

MORAL PROBLEMS IN FASHION DESIGN

An Address of Pope Pius XII to a Congress of the "Latin Union of High Fashion"[1]

Di gran cuore November 8, 1957

BELOVED sons and daughters, promoters and associates of the "Latin Union of High Fashion," We heartily extend to you Our paternal welcome.

You have seen fit to come here to give Us testimony of your filial devotion and, at the same time, to seek heaven's favor on your Union. >From its very inception you placed it under the auspices of Him Whose glory must be the end of every human activity, even of those that are apparently profane, according to the precept of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10, 31).

A delicate and complex problem

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.

It is right and proper that your generous intentions should receive Our gratitude and that of the Church, and that your Union, born of and inspired by a sound religious and civic sense, should receive Our fervent wishes for the achievement, through the enlightened self-discipline of fashion designers, of the twofold aim expressed in your statutes: to improve the moral condition of this important sector of public life, and to help raise fashions to the level of an instrument and expression of well-intentioned civility.

Since We wish to encourage such a praiseworthy enterprise, We have willingly consented to your request that We set out Our thoughts to you, particularly on the proper formulation of the problem and, most important of all, its moral aspects. We shall also make some practical suggestions which may guarantee to the Union a well-accepted authority in this highly controversial field.

I

GENERAL ASPECTS OF FASHIONS

Following that counsel of ancient wisdom which finds in the purposes of things both the ultimate criterion for every theoretical evaluation and the certainty of moral principles, it will be useful to recall those aims which man has always established for himself where his clothing is concerned.

Three reasons for clothing:

Without doubt he obeys the familiar requirements of hygiene, decency, and adornment. These are three necessities so deeply rooted in nature that they cannot be disregarded or contradicted without provoking hostility and prejudice. They are as necessary today as they were yesterday; they are found among almost every people; they can be seen at every stage of the wide scale in which the natural necessity of clothing is historically and ethnologically manifested.

It is important to note the strict and close interdependence that binds these three necessities, despite the fact that they derive from three different sources. The first is derived from man's physical nature; the second from his spiritual nature; the third from his psychological and artistic nature.

. . . hygiene

The hygienic requirements of clothing concern mostly the climate, its variations, and other external factors, as

[1] Reported in *Osservatore Romano*, November 9, 1957. Italian text. Translation based in part on one released by N.C.W.C. News Service.

possible causes of discomfort or illness. It follows from the above-mentioned interdependence that hygienic reasons—or, rather, pretexts—cannot serve to justify a deplorable license, especially in public, aside from exceptional cases of proven necessity. But even in these cases, every well-bred soul would be unable to avoid the distress of an involuntary feeling of confusion, outwardly expressed by natural blushing.

In the same way, a manner of dressing which is harmful to health—and there are no few examples of this in the history of style—cannot be considered legitimate on the pretext of beauty. On the other hand, the common rules of decency must give way to the needs of a medical cure which, although it may seem to violate them, actually respects them when all due moral precautions are employed.

. . . decency

Equally obvious, as the origin and purpose of clothing, is the natural requirement of decency, understood either in the wider sense, which includes proper consideration for the sensitivity of others to objects that are unsightly, or, above all, as a defense of moral honesty and a shield against disordered sensuality.

The strange opinion which attributes the sense of modesty to one type of education or another, and even considers modesty a conceptual deformation of innocent reality, a false product of civilization, a stimulus to dishonesty, and source of hypocrisy, is not supported by any valid reason. On the contrary, it finds explicit condemnation in the resulting repugnance with which they are viewed who dare to adopt this point of view as a way of life. Thus the soundness of common sense, manifest in universal usage, is confirmed.

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.

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

Modesty makes man hear its warning, like a forward sentinel, from the moment he acquires the use of reason, even before he learns the full meaning and purpose of chastity. It accompanies him throughout his entire life and demands that certain acts, which are good in themselves because they are divinely established, should be protected by a discreet veil of shadow and the reserve of silence, in order to confer on them the respect owed the dignity of their great purpose. It is therefore just that modesty, as the depository of such precious possessions, should claim for itself an authority prevailing over every other tendency and every caprice, and should preside over the determination of fashions in clothing.

. . . and adornment

And here we arrive at the third purpose of clothing, from which fashions draw their origin more directly, and which responds to the innate need, more greatly felt by woman, to enhance the beauty and dignity of the person with the same means that are suitable to satisfy the other two purposes.

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.

This penchant for the adornment of one's own person clearly derives from nature, and is therefore legitimate.

Over and above the function of clothing which hides physical imperfections, youth asks for clothing which has an attractiveness and splendor 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.

In those cases in which the aim is to enhance the moral beauty of the person the style of the clothes will be such as almost to eclipse physical beauty in the austere shadow of concealment, to distract the attention of the senses, and concentrate reflection on the spirit.

The language of clothing

Considered under this wider aspect, clothing has its own multiform and efficacious language. At times it is a spontaneous and faithful interpretation of sentiments and habits; at other times it is conventional, affected, and therefore hardly sincere.

Clothing expresses joy and sorrow, authority and power, pride and simplicity, wealth and poverty, the sacred and the profane. The specific form of this expression depends on the traditions and the culture of a particular people; it changes all the more slowly as the institutions, characters, and sentiments that the styles interpret are the more stable.

The nature of “fashion”

Fashion—an ancient art of uncertain origins, which is made complex by the psychological and social factors it involves—applies itself expressly to the enhancement of physical beauty. At present, fashion has achieved an indisputable importance in public life, whether as an aesthetic expression of customs, or as an interpretation of public demand and a focal point of substantial economic interests.

A profound observation of the phenomena of fashions will reveal that they are not only extravagant in their form, but are also the meeting point of such different psychological and moral factors as taste for beauty, thirst for novelty, affirmation of the personality, intolerance of monotony, no less than luxury, ambition and vanity.

Fashion is actually elegance, conditioned, however, by constant change in such a way that its own instability confers a distinctive mark upon it. The reason for the constant change of fashions, which has now become seasonal—changes which are slower in basic lines, but extremely rapid in secondary variations—seems to be a desire to surpass the past. It is facilitated by the frantic character of the present era, which has a tremendous capacity for burning up in a short time all that is meant to satisfy the fantasy and the senses.

It is understandable that new generations intent upon their own future—a different and better dream than that of their fathers—should feel the need to detach themselves from those forms, not only of clothing but also of objects and ornaments, which most obviously recall a way of life that they wish to surpass. But the extreme instability of present-day styles is determined above all by the will of its artificers and guides, who have at their disposal such means, unknown in the past, as an enormous and varied textile production, the inventive fertility of fashion designers, and easy means of “launching” fashions in the press, movies, television, exhibits, and fashion shows.

The rapidity of change is further stimulated by a kind of silent competition, not really new, between the “elite” who wish to assert their own personality with original forms of clothing, and the public who immediately convert them to their own use with more or less good imitations. Nor can one overlook another subtle and decadent reason, namely, the effort of those “stylists” who play on the factor of seduction in order to insure the success of their “creations,” being well aware of the effect that constantly repeated surprise and novelty create.

The economics of fashion

It is another characteristic of today’s fashions that, although they remain principally an aesthetic fact, they have also become an economic element of great proportions. The few established fashion-shops which once dictated undisputed rules of elegance from this or that metropolis to the world of European culture have now been replaced by a number of financially powerful organizations which, while they supply the demand for clothing, also form popular tastes and constantly work to promote increasing demands for their own market.

The reasons for this transformation are to be found, first of all, in the so-called “democratization” of fashion through which an increasing number of individuals fall under the spell of elegance and, secondly, in technical progress which makes it possible to turn out mass-produced styles that would otherwise be expensive but have now become easy to acquire on the so-called “ready-made” market.

Thus was the world of fashion born, a world which includes artists and craftsmen, manufacturers and merchants, publishers and critics, as well as an entire class of humble workers who draw their income from fashions.

The fashion-designer

Although the economic factor is the driving force of this activity, its soul is always the “stylist,” the person who,

through a clever choice of materials, colors, cut, line, and accessory ornaments, gives life to a new and expressive style that pleases the public. It is needless to list the difficulties of this art, the fruit of genius and skill and, even more, of a sensitivity to the taste of the moment.

A style destined for certain success acquires the importance of an invention. It is surrounded by secrecy while waiting to be “launched.” Once on the market, it brings in high prices, while the information media give it wide publicity almost as though it were an event of national importance.

The influence of fashion-designers is so strong that the textile industry lets its production be guided by them, both in quantity and in quality. Their social influence is equally great in interpreting public customs, for if fashions have been the external expression of the usages of people in the past, today they have become ever more so—from the time when this phenomenon, fashions, began to be the result of reflection and study.

“High fashion”

But the formation of the tastes and preferences of the people and the guidance of society toward serious or decadent habits does not depend on the fashion designers alone. It depends also on the whole organized complexus of the fashion industry, especially upon production houses and critics in that more refined sector which finds its clients in the upper social classes and takes the name of “high fashion,” as if to designate the source of the currents that people will later follow almost blindly, under what appears to be some magic compulsion.

Now, since so many important values are involved in and sometimes endangered by styles, as we have rapidly outlined, it seems providential that persons should enter upon the scene who have received a technical and Christian preparation and want to help free styles from those tendencies that are not commendable.

These are persons who see in styles the art of knowing how to dress, whose aim is certainly, though only partially, to enhance the beauty of the body, but with such moderation that the body, the masterpiece of divine creation, will not be obscured but, on the contrary, in the words of the Prince of the Apostles, will be exalted “in the imperishableness of a quiet and gentle spirit, which is of great price in the sight of God” (I Peter 3, 4).

II

THE MORAL PROBLEM OF FASHION AND ITS SOLUTIONS

The problem of fashion consists in the harmonious reconciliation of a person’s exterior ornamentation with the interior of a “quiet and modest spirit.”

However, some people ask themselves if there really is a moral problem in such an exterior, contingent, and relative fact as fashion. And, granted that there is, they ask in what terms this problem is to be set forth and according to what principles it must be solved.

This is not the place to protest at length against the insistent attempts of many contemporaries to separate the exterior activities of man from the moral realm as if the two belonged to different universes, as if man himself were not the subject and the object of the moral realm and, therefore, responsible before the Sovereign Regulator of all things.

It is quite true that styles, like art, science, politics, and other so-called profane activities, follow their own rules to attain the immediate ends for which they are intended. However, their subject is invariably man who cannot prescind from directing these activities to his ultimate and supreme end.

There exists, then, the moral problem of styles, not only insofar as they concern a generically human activity, but more specifically insofar as this activity is carried out in a field common to, or at least very close to evident moral values. The problem is especially great insofar as the aims of styles—aims that are good in themselves—are likely to be twisted by the wicked tendencies of a human nature which is fallen through original sin, and thus fashions can be changed into occasions of sin and scandal.

Ecclesiastical severity

This inclination of a corrupt nature to abuse fashions has frequently led ecclesiastical tradition to treat fashions with suspicion and severe judgment, as expressed with intense firmness by notable sacred speakers and by zealous

missionaries, even to the point of “burning vain objects” which, according to the usages and austerity of those times, was esteemed as effective eloquence by the people.

From these manifestations of severity, which basically showed the maternal concern of the Church for the welfare of souls and the moral values of civilization, one cannot argue, however, that Christianity exacts almost a renunciation of respect and care for the physical person and its external decorum. Whoever would draw this conclusion would be forgetting what the Apostle of the Gentiles wrote: “In like manner I wish women to be decently dressed, adorning themselves with modesty and dignity” (I Tim., 2, 9).

The Church’s positive attitude

The Church, on the contrary, does not censure or condemn styles when they are meant for the proper decorum and ornamentation of the body, but she never fails to warn the faithful against being easily led astray by them.

This positive attitude of the Church derives from reasons far higher than the mere aesthetic or hedonistic considerations which have been assumed by a renewed paganism. The Church knows and teaches that the human body, which is God’s masterpiece in the visible world, and which has been placed at the service of the soul, was elevated by the Divine Redeemer to the rank of a temple and an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and as such must be respected. The body’s beauty must therefore not be exalted as an end in itself, much less in such guise as will defile the dignity it has been endowed with.

Moral evaluation of attire

Speaking in concrete terms, it cannot be denied that along with seemingly styles there are also immodest fashions that create confusion in well-ordered minds and can even be an incentive to evil. It is always difficult to indicate with universal norms the border-line between seemliness and shamelessness because the moral evaluation of attire depends on many factors. However, the so-called relativity of fashions with respect to times, places, persons, and education is not a valid reason to renounce *a priori* a moral judgment on this or that fashion which, for the time being, violates the limits of normal decency.

The sense of decency, almost without being consulted on the matter, gives immediate warning as to where immodesty and seduction, idolatry of matter and luxury, or only frivolity, are concealed. And if the artificers of shameless fashions are skilled in the trafficking of perversion, mixing it into an ensemble of aesthetic elements that are good in themselves, human sensuality is unfortunately even more skillful in discovering it and is ready to fall under its spell.

Here as elsewhere, greater sensitivity to this warning against the snares of evil, far from being grounds for criticizing those who possess it, as though it were a sign of interior depravity, is actually a mark of an upright soul and of watchfulness over the passions.

Yet, no matter how broad and changeable the relative morals of styles may be, there is always an absolute norm to be kept after having heard the admonition of conscience warning against approaching danger: style must never be a proximate occasion of sin.

The element of intent

Among the objective elements that concur to make an immodest style there is, first and foremost, the evil intention of its makers. Where these seek to create unchaste ideas and sensations through their fashions, there is present a technique of disguised malice. They know, among other things, that boldness in such matters cannot be pushed beyond certain limits, but they also know that the desired effect is close to these limits, and that a clever combination of serious and artistic elements with others that are less worthy is highly suited to capturing the fancy and the senses. For they realize that a fashion thus devised will be acceptable to a client who seeks such an effect, but will not compromise, at least in their opinion, the good name of upright clients.

Every restoration of decency to style must, therefore, begin with the intention of those who design and those who wear. In both there must be an awakening of the conscience as to their responsibility for the tragic consequences that could result from clothing which is overly bold, especially if it is worn in public.

Immodesty

More basically, the immorality of some styles depends in great part on excesses either of immodesty or luxury. An excess of immodesty in fashion involves, in practice, the cut of the garment. The garment must not be evaluated according to the estimation of a decadent or already corrupt society, but according to the aspirations of a society which prizes the dignity and seriousness of its public attire.

It is often said almost with passive resignation that fashions reflect the customs of a people. But it would be more exact and much more useful to say that they express the decision and moral direction that a nation intends to take: either to be shipwrecked in licentiousness or maintain itself at the level to which it has been raised by religion and civilization.

Luxury

No less unfortunate, although in a different area, are excesses of style when it is assigned the task of satisfying a thirst for luxury. The small merit which luxury has as a source of labor is almost always nullified by the grave disorders that derive from it in public and private life. Prescinding from the dissipation of wealth which excessive luxury demands of its worshippers, who will more often than not end by being devoured by it, it always insults the integrity of those who live by their own toil, and it displays a cynicism toward poverty, either by flaunting too easy gains or by breeding suspicion about the way of life of those who surround themselves with it. Where moral consciousness does not succeed in moderating the use of riches, even if they are honestly acquired, either frightful barriers will be raised between classes, or the entire society will be set adrift, exhausted by the race toward a utopia of material happiness.

In indicating the harm that a lack of restraint in styles can do to individuals and society, We do not intend to suggest that the expansive force or the creative genius of fashion designers should be repressed, nor that fashion should be reduced to unchanging forms, to monotony or to dismal severity. On the contrary, We mean to indicate the right road that styles should follow, so that they may achieve their end as faithful interpreters of civilized and Christian traditions.

Three basic principles: . . .

To do this a few principles may be set down as a basis for solving the moral problem of styles; from them more concrete norms may be easily drawn.

. . . the influence of styles

The first is not to minimize the importance of style's influence for good or for evil. The language of clothing, as We have already said, is the more effective when it is more ordinary and is understood by everyone. It might be said that society speaks through the clothing it wears. Through its clothing it reveals its secret aspirations and uses it, at least in part, to build or destroy its future.

But the Christian, whether he be creator or client, should be careful not to underestimate the dangers and spiritual ruin spread by immodest fashions, especially those worn in public, because of that continuity that must exist between what one preaches and what one practices, even in the sense of externals. He will remember the high purity which the Redeemer demands of His disciples even in glances and thoughts. And he will remember the severity which God shows to those who give scandal.

We might call to mind on this subject the strong words of the prophet Isaias, in which was foretold the infamy that was to befall the holy city of Sion because of the immodesty of its daughters (cf. Isaias 3, 16-21). And one could recall those other words with which the greatest of all Italian poets expressed in vehement terms his feeling of indignation for the immodesty creeping into his city (cf. Dante, *Purgatorio*, 23, 94-108).

. . . control

The second principle is that style should be directed and controlled instead of being abandoned to caprice and reduced to abject service. This applies to the makers of style—designers and critics; conscience demands that they not

submit blindly to the depraved, taste which is manifested by society, or rather by a part of it, and not always that part most discerning in wisdom. But it also applies to individuals, whose dignity demands of them that they should liberate themselves with free and enlightened conscience from the imposition of pre-determined tastes, especially tastes debatable on moral grounds. To direct styles also means to react firmly against currents that are contrary to the best traditions.

Control over fashions does not contradict but, on the contrary, confirms the saying that “fashions are not born outside of and against society,” provided that one ascribes to society, as one should, consciousness and autonomy in directing itself.

. . . and moderation

The third principle, even more concrete, is the respect of “measure” or rather of moderation in the entire field of styles. Just as excess is the principal cause of their defects, so moderation will preserve their value. Moderation, above all, must provide a pattern by which to regulate, at all costs, greed for luxury, ambition, and capriciousness. Stylists, and especially designers, must let themselves be guided by moderation in designing the cut or line of a garment and in the selection of its ornaments, convinced that sobriety is the finest quality of art.

Far from wanting a return to outdated forms—though these often reappear as fashion novelties—but rather to confirm the perennial value of sobriety, We should like to invite today’s artists to dwell for a moment on certain feminine figures in the masterpieces of classical art which have undisputed esthetical value. Here the clothing, marked by Christian decency, is the worthy ornament of the person with whose beauty it blends as in a single triumph of admirable dignity.

III

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTERS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF THE “UNION”

And now some specific suggestions for you, beloved sons and daughters, promoters and associates of the “Latin Union of High Fashions.”

It seems to Us that the word “Latin” itself, with which you have wished to designate your association, callicates not only a geographical region, but above all the ideal aim of your activity. In fact this term “Latin,” which is so rich in deep significance, seems to express, among other things, a lively sensibility and respect for the values of civilization.

It seems to express at the same time a sense of moderation, of balance and concreteness, qualities that are all necessary to the components of your Union. It has given Us pleasure to see that these characteristics have inspired the purpose of your statutes, which you courteously submitted to Us. We notice that these statutes derive from a complete view of the complex problem of fashions, but especially from your firm persuasion of fashion’s moral responsibility.

Your program is, therefore, as wide as the problem itself, since it includes all the determining sectors of fashions: the feminine group directly, with the intention of guiding it in the formation of its tastes and the choice of clothing; the houses which are “creators of fashions”; and the textile industry: that by mutual agreement all might adapt their efforts to the healthy principles of the Union. And since your Union is composed of organizations that are not mere spectators but participators—We might say actors in the theater of fashions—its program also deals with the economic aspect of fashions, rendered more difficult now by forthcoming changes in production and by the unification of the European markets.

The formation of taste

One of the indispensable conditions for achieving the aims of your Union lies in the formation of sound taste in the public. This is indeed a difficult task, opposed at times by premeditated design, and it requires of you much intelligence, great tact, and patience. In spite of everything, face it with a fearless spirit. You are certain of finding strong allies, first of all, among the excellent Christian families which are still to be found in great numbers in your own native land.

It is clear that your action in this direction must be aimed mainly at winning over to your cause those who control

public opinion through the press and other information media. People wish to be guided in style more than in any other activity. Not that they lack a critical sense in matters of aesthetics or of propriety, but, at times too docile and at other times too lazy to make use of this faculty, they accept the first thing that is offered to them and only later become aware of how mediocre or unbecoming certain fashions are.

It is necessary therefore that your action should be timely. Among those, furthermore, who at the present time are guiding with great effectiveness the tastes of the public, celebrities, especially in the world of the theater and films, occupy a pre-eminent position. In the same measure that their responsibility is grave, so will your action be fruitful wherever you can succeed in bringing over at least a few of these to the good cause.

Aesthetic and moral problems

A distinguishing mark of your Union seems to lie in the careful study of the aesthetic and moral problems of fashions, conducted in periodic meetings, such as the present congress, that have an ever more international character, persuaded as you are that the fashions of the future will have a unified character in the individual continents. Employ yourselves, therefore, to bring into these congresses the Christian contribution of your intelligence and skill, with such persuasive wisdom that no one will be able to suspect you of prejudice in your own personal interest or of the weakness of compromise.

The sound consistency of your principles will be put to the test by the so-called modern spirit, which cannot bear hindrance. And it will be tried by the same indifference of many toward the moral consideration of styles. The most insidious of sophisms are usually repeated to justify immodesty and seem to be the same everywhere. One of these resurrects the ancient saying *ab assuetis non fit passio* (“The passions are not aroused by things we are accustomed to”) in order to brand as old-fashioned the rebellion of honest people against fashions which are too bold. Must it perhaps be shown how out of place the ancient saying is in such questions?

When We spoke of the absolute limits to be defended in the relativism of style, We mentioned the unfounded character of another fallacious opinion according to which modesty is no longer appropriate in the contemporary era which has now become free of all useless and ruinous scruples.

It can certainly be conceded that there are different degrees of public morality according to the times, the nature, and the conditions of the civilization of individual peoples. But this does not invalidate the obligation to strive for the ideal of perfection and is not a sufficient reason to renounce the high degree of morality that has been achieved, and which manifests itself precisely in the great sensitivity with which consciences regard evil and its snares.

A mortal combat

May your Union, therefore, pledge itself to this fight, which aims at insuring an ever higher degree of morality, worthy of its Christian traditions, in the public customs of your nation. It is not by chance that your work, which strives to introduce moral styles, is called a “battle.” Every other enterprise which tries to return to the spirit its domination over matter, meets with battle in the same way.

Considering each battle in particular, one can see that they are individual and significant episodes in the bitter and eternal struggle that everyone who is called to the freedom of the Spirit of God must endure in this life. The Apostle of the Gentiles described with inspired accuracy the front lines and opposing forces of this combat: “For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that you do not what you would” (Gal. 5, 17). Listing the works of the flesh in a sad inventory of the bequest of original sin, he included among them impurity, to which he opposed modesty as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Busy yourselves generously and with confidence, without ever allowing yourselves to be ensnared by that timidity which made the numerically small but heroic armies of the great Judas Machabeus say: “How shall we, being few, be able to fight against so great a multitude?” (I Mac. 3, 17). May the same answer given by the great champion of God and of the fatherland encourage you: “For the success of war is not in the multitude of the army, but strength cometh from heaven” (Ibid., 19).

With this heavenly assurance in mind We take leave of you, beloved sons and daughters. And We raise Our supplications to the Omnipotent that He might deign to bestow His assistance upon your Union, and His graces upon

each one of you, your families, and, in particular upon the humble working men and women of fashions. As a token of these favors which We wish you, We heartily impart to you Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.

This address was delivered to an international congress of the Latin Union for High Fashion, an organization recently established in Rome to develop European fashions for a common world-market. This is the lengthiest discussion any Pope has given to the moral problems raised by dress and fashions.

“Fashions”

It is often said almost with passive resignation that fashions reflect the customs of a people. But it would be more exact and much more useful to say that they express the decision and moral direction that a nation intends to take: either to be shipwrecked in licentiousness or maintain itself at the level to which it has been raised by religion and civilization. — Pius XII
