be used before temptation, or when we are free from temptation; the second comprises those to be used when we are actually tempted.

Before Temptation.

— While we are free from temptation, we must prepare and gird ourselves for possible and unexpected attacks. Before Colonel Lindbergh and his wife set out together on their 29,000 miles of perilous journey over land and sea from July to December of 1933, they did not say: “Everything depends on God or Satan for the success or failure of that flight.” They did not wait until dangers and difficulties confronted them. On every lap of that journey, before setting out, they checked their airplane, every instrument and detail; they prepared to meet any and every crisis.

Over the sea of life, despite the unexpected and dangerous storms and squalls surrounding us, God has given us certain means by which we may secure a safe passage. To safeguard the lily of holy purity before the attack, He has given us four means to ward off the assault: two of these we hold in our own hands; the other two are supernatural. The first two are the avoidance of bad company or occasions of sin and the custody of our senses, especially the eyes. The second two are prayer and the Sacraments.

(1).

#### Avoidance of Bad Company.

— We have already seen how easily bad company can lead us into sin; how lack of restraint of the senses, especially of the eyes, gives rise to impure thoughts and desires. Some may say: “Oh, I’ll be careful! God will protect me.” But this is not sufficient. There is something peculiar about temptations against holy purity, which allows no half-way measures. We cannot hesitate. For, “he who hesitates will perish.” “He who loves danger will perish therein” (Ecclesiasticus, 3:27). Immediate flight is the only alternative. And in this flight, we must — like the aviator — watch every instrument; that is, our senses, so that none fail us.

This is the advice one holy man gave to a boy who came to him for advice after having yielded to temptations against holy innocence. “There are three things,” he said, “you must do, if you really desire to overcome these temptations. First, you must fly away; secondly, you must fly at once; and thirdly, you must fly away quickly.” The young man followed this advice and his efforts were crowned with success.

Self-denial or mortification is also a powerful help. This means to deny ourselves some pleasure, some particular dish at table, some tit-bits, and the like, which we might legitimately enjoy, and are allowed. This strengthens our wills so that when the time comes we may deny ourselves the things that are not allowed.

(2).

#### Prayer and the Sacraments.

— Secondly, the helps from above, which enable us to overcome temptation, are prayer and the Sacraments.

(a)

For the virtue of purity, earnest prayer to God and His Blessed Mother, our Guardian Angel and the Saints, is a notable means of overcoming temptations. We find this promise recorded in the Book of Wisdom (8:21): “And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought Him.” And St. Augustine, who was a great sinner before his conversion, confirms this, saying: “I thought that I could lead a pure life by my own strength; but soon I felt that I was too weak. Then I began to pray.”

Let us mention a few of the prayers we might use. The making of the sign of the Cross, with the word “Jesus” said three times, is sufficient to ward off ordinary temptations. Then we have the beautiful prayer to our Guardian Angel, which we learnt at our mother’s knee, and which should be repeated mornings and evenings, namely:

Angel of the Lord, my Guardian dear,  
To whom His love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and rule, to guard and guide.

For the Blessed Virgin, we have the beautiful “Hail Mary,” and St. Bernard’s prayer of consecration, beginning with the words: “Remember, O most gracious and Blessed Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to your protection was left unaided,” etc.

Then again, most of you know this little prayer: “O Mary, my Queen and my Mother, remember I am your own. Keep me and guard me as your property and possession. To you, this day, I consecrate my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, and myself and my whole being.” Then you can add any other prayer you may know.

The Blessed Virgin once said to St. Bridget: “As a mother who sees her child in danger of being put to death by an enemy, runs forward and does all in her power to save that child; so do I also run to help my children, even those among them who have already yielded to impure temptations, just as soon as they call upon me for help.”

(b)

The other helps from above are the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. The more we polish a jewel, the brighter its luster, and the less chance is there for dust to gather. The Sacrament of Penance does a similar thing to the soul, in protecting it from any tarnish against holy purity. And what food is to the body, that Holy Communion is to the soul. Hence, these two Sacraments support us in temptation, raise us when we have fallen, and strengthen us when we are weak. If we cling with all our hearts to the Blessed Sacrament, “the bread of the strong, the wine of virgins,” then purity is safe.

Thousands of books have recommended these two remedies. The Saints have used Penance and Holy Eucharist as their panacea. Millions through the centuries have tried the same, and with constant success. And today, when men and women, exposed to the allurements of the world and beset at the most dangerous age with temptations of all kinds, have succeeded not only in leading pure lives outwardly, but also in keeping their hearts and their thoughts pure, it is because they have gone regularly to Confession, and received often the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Such persons, and these only, triumph. And, if even they sometimes fall, what can those expect who without watchfulness, without prayer, without the Sacraments, try to conquer temptations?

St. Don Bosco, a holy confessor, says: “To confess only once every three months, is for young people as little as a drop of water upon a red-hot iron.” And St. Francis de Sales advises us: “You ought not to wait longer than a month, you who love your innocence.”

Means Used When Actually Tempted.

— But supposing Satan, with his temptations, has broken through the first line of defense, and the storms of temptation are already upon us, what is to be done then? First of all, resort to flight, if that is possible. If not, then again, turn immediately to prayer: “Lord, save me, or I perish!” “O my God, rather let me die than sin!” “O Mary, help me; do not desert me.” “How can I do this wicked thing and sin before my God!” Other similar short ejaculations, accompanied by a sign of the Cross upon your forehead, your lips and your breast, will surely help. For the Cross is the sword for all Christians.

Secondly, remember what you sacrifice by a few moments of sensual pleasure.

My strength is as the strength of ten,

Because my heart is pure.

Thus cries out Sir Galahad. When the morning sun shines into the little dewdrops, we can see some of the glory and splendor of the heavens reflected there. So in chastity. Some of God’s glory and beauty is reflected in my soul, for the soul is the image and likeness of God.

“Chastity gives me a memory, prompt and tenacious; thought, quick and abundant; a will, strong and persevering; a character, tempered with a vigor unknown to libertines.”

All this I will sacrifice for a sin that will cover me with shame. My conscience becomes disturbed; my countenance grows pale and wan; the voice grows feeble and hoarse; my memory grows dull; intellectual exertion becomes difficult; and ills without number haunt me as old age creeps over my dissipated and polluted body. What an exchange for so little in return!

Conclusion.

— Before closing, let me tell you the story of a beautiful picture. Once described, you may profitably recall it in times of temptation. It is a group-picture, with the Blessed Virgin Mary occupying the center. She is seated upon a throne, wearing a lovely crown, the symbol of royalty. In her arms she holds the Child Jesus, who is distributing four lilies to four Saints. The lilies are symbols of innocence of heart — that virtue which makes a soul especially, dear to Jesus and His purest Mother. On this picture, to the right of Mary, are two figures of the protectors of innocent youth, namely, St. Aloysius and St. John Berchmans. To her left are the two virgins, St. Cecilia and St. Agnes. Immediately in front of these four Saints are four little children, who are stretching out their hands to the Infant Jesus. The four Saints in the picture urge them to do this. For these little children, too, want to receive the lily of purity. Their favor is granted, because they prayed to Mary with Jesus in her arms. Yes, my friends, when temptations come, we are not alone.

SOMEBODY KNOWS.

Somebody knows when your heart aches,  
And everything seems to go wrong;  
Somebody knows when the shadows  
Need chasing away with a song;  
Somebody knows when you're lonely,  
Tired, discouraged, and blue;  
Somebody wants you to know Him,  
And know that He dearly loves you.  
Somebody cares when you're tempted  
And the world grows dizzy and dim;  
Somebody cares when you're weakest,  
And farthest away from Him;  
Somebody grieves when you've fallen,  
Though you are not lost from His sight:  
Somebody waits for your coming,  
Taking the gloom from your night.  
Somebody loves you when weary;  
Somebody loves you when strong;  
Always is waiting to help you,  
Watches you, one of the throng,  
Needing His friendship so holy,  
Needing His watch-care so true.  
His name? We call His name Jesus.

His people? Just I and just you.  
(Fanny Edna Stafford.)

O, how beautiful and pleasing, then, must the virtue of purity be, since it makes a soul the favorite one with Jesus and Mary! "O, how beautiful," says Holy Writ, "is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof... is known both with God and with men... It triumphs crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wis., 4:1-2).

Amen.

#### §VIII. DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS CHILDREN:

##### INSTRUCTING THEM IN MATTERS OF SEX.

"All things are clean to the clean; but to them that are defiled, and to unbelievers, nothing is clean; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." (Titus, 1:15).

On April 10, 1907, Pope [Saint] Pius X gave to the Catholic world a message which at the time seemed strange and startling to many of the older folks of that day. It was that memorable Decree, in which this Holy Pontiff directed pastors and parents to encourage early and frequent Communion. Instead of waiting until the boy or girl had reached the age of 12 or 14 (as had been the custom), he advised that children at the age of seven, or when they have attained the use of reason, should be instructed in the rudiments of our holy religion, and then be permitted to receive their First Holy Communion. The reason this Pope, a great lover of children, gave was that this had been the practice of the early Christians; and that, on account of our times, when the young people are exposed to so many temptations against their holy innocence, Holy Communion is to be the antidote which is to preserve them in their virtue and innocence.

In like manner, in recent years, the thinking minds of the Church have perceptibly changed their attitude in favor of more direct and explicit instructions on the Commandments, and of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments in particular. On account of the many new channels through which a child of today may acquire false ideas on sex matters, the Church counsels especially parents and teachers to be mindful of their sacred duties in these matters. Primarily, however, the duty rests upon parents to impart to their children this necessary instruction on the sacred mysteries of life. This duty of parents is the subject for our discussion to-day.

A few years ago, an experienced missionary (see "Sex Education," by Fr. Felix Kirsch, O.M.Cap., page 146), sent the following questionnaire to 500 pastors in various parts of the country. "Is it," he asks, "your impression that Catholic parents give the necessary sex instruction early enough to their children? If not, why not?" From these 500 pastors, 320 replied "No," and only 43 replied in the affirmative.

The principal reasons given by these pastors, for the parents' neglect of their duty, were these:

- (1) parents do not know how to instruct their children;
- (2) they do not realize the need of the instruction;
- (3) they are too timid about discussing the subject with their children;
- (4) they think that the priest should take care of the matter in the confessional;
- (5) some parents believe that teachers might give sufficient information in a general way in school;

(6) too many parents believe that children may be left to themselves in the matter; that somehow or other they will find a way out of the difficulty themselves.

One old pastor in the East added the following note: “You will render a much needed service, if you will do something that will make our Catholic parents bestir themselves. Not all parents seem to realize to what frightful dangers their children are exposed at the present time. Children are seduced at an early age, whereas they could be saved if they were instructed betimes at home. They contract the habits of impurity before they are aware of what is happening to them. The confessor cannot do everything.”

In recent years, a number of our public schools introduced in their curriculum a special course in sex hygiene and ‘eugenics’, trying to supplement the instructions the child should receive from his parents. But, on account of the unfitness and divided opinions of the teachers themselves, experience has proved that these public school instructions have done more harm than good.

These subjects cannot be taught independently of religion. And yet, so many of these teachers begin with the principle: “Sex and morals have nothing to do with one another.”

Besides, these instructions should begin long before a child is sufficiently advanced in school to receive instructions there. Tennyson was correct in saying that “we are a part of all we meet.” Other scholars say that the character of a child is formed from birth until he reaches the age of reason, at about the seventh year. Then also, on account of our environment, curiosity about the mysteries of life is aroused at a much earlier age than in the past. Imagine a child of five or six years old coming to his parent or teacher, as has happened, and innocently asking without blush or shame: “Where do babies come from?” Imagine the statement of Miss Tracy, a policewoman of Worcester, Massachusetts (October, 1928), where she admits that nine-year-old children have told her things about sex which she did not know at forty.

And just because the age at which the legitimate curiosity of children may be aroused varies so greatly, it becomes all the more difficult for teacher or pastor to give class instructions on this subject. Hence, it becomes evident that father and mother, who are in daily contact with their sons and daughters from birth, have the sacred duty to instruct the child when the opportune time arrives. This is what Pope Pius XI restates in his Encyclical on the “Christian Education of Youth” when he writes: “It is no less necessary to direct and watch the education of the adolescent, ‘soft as wax to be moulded into vice,’ in whatever environment he may happen to be, removing occasions of evil and providing occasions for good in his recreations and social intercourse; for ‘evil communications corrupt good manners’. (1 Cor 15:33.)”

But many a father or mother will ask the questions: “When should I begin with these instructions? How shall I go about it?” The time to begin is when you see that the child grows curious to know what it has a right to know. Our principle is: “Rather a year too soon than one hour too late.”

When and How to Proceed.

— Age and circumstances must determine this to a great extent. Take the little boy or girl, for example, who asks the question: “Mamma, where do babies come from?” There was a time when the question was answered with a curt reply “The stork (or the doctor) brings the babies.” Or: “Little children like you should not ask such questions.” But these answers do not satisfy the mind of the child. They only arouse the curiosity of the child still further. They create a mistrust in the mind of a child towards his parent; and the child quietly awaits the opportunity when he may obtain

that information from other sources. Hence the Church discourages — in fact, condemns — such vague and unsatisfactory answers. Alban Stoltz, the writer and author, calls such replies “lies.” And “a lie never brings a blessing.”

The same author I mentioned earlier, (Fr. Felix Kirsch, “Education to Purity,” page 188) suggests that parents should answer such a child in a more direct manner; yet, with proper delicacy and reserve. For example, when the child is old enough to understand, parents might well begin with the beautiful narrative of the Incarnation and Birth of our Divine Savior. The Scriptural story of the first Christmas at Bethlehem appeals to the mind of every child. And the part Mary and Joseph played in the birth of the Baby Jesus can be beautifully and effectively retold. As children grow older, more details might be added. Following this, the mother can proceed to tell her boy or girl how they too were formed.

Let us cite an example how other parents proceeded to impart this information. One mother informs us that she found the following method, taken from *Good Housekeeping* (September, 1911), quite satisfactory and helpful. To the child she spoke somewhat as follows: “Mother and father love each other very much. Where God is, there is love, and God wants little ones to be. Children are the special proof that God is love. When God wants to send a little child into a home, He fits up, just beneath the mother’s heart, a snug nest, not unlike the nests the birds live in. Then out of two tiny eggs the father and mother bring together, in the nest, a little child is hatched just like a little bird. But for months and months he lives in his nest in the mother’s body. The mother knows the little one is there and loves him dearly. A part of all the food she eats goes to his nourishment. At last when the little one is too big to stay longer in the nest, the doctor comes and helps to bring him out into the world.”

One little boy who fearfully had asked his mother the question, and had received the above reply, hastened to ask:

“That must hurt, mamma, does it not?”

“Sure, my darling,” replied the mother.

“Are you still mad at me?”

“Mad?” replied the mother, as she warmly clasped the boy to her heart. “No, my dear, that was not your fault.

“All mothers, except the mother of Jesus, suffer when their children are born. But they forget all their pains the moment they see their little ones. Now, darling, don’t look so sad. Smile and laugh again like mamma.”

The little boy did not laugh for a while. The thought that he had caused his mother pain, made him serious, and haunted him for hours. Later, when mamma kissed him good-night, the little chap flung his arms around mamma’s neck, saying: “Oh mamma, I love you so much more now than ever before.”

“Yes, my boy,” she added, “these are holy things we talked about. Anything else you wish to know, do not go to anyone else, but come right to your papa or mamma, and we shall gladly tell you anything you wish to know.”

Such parents have won the undying love and complete confidence of their children forever. Such children usually grow up to be good sons and daughters; and nothing could ever shake their reverential love and their unlimited filial confidence in the future. Children from such homes will not come later in life, like the girl who was kept in total ignorance about sex matters, asking the question: “Father, does a girl become pregnant if she kisses the boy whom she loves?” Or: “Father,

is it all right for a girl to give up her virtue to a boy she loves before she marries him?” and many other similar questions. Nay, but rather will good parents, who know their duties towards their children, inform them still further, as they enter their teens, of the fact that the knowledge of sex matters is not wrong. Only the abuse of such knowledge is bad.

Again, they will take the story of the Incarnation as their guide. When the Angel appeared to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and told her she should become the Mother of God, she showed clearly from her answer, “I know not man” (that is: “I have not done what is necessary to become a mother”), that she was well informed on sex matters. And she was, no doubt, very young at the time when her parents, Joachim and Anna, imparted this knowledge to her. For she was probably only about 16 years old when the Angel appeared. And we do know that this knowledge did not cast the least shadow on her incomparable, spotless chastity.

Often when young people present themselves for holy matrimony, during the preliminary instruction preceding the ceremony, I frequently ask the question: “Did your parents or anyone else instruct you on the things young people should know before entering holy wedlock?” Repeatedly, the reply is: “No, neither our parents nor anyone else told us anything about our duties in this regard.” Such young people have never had explained to them the real meaning of the words repeated daily in the Hail Mary: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

Such parents are guilty of grave neglect. Following the example of Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Blessed Mother, it is the sacred duty of every parent to call son and daughter aside before they have reached the ages of twelve or fourteen, and especially before marriage, and explain to them the nature and purpose of the various organs of the body. Beginning with the various appetites of the senses, as they develop, the appetite we call “sex instinct” should be properly explained. And it should be made clear that this sex instinct is good in itself; that God has given it for a noble and definite purpose; but that it must be used only according to God’s plan and design.

Hence, it would be wrong to speak of it as being “bad pleasure,” or certain parts of our body as being “forbidden.” Jesus, when He became man, took to Himself a complete body, with all the organs of man. His Blessed Mother, too, had a complete body, with all the organs of a woman. Hence, no part of our body is “forbidden” or “bad.” God made them all. I should rather say, that certain parts of the body are “too sacred” to be trifled with — to be abused or to be talked about lightly. God could have created the bodies of every one of us, just as He creates every soul — as He created out of nothing our first parents, Adam and Eve, or as He created the Angels. But, by giving man these organs of the body, God made every man and woman a potential co-partner in His work of creating new human beings — creatures who are one day to fill the spaces made vacant by the fallen angels.

Here lies the tremendous responsibility of marriage. It is a partnership, not only between man and woman, but between a man and a woman and God. God is not mocked. Parents cannot leave Him out of the picture of married life. A terrible judgment awaits those who try to cheat God of His share in this partnership. And whoever assumes the responsibility of parenthood, must preserve the life of that child, both for time and for eternity. Parents have a sacred duty to teach that child how to preserve both body and soul pure and undefiled.

Conclusion.



— And the easiest way to accomplish this is by leading the way through good example. Remember this point well: in parental teaching it is not so much what parents say, but what they are and do. There is a wise saying: “Parents may say what they please, but they thunder what they are.” What parents are may speak so loudly that children cannot hear what they say. Therefore, the best parents for training children in chastity, are the chaste parents who set the example first. “Verba docent, exempla trahunt.” “Words teach, but example draws.” Children see through their parents much quicker and better than parents see through their children. “Actions speak louder than words.” Hence, the father who says to his son “Come,” has some influence. But the father who says to his son “Go,” has much less influence.

I have the greatest sympathy for any boy or girl who may have made a mistake. For we never know how much of the guilt is due to the child and how much to the parent of that child. We know that Scripture tells us that the sins of parents shall pass on to the third and fourth generations. In like manner, we might say, the blessings of good parents pass on to their children and children’s children, even to the third and fourth and fifth generations. What tremendous powers and responsibilities, therefore, has God placed in the hands of fathers and mothers, for good or for evil! Truly, then, may every good father and mother address his or her children in the words of the noble Machabean mother, who spoke to her seven sons, about to be martyred, in the following terms: “I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath nor soul nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you: but the Creator of the world, who formed the nativity of man {did it}.” (2 Mach., 7: 22-23).

Amen.

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