

MORALITY

By Rev. Clement Crock

§I. THE VIRTUES OF CHASTITY, PURITY, MODESTY AND VIRGINITY

“Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God” (Matt., v. 8). —“I beseech you therefore, brethren, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service” (Rom., xii. 1).

Of all the disquieting moments human flesh is heir to, my friends, there is nothing that seems to disturb the conscience of us mortals more than the sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Due to ignorance or misinformation many people worry when there is no cause for worry. Others again do not worry when they should, and arouse their dormant conscience from slumber. Those who worry unnecessarily are usually those who confuse concupiscence and temptation with sin itself. Temptation in itself is no sin. Since the fall of Adam man is prone to evil. Concupiscence is but the aftermath of original sin.

Therefore, everybody should remember this: concupiscence in itself, like temptation, is not a sin. It is the mere tendency, the inclination, to sin. St. Paul speaks of this in his own members. He calls it a “sting of the flesh,” which warreth against the spirit and keepeth a man humble. “And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me,” he says, “there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And He said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee’” (II Cor., xii. 7-9). It is only when this concupiscence is given free rein and left uncontrolled that it becomes sinful. It is then called the *sin of lust*. But when we retain control, or self-mastery, over our thoughts, words, and actions, we possess the beautiful virtue known as *chastity*.

Today, we shall first of all consider this key virtue, chastity, which is so necessary to make our daily conduct—our every thought, word and deed—pleasing to and meritorious before God.

Meaning of Chastity—Most people have heard the words, chastity, purity, modesty, virginity and continency; but few Catholics even know the correct meaning of all these terms. Let us define them briefly:

(a) *Chastity or purity* is a moral virtue or habit, which excludes or moderates the inordinate appetite of venereal pleasures, or concupiscence, according to the norm of right reason. Just as temperance and sobriety determine the proper use of food or drink, so chastity determines the proper control of our lower appetites.

(b) Modesty differs again from chastity or purity. Modesty is that blush, that shame, that instinct, to be found in all people who are not utterly depraved, which prompts them to abstain from improper words or actions, from unbecoming dress or conduct, to repress the curiosity of the eyes and the other senses, lest their chastity be violated. In German it is called “Schamgefühl,” the nearest to which is our word “shamefulness.” For example, after their sin of disobedience, Adam and Eve realized for the first time that they were without clothes. Their instinct of modesty was awakened.

We might call modesty, therefore, the forerunner, the companion, the guardian, the teacher and protector, or the outpost of chastity. Whatever, then, is against chastity or purity, is also against modesty; but not vice versa.

(c) Lastly, chastity differs from continency. Although continency is ordinarily understood to mean only the restraint of all venereal appetites (because these are the hardest and most necessary to bring under control), in reality continency is that virtue by which we bridle all concupiscence and every other immoderation, even in eating and drinking or whatever it be.

Under the word chastity, we should also mention the terms of “virginity, virginal chastity,” and “conjugal chastity.” (i) Conjugal chastity avoids every thought, word, or deed that is not permitted in holy wedlock. It is that virtue which makes every Christian home so lovely, so happy, so sweet; and manifests itself so beautifully on the mellowed and chaste countenance of married people, who possess this domestic tranquillity. (2) Virginal chastity, again, differs from virginity. Virginal chastity restrains from all forbidden sensual pleasures. It is the virtue so highly cherished by every good man and woman outside of holy wedlock. (3) Virginity, on the other hand, is that special jewel, that unspotted lily, that immaculate white garment, possessed by every man or woman who through life has preserved his or her body inviolate, unspotted by any willful Sin against holy purity.

Highly Cherished Virtue.—This, then, my friends, gives us a comprehensive idea of the virtue of chastity, no matter under what term we speak of it, be it purity, modesty, continency, virginity, and so on. To learn how dear to the pure Heart of Jesus this virtue is, especially in the lives of the young people, we need but to turn to Christ's associates in His own early childhood. Both in childhood and adolescence Jesus associated Himself mainly with those whom He knew to be absolutely pure and beyond suspicion. His Mother was the spotless and most pure Virgin, even in her divine motherhood. His foster-father, St. Joseph, was and remained a virgin. His precursor, St. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for His coming, was and remained a virgin. His favorite Apostle was the virgin John, who later took care of His Virgin Mother, Mary.

His enemies accused Jesus of being a law-breaker; but He would never permit even His enemies to accuse Him of violating the virtue of chastity. Why this insistence on holy virginity, holy purity, in His own behalf and for His intimate companions in the very beginning of His life? Undoubtedly, to impress upon all His followers the high value and urgent necessity of the virtue of chastity, particularly in the beginning of our career on earth. For Jesus knew that, once self-mastery has been acquired, all other virtues follow readily; and with them peace of heart and mind, which are the safe anchors for temporal and spiritual happiness. This Jesus confirmed once more in His Sermon on the Mount, when He addressed the multitude, saying "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt., v. 8).

St. Anthony, who loved this virtue so dearly, was visibly rewarded one day when the Blessed Mother herself presented her Divine Infant into his arms. St. Agnes, Philomena, Cecilia, Lucy—all young girls—offered their lives in martyrdom rather than violate this holy virtue. In the Lives of other Martyrs we read that not only brutal men, but even savage beasts maddened with hunger and turned loose upon the helpless Christians who awaited their martyrdom in the arena, lost their ferocity, and were subdued unto gentleness and meekness by the sight of pure and innocent manhood and maidenhood.

Even the ancient pagan Greeks and Romans, who were noted for their lust, had their vestal virgins in testimony of the human instinct to reverence and prize whatever makes for purity and chastity. So great was their reverence for these vestal virgins, even though only outwardly so, that if a conquering hero returning from glorious victories was having a triumphal procession through the streets of the city and a vestal virgin came his way, the procession was halted in reverence to her, and the conqueror paid her public homage.

Considered even from a merely natural standpoint, it is far sweeter and more profitable to lead a chaste life than to be in the thralls of impurity. How often do we not read of a young man or woman committing suicide, after having lead an immoral life! But you never read of a young person ending his or her life through misery of mind and wretchedness of heart brought on through the practice of purity and self-control. Hence, for physiological and psychic reasons alone, a sensible young person will keep the mind clean, the heart pure, and the imagination away, as much as possible, from matters of sex.

Many non-Catholics, who have not the religious training that we have, from a mere interest in their personal comfort and wellbeing, from an instinctive appreciation of modesty, and as a strong factor towards self-control and self-possession and towards ensuring future happiness, ease and contentment, aim to keep their minds pure and their hearts chaste. Their native good sense tells them that this cannot be attained, except through a rigid check, a severe and unrelenting guard, over their sensuous leanings and sexual appetites. In consideration of all these motives, both from a natural and supernatural standpoint, the author of the Book of Wisdom (iv. 1-2) could rightfully cry out: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."

Virginal Chastity Regained.—Many of my listeners are doing so perhaps with a heavy heart. Already, their many past transgressions against this virtue may lead them to cry out with St. Paul: "Unhappy man (or woman) that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom., vii. 24). In consequence, there may be such who are wondering if, through their past lapses, they have forfeited the dignity and honor of virginal chastity forever; or if lost, can it ever be recovered somehow? And if so, in what manner?

The answer is contained in the same Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom., vii. 25). It is true that the Church has made no explicit pronouncement upon this point. But St.

Augustine, one of the greatest Doctors of the Church who in his youth and before his conversion had been guilty of shameful excesses of impurity, says a comforting word, when he declares, that “virginity, which has been lost, may be recovered by a long practice of chastity” (see Meyer’s “Youth’s Pathfinder,” p. 122). Added strength to this view of St. Augustine is found in the life of St. Margaret of Cortona. She is known as the St. Mary Magdalen of the Order of St. Francis. After her conversion from a scandalous life of immorality, Our Lord drew her closer and closer to Himself by the bonds of divine love. The stronger their holy friendship and union grew, the more tender and endearing were the names with which Jesus addressed Margaret. At first He called her His “dear little sheep,” which He had found again. Then, in loving gradation He called her His “child, His daughter, His beloved, and finally, His spouse,” assuring her at the same time that her place in Heaven would be among the virgins, whose glory she would share. No matter what be the theological value or non-value of this legend, there is at least a great deal of real comfort and genuine encouragement here for every God-loving soul who has been unfortunate after the manner of St. Margaret, but who, like her, wants to give whatever remains of her love and devotion entirely and forever to Jesus, the pure Lover of penitents, as well as of innocent virgins. In addition to St. Margaret and St. Augustine, there is another consoling fact. It is this: beneath the Cross of Jesus, as He was dying upon it, as His Precious Blood oozed forth from His sacred members, not only was Mary the spotless one, but immediately next to her stood also Mary, the penitent one. Following, therefore, the example of Christ, no position or vocation in the Church established by the same forgiving Lord should be closed to a repentant soul, be it honorable wedlock, or holy priesthood—just as St. Augustine was not barred from the priesthood, nor St. Margaret of Cortona from a religious sisterhood.

Conclusion: Never to Have Sinned Is Sweetest.—But sweet as is the forgiveness of sin on the part of God after the fall, the consciousness of never having seriously violated holy chastity and virginity, thanks to the grace of God, is a joy infinitely more soothing and delicious. Mary Magdalen was indeed happy at having been pardoned by Jesus after her fall. But Mary, the Mother of Jesus, must have been unspeakably more happy for never having sullied her innocence and purity with the least shadow of guilt.

But if it is too late for us to be happy after the manner of Mary Immaculate, then we must strive earnestly to be happy after the manner of Mary, the Penitent. If our innocence is still unsullied, then let our one ambition in life be to merit the eulogy pronounced by God upon Mary, namely: “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee” (Cant., iv. 7). At all events, either for innocence preserved or for innocence regained through penance, let us cultivate an ardent love and tender devotion to Mary, who invites all sincere lovers of purity, saying: “Come to me, all ye that desire me. I am the Mother of fair love.... In me is all grace,... all hope of life, and of virtue” (Ecclus., xxiv. 24 sq.). Amen.

§II. THE SIN OF LUST

“Know ye this and understand, that no fornicator nor unclean person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph., v. 5).

From the moment of our conception, my friends, we have the germ of good and evil implanted within us. When we attain the use of reason, the battles of life begin. From then on until our dying day there is a dual struggle going on within our being, each inclination striving to gain the mastery over us. The one aims at the higher, the nobler things of life—the chaste, the pure, and the beautiful. Opposed to this is that other power which Sacred Scripture calls “the beast” the animal nature within us, ever-striving to overpower our spiritual nature. This lower element of our nature constantly tends to the unholy things of life, and craves to satisfy those baser appetites.

These struggles become more violent as we grow into adolescence until the closing years of our teens, especially. Usually, after the age of twenty or thereabouts, one or the other of these dual powers will predominate. The stronger of the two will determine most of our thoughts, words and actions thereafter. Should the evil predominate, only a miracle of God’s grace can liberate us from its meshes. Yes, any person so ensnared can truly cry out with St. Paul: “O unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ, our Lord” (Rom., vii. 24 sq.).

Proposition.—Under the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, we call this dual struggle within us between the good or bad, virtue or vice. The virtue we call chastity, the vice we call lust. In our previous sermon we have already

considered the virtue of chastity under its different aspects. Today we turn to the unpleasant phase of this dual struggle. In other sermons to follow we shall consider the sins of the flesh and the occasions thereof, more in detail; but today we will speak of them under the one common term, namely, lust.

Definition.—What do we mean by the word, lust? It is defined as an inordinate, unnatural love of the pleasures of the flesh and of the senses. Contrary to the opinions of some, not all pleasures of the senses are forbidden. Divine Providence has prepared many pure and innocent pleasures for us—pleasures that are necessary to entertain us, to repair our strength, to preserve our health, to sustain us in our weakness, and to relieve our ills. For example, we have the sensible pleasure that goes with well-prepared food or drink; the sweetness of sleep in a cozy bed; the exhilarating sensation after a good bath; the beautiful aspects which nature and God’s creatures present to our eyes; the sweet and harmonious strains of music, etc. Any such pleasures, when they are not excessive and are enjoyed with a proper motive, are praiseworthy and legitimate.

But it is different with the pleasures of the flesh and of the senses, in relation to the organs of sex, when they are contrary to the purpose for which God created them. We then call these pleasures “sins of the sense,” or sensuality. There are other terms by which we designate these sins, due to their peculiar malice, with which all intelligent Catholics should be familiar. There is, for example, the sin of immodesty, the sin of impurity. (a) If the complete sexual satisfaction is sought by oneself alone, it is called self-abuse. (b) If it is an intercourse of sexes between single or celibate people, it is called fornication. (c) If one or both are married, the sin is called adultery. (d) If they are closely related, though not married to each other, it is incest. (e) Unnatural sexual relation between persons of the same sex, or of the opposite sex, is called sodomy—after the biblical city of Sodom, which was destroyed by fire and brimstone on account of these unnatural sins. (f) Finally, sexual transgression with an animal is called bestiality. But all these sins, by whatever name you call them, are classified under the one term, lust, of which Holy Scripture says “that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God” (Gal., v. 21).

Nature and Gravity of Lust.—St. Jerome and St. Alphonsus give it as their opinion that nine out of every ten persons in hell owe their damnation to the sins of lust. Be that as it may, it seems probable that about that proportion of sacrilegious confessions are reducible to the sins of the flesh—either on account of lack of proper contrition or on account of failure to confess sins properly through false shame or pride. The reason why so many are lost on account of this sin, is because this sin so completely overpowers its victim that the unfortunate soul clings to its charms and pleasures to the last. Thus, dying unrepentant, it becomes for him the unpardonable sin.

The Dignity of Man.—It is only after we understand the dignity of man that we realize fully the gravity of these sins. (1) “We are, first of all, creatures made to the image and likeness of God, endowed with understanding and free will. Through Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, and the other Sacraments, our bodies, says St. Paul (I Con, vi. 15), become “members of Christ,” nay, “one with Christ.” “Know you not,” says St. Paul (I Con, iii. 16—sq.), “that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are.” This body is one day to arise again from the grave, either in glory or in shame. What, therefore, can be more degrading, more debasing, than to pollute this body with the sins of lust and sensuality?

What would you say if a man should come here before God’s sanctuary and profane this temple with shameful crimes and abuses? But what of these crimes in comparison to those who profane the living temples of the Holy Ghost—their bodies, the dwelling places of their souls for whom Christ shed His Precious Blood, and died the ignominious death on the Cross?

(2) Secondly, to ascertain how displeasing to God the sins of lust are, we need but to look at the terrible punishments He has sent to those who have committed this sin. Was it not this vice that caused the deluge? Was it not the sins of lust that brought down fire and brimstone upon the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed all the inhabitants thereof? Was it not lust that caused the death, through the sword of Phinees, of 24,000 Israelites in one day, that effected the extermination of almost the entire tribe of Benjamin, and which drew so many evils upon the house of David (Num., xxv. 6-9)?

In our own day, whence arise the many plagues and misfortunes that afflict us? Pestilences and contagious diseases; so many sudden deaths, bloody wars, tempests and storms, floods and drought; so many disasters, as fires

and earthquakes, which ravage cities and provinces. In all of these can be seen the hand of an angry God, who strikes and chastises us. “Believe me,” says St. Thomas of Villanova, “they are also in punishment of intemperance and the frightful lust of mankind.” God’s mills grind slowly, but surely; and severe chastisements of this nature God employs only as a last resort, in order to draw His wayward children from evil and sin.

Fatal Consequences to the Individual.—Furthermore, the individual addicted to the sin of lust brings both spiritual and physical ruin upon himself. I quote from a doctor of authority: “The entire nervous system, the emotional and religious life become deranged. The body loses its vigor and resistive powers, while the mind forfeits its robustness, alertness and resourcefulness. Many a youthful and beautiful complexion, florid appearance, sprightly gait, graceful carriage, and easy manner, are hopelessly ruined by this unnatural practice; many a brilliant mind is shorn of its power of initiative, spirit of enterprise, glow of originality, fire of enthusiasm, by the same suicidal habits. It sickens the imagination, deadens the emotions, and brings on depression of spirits, melancholy, despondency and despair, and extinguishes every spark of religious enthusiasm.” There is no crime too low to which a man of lust will not stoop. Hardly had the wise Solomon become unchaste, when he offered incense to idols and became an apostate. King David, from an adulterer, became a homicide. What about Martin Luther, King Henry VIII of England, and Napoleon of France? It was lust that started them all on their career of apostasy, infidelity, murder and ruin. Why so many infidels in the world today, who mock everything holy, everything pure, if not because they are steeped in the sins of lust? O frightful plague of religion, of society, of so many individuals!

Conclusion.—Realizing the evil consequences, may I exhort you to fly from and to detest every avenue of approach to this sin? Every pastor knows, and God knows, the many temptations that are flaunted before us at every turn in the world today. For this reason, holy Mother Church is most generous in dispensing the graces of God to fortify us from being drawn into this maelstrom of lust which surrounds us on every side. In turn, there is something refreshing, amidst the present whirlpool of filth, to see those untold numbers of beautiful souls, young men and women as well as elders, in every walk of life, who in spite of evil surroundings still retain the beautiful virtue of purity and chastity.

These realize that we are never sure from an unexpected attack. Hence they combat these powers of evil by practising the virtue opposed to lust, namely, chastity—that most beautiful of all virtues, the flower of good morals, the honor of the body, the glory of both sexes, the foundation of all sanctity. Chastity elevates man above the angels, and renders him, so to say, similar to God. Let us pray often to God for this holy virtue; then rest assured that He will never refuse us the graces necessary to fulfill what He commands. Fortified thus, we can say with St. Paul: “I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.” Amen.

§III. OCCASIONS OF SINS OF LUST: THOUGHTS AND LOOKS

(Newspapers, Pictures, Movies, etc.)

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt., xii. 34).—“I fear lest, as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted, and fall from the simplicity which is in Christ” (II Cor., xi. 3).

Man, my friends, is made up of body and soul. Unlike all other creatures, he is endowed with intellect and free will. Through his soul, he becomes reasonable and free, master of his own actions.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul. (Wm. E. Hanley).

Yes, endowed with intellect, immortal and allied to the Angels is man! For, as the Psalmist declares: “Thou hast made him a little less than the Angels.” On the other hand, through his body, man is related to inferior creatures, and even to the very dust of the earth. Hence these two elements, the material and the spiritual, body and soul united, forms man. But there must be one head, one master, that must dominate and rule. Which shall it be? You will say that it is the soul and reason, of course. And what is to be the subject of this rule? You answer that it is the body. It is the body that must obey.

But now take a glance at those steeped in lust and impurity. In such, the soul is degraded to the position of a servant and slave of the body and of the flesh. The right order is inverted. Passion controls, and reason obeys. To avoid this inverse order in our lives, of the body domineering over the soul, God has given us the Sixth and Ninth Commandments as guides. In these He forbids not only the sinful act itself, but also all those factors that may lead up to the sinful act, or prepare the way for it. The latter group, we shall begin to consider today. We may call them the avenues of the enemy's approach, or the occasions for the sins of impurity. Our Catechism groups them under the following heads, namely: thoughts, desires, looks, words, and deeds. Today we shall take up thoughts, desires and looks.

Thoughts and Desires.—Our enemy's first avenue of approach is through the intellect, by placing before us thoughts and images against holy purity. These thoughts and images, however bad they may be, are not sinful if not followed by bad and wilfully entertained desires. St. Paul and others of the greatest Saints had violent temptations of this nature.

These thoughts may even be accompanied by a certain sensation of pleasure without becoming sinful. Concupiscence is an effect of original sin; and it is in us, in spite of ourselves. But it is in our power not to give consent, either to the thought or to the sensation of pleasure. It is in our power to reject both as soon as we are conscious of them. In case we do, these thoughts are not only not sinful, but may be even meritorious. Such, for example, are the thoughts that so frequently confront us, like a mist, like a cloud, passing over a clear sky.

Therefore, before we should be disturbed over evil thoughts or desires, we must be certain of three things: (a) the thought or image must be intrinsically immodest or impure; (b) we must be conscious of its presence and take pleasure therein; (c) we must give our free consent to the thought or pleasure. If one or other of these conditions is missing, there can be no grievous sin. But when all three conditions are present, then our thoughts are sinful, and very often grievously sinful. For, says Christ, such a one has already committed the sin "in his heart." This important fact is frequently overlooked, when people examine their conscience for confession and neglect to mention the sin of thought.

Sins of Looks.—Next to our thought, come our sight and hearing and our other senses. Our eyes are frequently called the "mirror of the soul." For, it is through the eyes that objects from without are mirrored in our minds. Also our eyes may reveal to others the thoughts that are entertained within the mind. Frequently, without a warning, our eyes may fall upon an object that is indecent. If we immediately turn away from that object, we may incur no guilt. Even willful looks of curiosity may not in themselves be sinful; but they readily expose one to the danger of sin. For example, a curious and indiscreet look led David to fall (II Kings, xi. 2), the chief of Sichern to outrage Dina, the daughter of Jacob (Gen., xxiv. 2), the two men who threatened to attack the chaste Susanna, and so on. So grievous, therefore, may the sin of sight become that it is equal to the act itself. For, says Our Lord, "whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt., v. 28). And St. Augustine tells us that he knew persons of such eminent sanctity that he would have been less surprised to see an Angel fall than these holy persons; and yet they fell and were lost on account of immodest looks.

Bad Books and Pictures.—Most people's actions, and this is especially true with the young, are mere repetitions of what they see others do. For that reason, there used to be a popular saying: "As the parent, so the child. As the father, so the son. As mother, so the daughter." But in our day, when the fireside is no longer the place where children gather for their recreation and social hours, when the home is rather a place to eat and to sleep in when there is no other place to go, there are other outside influences that are equally as great as, if not greater than, the influence parents exercise in moulding the physical, mental, and moral future of their children. And of all the unbridled commercialized influences that have been instrumental in bringing morality, especially amongst the young, to such a low ebb as we find it today, there is nothing more destructive than the immoral picture magazines, cheap books, and the moving picture traffic, as we find them at present.

To confirm these statements, I visited one of our local "respectable" newsstands, similar to those that are commonly found in every community all over the land. On its shelves I discovered more than 15 pornographic magazines, that reek with lewdness, filth, and immorality from cover to cover. In the same newsstands, you find circulating libraries of books, amongst which cannot be found one out of a hundred that is fit reading matter for

respectable people. And yet, we find that our own Catholic people frequent and patronize these places without qualms of conscience.

Next to these magazines and books, which lead people to sin against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments through the sense of sight, we must mention in particular, our modern moving picture theatres. There, lewdness and sex have been depicted upon the screen in such a manner that the movie colony at Hollywood has fallen into ill-repute the world over. Even the players themselves there fell so low in their morals that one writer describes the colony “as so rotten that it stinks.” In some foreign countries, as in Ireland, as high as 80% of American movies are banned from the country because of their obscenity and indecencies.

As advocates of the Legion of Decency, we do not condemn all movie pictures. Every new discovery in art or science can be used for good or evil. Visual education, too, can be productive of much good. But the evil lies rather in the industry itself, as it has been conducted, than with the individual movie houses. The reason is this: in this country four or six motion picture producing companies control, not only the production, but the distribution of nearly all movie films as well. Through their “block” and “blind” booking, these companies oblige the distributor to buy blindly in a block, without previous inspection and without any right of selection or discretion, whatever is sent to him locally. Those too in control of production are commonly people without any religion, and are frequently opposed to all positive religion.

And lest we be accused of exaggerating the physical, mental and moral harm that moving pictures are doing, let us hear from a nationally recognized authority. His name is Henry James Forman, who published his findings in 1929 after an exhaustive study. He entitled his book: “Our Movie-Mad Children.” He estimates that the movies touch the lives of 250,000,000 people every week. The average weekly attendance in our own country is nearly 80 millions, of which 23 millions are young people under 21 years of age. These 23 millions of children spend at least two hours each week in movie theaters. Twelve millions of these children are 14 years or younger, while 6 millions are seven years or younger. Seventy per cent of the pictures reviewed had for a dominant theme crime, sex love, violence, or horror, with 449 crimes being noted in 115 films taken at random.

Effects on Children.—Here are the results upon the minds and bodies of these children.

(i) First, after attending such pictures, scientific tests were made of a group of children selected at random. The physical disturbances, indicated by increased restlessness in sleep, averaged 4% in girls and 26% in boys; while individuals registered as high as 90%. In all cases, the increased restlessness lingered over a period of several nights, while the normal work at school was disturbed for days after attending the movies.

(2) The *emotional reactions* were found equally as great, registering five times as great in children as in adults. Due to the excitement caused, it was found that the pulse had jumped to 140, instead of the normal pulse rate of 80; in individual cases it reached 192. In the opinion of a noted neurologist, the scenes of horror and tense excitement produce an “effect similar to shell-shock,” which eventually “amounts to an emotional debauch, sowing the seeds for future neuroses and psychoses”—which, in our language, are forms of insanity.

(3) The *moral harm* can scarcely be estimated. The sex appeal; the racketeers, the flaming passion and high-power emotionalism so featured in the movies, may easily nullify every standard of life and conduct set up at home and at school for the child. What a crime this “greed for profits on the bodies and souls of little children!” No wonder the Manchester Guardian of England, referring to our American movies, should suggest: “The United States has agitated against the trade of opiates in the Far East. Would it not be well for her to act as vigorously against the corrupting influence that comes from her own shores (through her moving pictures)? No wonder, then, that according to a conservative estimate (Commonweal, May 5, 1933) there are at least 55 millions of intelligent people in this country, who never go to a movie theatre, because the pictures are “below the level of their intelligence.”

Likewise with reason, therefore, did a group of Catholic women, under the National Council of Catholic Women, condemn the movies in the following caustic terms: “We find the average film reeking with vulgarity, crammed with lewd dialogue, disguised under the term of ‘wisecracking.’ We find immorality exalted; gross spectacles presented in the form of realism. Divorce is upheld as an ideal condition; faithfulness between husband and wife is looked upon as something unusual. Films deal with the lives of morons, rather than of decent men and women. The gangster and horror pictures have given place to the production of the most immoral films of all time.”

The Legion of Decency.—Justified, therefore, was the Catholic Church as a whole, unitedly to organize her “Legion of Decency,” under the capable leadership of the Most Rev. Archbishop McNicholas, O. P. Everyone knows the nature and intent of this organization now. Other religious bodies and organizations have united with us in this campaign. A good beginning has been made, but only a beginning. The producers in Hollywood have promised a reform. There are signs of improvement from that source. But we cannot stop there. This is only one angle of the work of the Legion of Decency. Our campaign must go on until all sources of corrupting influence are checked. We must go on until our news-stands with their bookshelves and magazine counters are cleared of filth and corruption; until our schools, colleges and universities remove from their teaching staffs those whose doctrines are demoralizing and corrupting the minds of their pupils.

This is your work and mission, you fathers and mothers, you older men and women! It is not the youth of the land that is seeking a lower standard of morals than our forbears. It is their elders that are preparing and pointing the way. It is true that thirty years ago the average criminal’s age was forty. Today, those who glut our penal institutions are nearer twenty years of age, or even less. But where must we look for the causes of the youthful criminal? Is it not in our lewd advertisements in our daily newspapers, books and magazines, placed there for profit? In our theatres where crime and racketeering, where vice and immorality, are extolled and virtue flaunted? Is it not in our many schools of learning, where teachers are deliberately misleading youth from the high principles of living, offering in their stead unbridled license as the guiding principle of life, self-indulgence and self-gratification as its goal? These teachers of youth declare, that neither the criminal nor the ordinary citizen has any freedom to determine his own acts but that everything is predestined by his heredity and experiences. What respect can the pupils have for religion, what reverence for authority, human or divine, when their teachers sneer at the “myth and outworn superstition,” as they call it, of a personal God? When the young are told that the Ten Commandments are only a man-made code of etiquette, the crystallized will of a group, and not the revealed law of God, binding upon the conscience of man? Are we forgetting George Washington’s wise warning, that “reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle”? Have we forgotten the proverb: “It is hard to take out of the oak the twist that grew in the sapling”? Here lies our responsibility.

And our cause is not entirely hopeless. There are signs of an awakening in many quarters. “The very presence of a widespread alarm and concern for youth is a sign of health. When public men and women are voicing the need of safeguarding the youth of the land, it is an indication that the Nation is becoming aroused to the evil influences threatening the young. When business and professional men, clergymen, parents and teachers are beginning to give thought to the problem, that fact alone begets the well-founded hope that youth, with ‘its illusions, aspirations, and dreams,’ will come through the perils of the new age victorious” (“Nation’s Youth Problem,” by J. I. Corrigan, S. J.).

If we elders will not protect youth against this modern exhibition of “greed for profits” which preys “on the bodies and souls of little children,” there are signs that youth will soon refuse to follow us. They will set out to chart their own future course. The heart of American youth is still sound. “Our young are fired with stronger idealism, higher ambitions to climb greater heights than ever before. They are charged with a courage to dare, with ambition to achieve, with nobility to strive, with inspiration to win, what their forefathers could not achieve.” What hopes for America, with her 40 and more millions of children and adolescents! “What a picture they make as they troop off to school, day after day, 231/2 millions strong to our elementary schools, 5 millions to our high schools, and 1 million to our colleges and universities.” There is yet hope for the future—if not in our elders, then in our youth. We still retain confidence in modern youth, whose heart and mind are moulded after God’s own plan. In the words of the poet, let us close with a tribute to youth:

How beautiful is youth! How bright its gleams,
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Books of beginnings, story without end,
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!

All possibilities are in its hands,
No danger daunts it, and no foe withstands;

In its sublime audacity of faith,
“Be thou removed,” it to the mountain saith.
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,
Ascends the ladder, leaning on the cloud.
Amen.

§IV. OCCASIONS OF SINS OF LUST: WORDS AND ACTIONS

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt., xii. 34).—*“Uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints”* (Eph., v. 3).

Everything that is necessary for the proper care of the body, so that it remain clean and healthy, is allowed, and is no sin. Everything that is done for wicked pleasure, is forbidden, and is a sin; be it in thought or desire, in looks, in words, or in action. These are mostly known as the sins of the senses—the “avenues of approach,” as we called them in our last discourse, or the occasions for sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. First of all, since the soul or mind should control the actions of the body in rational creatures, the evil one begins by directing his attack upon our thought-life. Evil thoughts may arise like a sudden mist, and try to disturb us. But, as we said, these thoughts are not sinful unless they are wilfully entertained. And by prayer and determination of will we can control these thoughts and dispel them before they become sinful.

Next to thought, Satan plans his approach through the eyes. Jeremias calls the eyes the “windows through which death enters.” Salvian calls them the “mines of the soul.” For, as the strongest rocks and walls are blasted by mines, so, by fixing the eyes upon dangerous objects, the soul is instantly confronted with impure thoughts and desires that cause the destruction of holy virtue. St. Bernard, therefore, says: “A true sign of chastity is caution in looks, and he who is dissolute in looks, you must conclude, is also unchaste.”

Proposition.—From sinful objects or looks follow evil thoughts and desires; and from these proceed also evil words and actions. For, as St. Matthew wistfully says: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt., xii. 34). What these sinful words and actions are in relation to chastity, we shall discuss today.

Immodest Words.—St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 3) tells us: “Uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints.” Elsewhere (1 Cor. xv. 33), he further warns: “Evil companionships (communications) corrupt good morals.” For, once the eye has grown evil and thoughts become corrupt, the sense of speech is not slow to express in words what is in the minds of people with whom we associate. Who has not heard the saying: “Like begets like”? Or: “Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are.” In other words, he that sees alike, will think alike; and they that think alike, will speak alike; and from thinking and speaking there is but one step to doing alike.

No one knows human nature better than Jesus, our Saviour, knew it. And for the question under discussion He left us the parable of the prodigal son. This wayward son had become impregnated with evil thoughts and desires through bad companionship. Through his conversation with others he had heard of the liberties he might enjoy away from home. His home surroundings became distasteful, and he became restless. He asked his father for his inheritance—something he was not entitled to until after his father’s death. “He went abroad,” says Scripture, “and wasted his substance, living riotously” (Luke, xv. 13). Upon his return, his brother states it more explicitly, by saying he “devoured his substance with harlots” (ibid., 30).

Here Our Lord points out every step that is taken by one who falls into grievous sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. Had this young man not listened to the evil conversation of his wicked and corrupt companions with whom he associated, his downfall would have been averted. And yet, there are those who think lightly of the immodest conversation that is carried on daily by and around them. You frequently hear them say: “Oh, we don’t mean any harm by it. It is just in fun.” But not all those who hear that filthy talk, will go away and believe “it was all in fun.” In their quiet moments, the things they have heard will recur again and again to their minds. It becomes a scandal to them; and like the prodigal son, it may be the beginning of a coming downfall, a life of sin. Hence, without making any distinction, whether any harm is meant or not, Sacred Scripture, through the mouth of the Apostle, forbids

all immodest language, saying: "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth" (Eph., iv. 29). "Put away filthy speech out of your mouth" (Col., iii. 8).

Bad Actions.—Speak no evil, do no evil! Or the reverse: speak about immodest things, and there is but one step to doing impure things! This brings us to another question which a Catholic priest would rather not speak about, but would prefer to pass over unnoticed. But were I, from false delicacy, to leave some of you entrusted to my care in dangerous ignorance of or in doubt concerning certain sinful acts, I might incur blame for serious injury to your souls and one day hear from God the awful sentence: "If thou dost not announce My word to man and make it known, I will require his blood (his soul) at thy hand" (Ezech., iii. 18).

First of all, we must proceed to answer some of our objectors, who do not agree with us on what we call forbidden or sinful actions.

Objection 1—"Why," they say, "insist upon an impossibility? Nobody keeps quite chaste. You don't understand what life is, until you've tasted life. Give me a man who has had experience, and then he can talk, if he wants."

Answer.—As to the impossibility, we know that there is a large group of clean men and women composed of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, who conduct themselves quite as they should. They come to marriage, or even live out their whole life of single blessedness, without their purity ever losing its lustre. There is still another group larger than the first, who, either through ignorance or through human frailty, have done wrong once perhaps, but never again. These quickly regain their friendship with God, and lead pure and noble lives the rest of their days.

Again, it is quite true that keeping oneself chaste involves the sacrifice of one experience, but it means the gaining of a *better experience*. For example, if I never had smallpox, I miss the experience of the infection of smallpox. Yet, is it not better to have experienced good health without the experience and marks of smallpox? Hence, you may answer the impure: "I agree that I have sacrificed one experience; but I have also gained one. And so have you. But the one I have gained is by far better than the one you have had. I have got nearer to true manhood, you nearer to animalhood."

Objection 2—Another fallacy you often hear is this: "A certain amount of indulgence is good for you. It quiets your nerves." In reply we say: go and ask any reputable doctor whether it "is good for you." He will tell you that our social diseases and nervous exhaustion, about which we hear a great deal today, are due to sexual debauchery. As to "quieting your nerves," he will tell you that just the contrary is true. Why does every instructor for prize fights and athletics advocate the very opposite, namely, complete abstinence? The fact of the matter is that sexual indulgence is a short, acute shock to the nerves, leaving its scars and searing the conscience. But virtue's experience "is like a glow, not a flash; an experience of happiness, not of mere pleasure."

In every age there have been those who held that ever so often it was good, nay, even necessary, to ease one's concupiscence, either through pollution, self-abuse, or intercourse with others. This is one of the trump charges which the lecherous and impure love to make, especially against the chastity of priests and Sisters.

Here is a story to the point. A certain anti-Catholic speaker was making these very charges against priests and Sisters. Amongst other charges he made this statement: "It is impossible for any man to remain pure for six months at a time." A man in the audience arose, and asked the speaker this question: "You are a married man with a family, are you not?" "Yes," was the speaker's reply. "You just told us you recently spent nine months abroad on business, while your family was here at home, did you not?" "Yes," was again the reply. "Then," said the man in the audience, "I pity your wife and your children." The audience caught the point, and booed the speaker from the platform.

These people deny the possibility or the advisability of continency. Do you know the meaning of that word? Continency means the positive abstention from all carnal pleasures under all circumstances. This does not include those nocturnal or periodical emissions, which are natural for a healthy, normal person of either sex. We affirm that physicians are in almost unanimous agreement with the statement of Dr. Henry Stanton, a recognized authority, who says: "Strict continence is neither injurious to health, nor does it produce impotence [as some contend]. While self-denial is difficult, since the promptings of nature often seem imperious, it is not impossible. It is certain that no youth will suffer physically by remaining sexually pure. The demands which occur during adolescence are mainly abnormal, due to the excitements of an over-stimulating diet, pornographic literature and art, and the temptations of impure association." Of our own strength, yes, it might be physically impossible. But, says Our Lord "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor., xii. 9). "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ, Our Lord" (Rom., vii. 25). And so counsels the Wise

Man: “As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, I went to the Lord, and besought Him with my whole heart” (Wis., viii. 21). Prayer, then, gives us the added strength needed.

Objection 3.—But our adversaries are persistent. Their next reply is: “Well, after all, these actions are but natural.” But this is only a half-truth, and that is why it sounds so plausible. In man, endowed with intellect and freewill, such actions uncontrolled are only partly natural. They correspond to instinct, which we have in common with the animal, the brute. But if they are duly controlled and properly governed by reason, they are fully natural. For actions through instinct go all the way in an animal, but only part of the way in man. Hence, to follow instinct and not reason would be to cut away the very part that makes man human—that which makes our acts human acts. Therefore, continency, or control of sensual appetites by reason and instinct combined, is natural, and self-indulgence is not.

Even aside from a supernatural standpoint, let us not be misled by these false prophets of self-indulgence. Listen to this remarkable document. In accordance with the best medical opinion of the world, the following Bulletin (known as “General Headquarters Bulletin, No. 54”) was issued from the American Army Staff in France, on August 7, 1918: “Sexual continence is the plain duty of members of the American Expeditionary Forces, both for the vigorous conduct of the war, and for the clean health of the American people after the war. Sexual intercourse is not necessary for good health, and complete continence is wholly possible.... Commanding officers will urge continence on all men of their commands, as their duty as soldiers, and the best training for the enforced sexual abstinence at the front. Instruction, work, drill, athletics, and amusements will be used to the fullest extent in furthering the practice of continence. By command of General Pershing. Official: Signed: Robert C. Davis, Adjutant General, James W. McAndrew, Chief of Staff.”

Finally, if “it is but natural,” then why the feeling of remorse that follows every abnormal sensual satisfaction? Why call it a temptation or sin at all, if it is but natural? Why call “each maid a heroine, and each man a friend,” who overcomes that evil propensity, if it is but natural? Why, if the opposite is but natural, does Tennyson cry out in Sir Galahad:

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.

Nay, rather “blessed is the man that endureth temptation,” says St. James, “for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life.” Amen.

§V. OCCASIONS OF SINS OF LUST: DRESS AND DANCING.

“Evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Cor., XV. 33)

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 (iii. 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., iii. 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., ii. 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" (I Pet., iii. 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, xv. 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, 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-dornment, 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 practised 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 thou perish by the force of her charms” (Ecclus., ix. 4). And even though we sin at such dances only in thought, St. Paul tells us that “he that lusteth after her in his mind, has already committed the sin before God.”

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 represents the public dance hall as a “temple of Venus, or a sink of obscenity.”

St. Ambrose calls them “a choir of iniquity, the rock of innocence, the grave of shame.” And St. Charles Borromeo 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.

Conclusion.—With such an array of indictments, then, surely no normal-minded Catholic or Christian can refrain from vigorously censoring 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 loveth danger shall perish in it” (Eccles., iii. 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.' "

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*).

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, 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 Saviour replies in the words He addressed to St. Paul, namely: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” 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 and 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., xxxix. 9). And with St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." Amen.

§VII. SAFEGUARDS TO HOLY PURITY: MEANS OF PRESERVING IT.

"Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall" (1 Cor., x. 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. 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” (EccIus., iii. 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 (viii. 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 thy protection was left unaided,” etc. Then again, most of you know this little prayer: “O Mary, my Queen and my Mother, remember I am thine own. Keep me and guard me as thy property and possession. To thee, 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 lustre, 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,
Tho' 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 triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wis., iv. i sq.). 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, i. 15).

On April 10, 1907, Pope 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., p. 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 asking without blush or shame: "Where do babies come from?" Imagine the statement of Miss Tracy, a policewoman of Worcester, Mass. (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.' "

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 (Fr. Felix Kirsch, "Education to Purity," p. 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 Saviour. 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” (11 Mach., vii. 22 sq.). Amen.

Nihil Obstat:

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