



Our Lady of Fatima
Stressed ...

**MODESTY
IN
DRESS**



“For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son ...” (Jn. 3:16).

You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt. 5:27-28)

“Certain fashions will be introduced that will offend Our Lord very much.” - Our Lady of Fatima, 1917

Our Lady of Fatima Stressed MODESTY IN DRESS

with ecclesiastical authorization

January 1, 2004

Let us first turn our gaze to Jesus Christ

Before any specific consideration with respect to modesty, it is necessary that we turn our attention to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the tenor of His Covenant and invitation to each one of us to love Him, *“For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son ...”* (Jn. 3:16). God the Eternal Word is sent to us out of love. And, *“having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end”* (Jn 13:1), that is, He loved them entirely, nor was it possible to love them more. He gave His life for us. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (Jn. 15:13) That is what Jesus did for us. His was love to the fullest. Souls are of infinite worth because Jesus Christ has paid for them with the shedding of His Most Precious Blood.

So out of love for God, you, dear Christian, do not want to greatly offend Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by causing your brother, sister or you yourself to fall into mortal sin. Nor do you want to hurt your brother or sister or Lord God. You do not want your brother or sister in mortal sin nor do you want yourself in mortal sin, as mortal sin is our greatest enemy and ultimately the only thing capable of separating us from eternal life.

Immodesty in dress can lead to the loss of immortal souls, and if gravely offensive, is a mortal sin for the wearer and occasion of sin for the beholder of immodest fashions. Sins caused by immodest fashions send to hell, or at least make worthy of hell’s fire, the souls of many of those exposed to these fashions.

“I pray ... for them whom Thou hast given Me: because they are Thine ...Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept: and none of them

is lost ...” (Jn. 17:9,12). This is the wish of our Redeemer, having offered Himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of all, He desires all, without exception, to be saved. Sadly, we know that this does not happen, being a truth of the Faith invariable in Tradition, in Scripture and in the perennial teaching of the Magisterium, including the solemn definitions of the Catholic Church, that hell exists, and there are in fact human persons who are damned. Our Lady confirms this in the Fatima Message. Nevertheless, we know that the mystery of the Communion of Saints shares the intercommunication of merits among the members of the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, only some are saved, or only reach the level of sanctity that they were called to by God, by means of the collaboration of other members of this Body. St. Paul put it like this: *“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church.”* (Col. 1:24)

Many are the ways by which the Faithful can and should help others in the interests of their eternal salvation. In addition to prayer, sacrifices, all types of good works, sufferings patiently endured and offered to God by the hands of Mary, the Faithful are helped on the road to salvation by the good example of a Christian life in the fulfillment of all of the serious, but profoundly loving demands of our Faith, because on this side of Heaven true love requires sacrifice. *And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple* (Lk.14:27). Such exigency includes modesty in dress because modesty first presupposes respect for the body itself as the *temple of the Holy Ghost* (1 Cor. 6:19), or better put, with love and respect for God Himself present in my body, and then charity to one’s neighbor, who can suffer temptations and fall into sin if I do not dress and behave modestly. Such disorder in the appetites is a consequence of Original Sin, and because it is not possible to consider man as in a state of perfect nature, as some would have it, rather he is wounded and sadly enough, tends toward evil. Jesus Christ, our Saviour, redeemed us, but He did not reintegrate our nature to that state of original perfection. Wounded by sin, but restored and reinvigorated by sanctifying grace, we should *“work out our salvation with fear and trembling”*. (Phil. 2:12)

And we should not forget the warning made by the Lord Himself: *“It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.”* (Lk.17:1, 2)

Therefore, sisters and brothers, we must remember the Apostle’s exhortation, that still is so timeless: *“Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations: that you may be blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: among whom you shine as lights in the world. Holding forth the word of life to my glory in the day of Christ: because I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain.”* (Phil. 2, 14-16)

The invitation that Jesus Christ extends to us is beautiful and comforting, but also requires sacrifice — the sacrifices of our daily duty to God which includes assisting our brothers and sisters to Heaven and not being an obstacle to their salvation by dressing immodestly.

Guidelines on Modesty in Dress

The essential guidelines that the Holy See gave in this matter are summed up in the one paragraph which we here quote¹:

A dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers breadth under the pit of the throat²; which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows; and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent materials are improper.³

Both men and women are bound by the law of modesty and

¹ If anyone wants this statement of guidelines from the Holy See and Church authorities, they can obtain it from the International Rosary Crusade offices - ask for the leaflet *The Marylike Standards for Modesty in Dress* (LF005)

² Two fingers below the pit of the throat is approximately 2 inches, or 5 centimeters.

³ At the direction of Pope Pius XI, Donato Cardinal Sbaretti, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, on the Feast of the Holy Family (January 12, 1930) issued this rule as to what constitutes modesty in dress. This statement is the most specific and in this sense the most authoritative ever made on the subject of modesty by the Church. No other Pope has changed or modified it. The statement was and still is binding in conscience. Note that the statement gives only the minimum requirements by stating, "A dress cannot be called decent etc..." Richard J. Lloyd, "On Christian Modesty: The Natural Guardian of Chastity", Reprinted from *The Remnant*, pp. 2-3, Cf. Rita Davidson, *Immodesty Satan's Virtue*, Little Flowers Family Apostolates, 2001, Lanark, ON, p. 121.

it is a mistake to read into this concern for modesty as somehow being anti-women. However, it is much more common for the sin of immodesty to be committed by women and that is why we quote Father Bruno Pelegia who argues in favor of the obligations of women in this regard (see the 12 objections he addresses at the end of this booklet). But men too, must be concerned about this virtue.

We composed this booklet to preface and expand upon the arguments of Father Pelegia, a Doctor of Sacred Theology and Catholic priest who had for more than 20 years studied the moral theology of St. Alphonsus Liguori. St. Alphonsus has been proclaimed Doctor of the Church in Moral Theology by the Magisterium. In a spirit of imitation of the Blessed Virgin, model of purity for all Her children who make up the Mystical Body of Christ, let us first list two sets of guidelines for modesty in dress, one which applies to men, the other to women:

Modesty Guidelines for Men

1. Men should not remove their shirt and expose their body to the waist in public.
2. Men should not wear shorts in Church or tight-fitting pants.
3. If men should feel that their clothes are too tight or immodest in any other way, they should correct this by being more modest so as to not be the occasion whereby any of their sisters in Christ should lose their souls by unlawful desires being aroused.⁴

Mary-like Guidelines of Dress for Women

These norms listed below are an abridged version taken from *A Girl's Modesty Guide*, a sound guide for women and girls who want to know what the Catholic Church has to say about modesty in dress. This is the program of the *Mary-like Crusade*.

For many years until his death in 1969 Father Bernard Kunkel of the diocese of Belleville, Illinois was director of the Crusade, his bishop being the President. Members of the Crusade pledged

⁴ Some of the content of these modesty guidelines for men was first published in the original article on which this booklet is primarily based, in Issue 19 of *The Fatima Crusader*, February - April, 1986, p. 26.

themselves to observe the following:

In response to the plea of Our Lady of Fatima for absolute modesty in dress and to help prevent the countless sins caused by immodest dress especially in the summer time, I shall earnestly strive:

1. To refrain entirely from wearing shorts of any type, whether at home or in public.

2. To refuse to wear any other type of scanty wear, including such things as sun-suits, and outfits that expose the shoulders, breast, back, or midriff; likewise to avoid sheer or transparent outfits, tight dresses, tight sweaters, and slacks; and to wear only such skirts that go sufficiently below the knees to safeguard modesty in all normal postures and movements.

3. To be particularly careful to dress modestly and respectfully for church, and for all sacred services and sacred places, including parish grounds, pilgrimage sites and shrines, and to encourage others to dress with Mary-like modesty in every situation without fear of being unpopular; to follow the wishes of Our Lady, Mary Immaculate, rather than the decrees of pagan fashion dictators.

Listen to the voice of Saint Padre Pio, Stigmatist

Given special guidance from Heaven, Saint Padre Pio the stigmatic priest who bore the bleeding wounds of Christ in his body from 1918 until his death in 1968, refused time and again to absolve any woman, no matter how important she was, who did not wear her skirts *at least 8 inches below the knee*. He also insisted that they do not wear slacks. Yet this traditional guideline, due to ignorance, prejudice, enslavement to vanity or passion, has been combated so much in contemporary times.

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church issued statements on modesty in 1930, 1954 and 1957 but since then has kept silent because people no longer listen. God allows us to be punished by the silence of the Magisterium today for the sins of not obeying the Magisterium when it spoke up. This is similar to the way God responded to the hardness of the hearts of the people in the Old Testament. As punishment, God did not send prophets for four

hundred years after the Jews had killed and rejected many of the prophets He had already sent.

A short number of years ago, even two Catholic bishops came down on the wrong side of this issue. In 1979 they felt compelled to persecute *The Fatima Crusader* for publishing this material (our leaflet now 30 years in circulation: LF005 *The Marylike Standards for Modesty in Dress*). One of these bishops, several years later and just before his death, seemed more disposed to hear the truth.

Thus we hope you will understand why today many priests do not want to talk about this subject. However Our Lady of Fatima compels us, for the salvation of souls, to explain the matter more fully.

Listen to the Voice of Our Lady of Fatima, Queen of Prophets

Our Lady at Fatima lamented that in our times the Militant Atheists, Satanists and other anti-Christian societies such as the Communists and Secular Humanists and their associates would spread their errors against our Catholic faith and morals. Our Lady said, “Russia will spread her errors throughout the world.” She also said: ***“certain fashions will be introduced that will offend Our Lord very much.”***

And so at Fatima, modesty was very much stressed by the Blessed Virgin Mary because She also told us in the Fatima Message: ***“more souls go to hell for sins of the flesh than any other reason.”***

There are a number of sins against purity that Our Lady was referring to, and there is need for clear teaching that only persons who are married may have, with their own spouse and only with that spouse, sexual relations that naturally orientated to procreation, should be always open to that purpose. With regard to people who are not married, they may not use or even give their consent to any pleasure attached to the procreative faculties. Nor may these faculties be voluntarily aroused except in marriage. This is because the power of begetting children is a sacred trust that God has given to men and women to be used only according to His laws. As Creator of all and especially as Creator of each child’s immortal soul, God has a right

to demand we obey Him.

These matters were explained in a general way in *The Fatima Crusader* by Father Bruno Pelegia in 1986. Because sins against holy purity are particularly prevalent today and are causing the loss of a multitude of souls and in answer to the requests of many, especially those of priests and bishops, we decided to republish Father Pelegia's arguments in favor of Modesty in Dress.

Preface to the 12 Objections answered by Father Bruno Pelegia

To help you understand more fully Father Pelegia's plea for Modesty in Dress, some background Theology is useful. It is because of Original Sin that every man, woman and child experiences difficulty in controlling their appetites even when one's reason tells him it is in his own best interests to do so.

For example, everyone has had the experience of eating just a little too much after your reason and senses tell you that you have already had enough. Others have felt the desire for more alcohol to drink, or cigarettes to smoke even though they know that alcohol in excess and tobacco are not good for them. The sense appetites such as for food and drink, clearly want to "do their own thing" even when it is contrary to reason.

We do not always have direct control over how our sense appetites feel. We can however control them by Christian mortification as well as by other indirect methods. By not keeping our mind's attention focused on food, drink or tobacco, we can the more easily not give in to the sin of gluttony. But if we continue to dwell on food or drink, or the pleasure they give us, then oftentimes we give in to our appetites even against our better judgment.

Since Original Sin, the appetite for sex, the procreative faculty in all men and women, also is not always subject to direct control by the will and intellect. But it can be controlled indirectly by the mortification of fasting and abstinence, as well as by not dwelling upon creatures who would tend to awaken a desire in this appetite. Because it is so powerful (God made it that way in order to ensure the continuation of the human race) it requires very little provocation

to awaken the desire of the procreative faculty. Given the different natures of men and women, it is generally true that mens' sexual desire is more easily aroused.

It is by seeing persons of the opposite sex immodestly dressed that persons, especially men, find that their appetite for use of the procreative faculty is drawing them to exercise this faculty. This can happen even when it is against the Law of God, and, therefore bad for the person. When this appetite is not directed towards one's marriage partner, and if it is, after sufficient reflection fully consented to, then that person has thereby committed a mortal sin. If this sin is not repented of, it will undoubtedly drag that soul to hell for all eternity.

Therefore, mindful of this dire consequence of the weakness that our brothers and sisters experience as a result of Original Sin, we must safeguard their virtue by dressing modestly. Both men and women are obliged to dress modestly in strict justice and charity and to offend in this matter is often a mortal sin. Because of the differences in psychology in men vs. women, it has been the case that the devil, his human agents and other evil people who actively fight against our Christian culture and heritage, have conspired to induce women to dress immodestly.

By this strategy the devil and his followers often succeed in causing both men and women to fall into hell. This they achieve by tempting men to mortal sin by impure desires and actions, once having viewed immodestly dressed women. The women responsible are implicated in these sins for having caused the men to fall from grace. The diabolical disorientation away from the Christian traditions of modesty in dress, one could even say, is in part responsible for a present-day nearly universal enslavement of Christians to their base passions in complete denial of their baptismal promises.⁵

Finally, it should be noted that Chastity and Modesty are parts of the virtue of Temperance, which is one of the Four Cardinal Virtues. As virtue means "strength", it truly denotes strength of character to practice chastity and modesty, rather than the weakness of following

⁵For a more complete explanation read the booklet available from the Fatima Center: *Our Lady's Urgent Appeal*.

the lax maxims of the world.

REMEMBER: *Modesty in dress helps safeguard the virtue of purity and is demanded by the moral law of God. The above norms are based on this unchangeable moral law and on Christian tradition. Immodest dress is immoral and sinful, and matter for confession. We have reason to believe that many souls are now in hell because of the thoughtlessness of women and girls who dress immodestly. **Out of love for Christ and His Immaculate Mother, and for the sake of others who are struggling to be pure, Please Dress Modestly!***

Father Bruno Pelegia, S.T.D., Catholic Priest, Theologian & Doctor of Sacred Theology, Answers 12 Objections against the Absolute Necessity of Modesty in Dress for Women

You might say, *What evil is there in the way I dress?*

You must suspect that exposing a woman's body (or man's body) as you do, can be terribly provocative.

You might say, *Those who see me this way are not forced to sin!*

Yes we admit that. But should we not wish to reduce the offenses our Divine Lord receives when we can? Woe to us if we are indifferent about this! Woe to us if, from this indifference, our conduct coaxes others into sin! We know that some good men will so successfully resist any woman's provocativeness that they will not sin in the least, but will gain merit. However, some others, being weak, will consent to what is forbidden; and according to the Scriptures, you will share in their sin for unnecessarily giving them a lure to it. (Matt. 18:7)

You might say, *All the other girls dress this way!*

We admit the sad fact that many are that thoughtless. But even if all were so thoughtless, you should not follow such an example. You consider yourself capable of making wise decisions of your own in personal matters. Seeing that you have the freedom, the privilege, and the duty to pursue virtue and heaven, would you unthinkingly follow the herd like cattle do? "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for

wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction: and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!” (Matt. 7:13-14). Let a sense of responsibility and uprightness distinguish you from the herd.

You might say, *I do not mean to do evil.*

I can believe that. But the mischief you are doing by dressing without due care of the consequences is an evil you will be responsible for.

You might say: *But what is important is the heart!*

But, Faith ... if it have not works, is dead in itself. (James 2:17) It is our bodies, regenerated at Holy Baptism, which become temples of the living God, living tabernacles of the Most Holy Eucharist. The dignity of your Christian body demands adequate clothing. “Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member.” (1 Cor. 12: 27) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1)

You might say, *I feel I should be in style and up-to-date.*

I would answer there are good women and girls who, using a bit of resourcefulness, manage to dress with a modest attractiveness and charm. But beware of a style which, luring men toward corrupt morals, serves only vanity and the devil; for it is a tragic deception. No matter how styles change and popular tastes change, the moral law does not change.

You might say, *Often it is hard to judge if a dress is modest or not.*

Reflect: If you suspect that a dish of food is poisoned, you do not serve it to anyone, for fear of doing harm. Even more so, should you not wisely play safe when you have any prudent suspicion that your manner of dress will be a source of harm? Does not an upright

conscience look upon sin as the greatest of harms?

You might say, *I refuse to be a bigot and a hypocrite!*

But how can it be wrong to act upon an upright conscience, which tells you that an offense against the all-holy God is truly the greatest of evils? A bigot and a hypocrite is one who pretends to hate sin and love God when he does not really care about these things. But I ask you to care, and how is that wrong? Uprightness, which at times requires sweat and tears and courage, is never the same as bigotry and hypocrisy. And the Saints who fought valiantly against immodesty, were they bigots or hypocrites?

You might say, *Men want me this way.*

That may be true of men who prefer a bit of pleasure to God's friendship; but it is not true of men who live by a right conscience. Furthermore, it is to God that you must one day render an account, not to men.

You might say, *Beauty is supposed to be seen.*

I could reply that "When bodily beauty is shown off a great deal, it loses its loveliness." But there is a physical beauty that cannot be displayed without becoming a lure to tempt men to forbidden satisfactions. On the other hand, if you thought that there was beauty in displaying your legs, why is there not beauty in showing Christian modesty and a concern for the good of souls?

You might say, *But I feel hot!*

You know how to put up with the heat when you want to. Surely a good conscience is worth suffering a bit of heat for. Many good souls bear the heat willingly in order to offer it as a penance to God. But—sad to say—some women in hot weather go scantily clad to Mass and other church gatherings who dress modestly when they must work in an office where they receive all kinds of clients, or when they must teach school, or when they must work as salesclerks where they have to satisfy all kinds of customers.

You might say, *but I have free will and can make free decisions!*

But you certainly don't want to go to hell and you don't need to be a convicted murderer to go there—it takes much less than that—sinning mortally against any Commandment will do it! And I have the strongest objections to seeing you go there! I will go there myself if I do not try to keep you from going there.

If you want to be Christian in fact and not just in name—if you want to help and not hinder the work of grace to reform consciences—if you do not want to feel remorse tomorrow and bear a weight of guilt—then put forth the effort to dress with Mary-like modesty,

... so that you may prove yourself a Christian woman and not a mere man-trap;

... so that you uplift and inspire chaste love, and not enkindle forbidden pleasure.

Now may your informed conscience guide you and let nothing cheat you out of your call to Holiness, Purity and your Eternal Salvation!



Let us conclude by stating:

Women by dressing with modesty will gain the respect of men, becoming dignified instead of being degraded and considered a mere object of lust. Instead of dressing in a manner which is disrespectful, they should dress in accord with a higher standard. They should dress with this higher standard to receive the respect they deserve.

God commands us to practice Charity, which is primarily a mandate to obey Him. And Charity is defined as *the love of God*. What did Jesus say about this love?

... you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)



THE FATIMA CENTER

IN U.S.A. – 17000 State Route 30, Constable, NY 12926

IN CANADA – 452 Kraft Road, Fort Erie, ON L2A 4M7

CALL US TOLL FREE: 1-800-263-8160 OR 905-871-7607

www.fatima.org | E-mail: info@fatima.org