

warn the faithful against being easily led astray by them."

The human body is "God's masterpiece in the visible world"; Jesus elevated the human body "to the rank of a temple and an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and as such must be respected."

Certain fashions and styles "create confusion in well-ordered minds and can even be an incentive to evil." It is possible to declare when the "limits of normal decency" have been violated. This sense of decency sounds an alarm when immodesty, seduction, lust, outrageous luxury or "idolatry of matter"... exists.

What the Holy Father said in 1957 is still pertinent: ". . . no matter how broad and changeable the relative morals of styles may be, there is always an absolute norm to be kept after having heard the admonition of conscience warning against approaching danger; style must never be a proximate occasion of sin."

MARYLIKE STANDARDS OF MODESTY IN DRESS

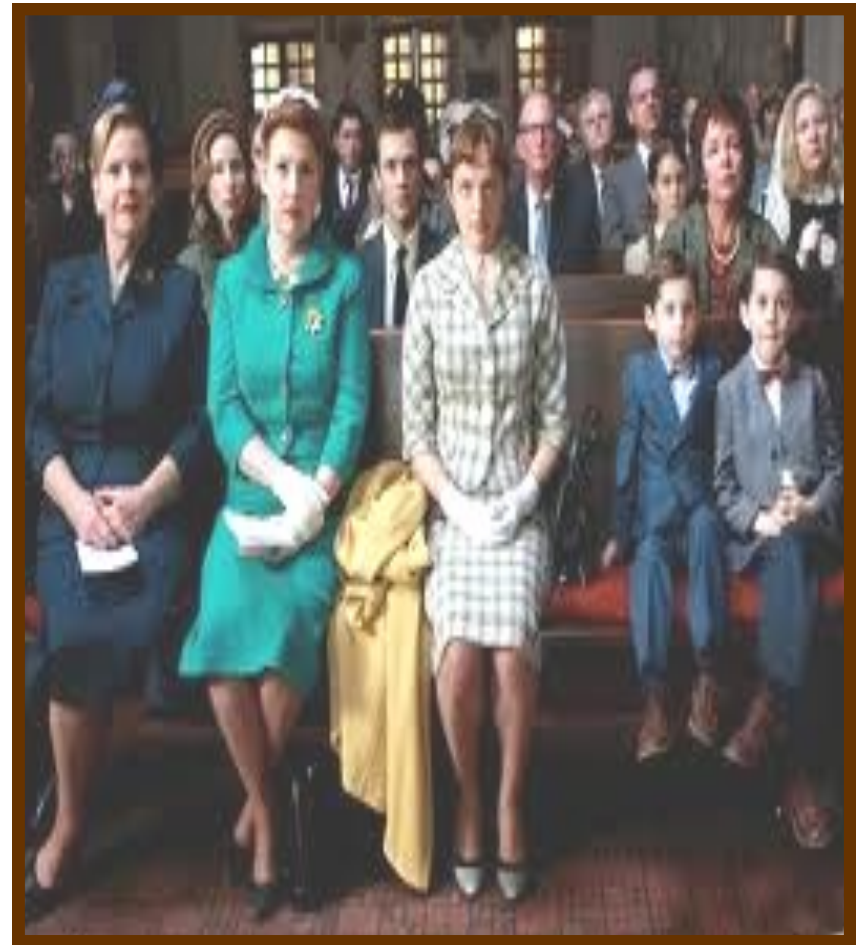
Marylike clothing is designed to clothe the body, ***not to reveal it.***

Marylike standards of dress are a guide to help instill in the hearts and souls of our youth a "sense of Christian modesty", that beautiful fruit and glow of holy purity, the awareness of one's integrity as a Child of God. A young woman who follows these guidelines, and who looks up to Our Lady as her ideal and model in all things, will have no problem with modesty in dress. She will never be an occasion of sin or source of embarrassment or shame to others. On the contrary, she will realize in herself the prayer of so many young women who have taken Our Lady for their model and mother: "May all who see me, see thee, O Mary!"

Also, an important part of a woman's dress is the covering she wears on her head in the presence of the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament she is reminding herself that she must be humble before God. As with all outward gestures, if it is practiced enough it filters down into the heart and is translated into actions that speak volumes. It is no surprise women of today have so easily abandoned the tradition of the chapel veil when the two greatest meanings of the veil are purity and humility. + + +

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Modesty in Dress ***THE FORGOTTEN VIRTUE***



**When Christian decency is present,
then one's dress is "the worthy ornament of
the person with whose beauty it blends
as in a single triumph of admirable dignity."**

MODESTY IN DRESS... THE FORGOTTEN VIRTUE

by Monsignor Charles M. Mangan

Dress for both men and women has changed dramatically during the last fifty years. Much of what is worn today is meant to expose rather than conceal the human body.

For centuries, Christians have looked to the virtue of modesty as it applies to vesture in order to judge what is appropriate.

The Catholic tradition has given us a valuable definition of modesty, which is the virtue that regulates one's actions and exterior customs concerning sexual matters. It controls one's behavior so as to avoid unlawful sexual arousal in oneself or others.

Modesty is one of the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as "the first fruits of eternal glory": charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.

To dress modestly is to avoid deliberately causing sexual excitement in oneself or one's neighbor. One who dresses modestly shuns clothes that are known or reasonably expected to effect sexual arousal in oneself or others. Modesty in dress pertains to both genders.

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), in harmony with the Magisterium and orthodox spiritual authors, addressed the necessity of cultivating modesty.

"How many young girls there are who see nothing wrong in following certain shameless styles like so many sheep. They would certainly blush with shame if they could know the impression they make, and the feelings they evoke, in those who see them.

"The good of our soul is more important than the good of our body; and we have to prefer the spiritual welfare of our neighbor to our bodily comforts... If a certain kind of dress constitutes a grave and proximate occasion of sin, and endangers the salvation of your soul and others, it is your duty to give it up ... O Christian mothers, if you know what a future of anxieties and perils, of ill guarded shame you prepare for your sons and daughters, imprudently getting them accustomed to live scantily dressed and making them lose their sense of modesty, you would

be ashamed of yourselves and you would dread the harm you are making for yourselves, the harm which you are causing to these children, whom Heaven has entrusted to you to be brought up as Christians.

"Christian girls, think also of this: the more elegant you will be, and the more pleasing, if you dress with simplicity and discreet modesty."

On November 8, 1957, Pope Pius presented the still-valid principles of modesty in dress.

Clothing fulfills three necessary requirements: hygiene, decency and adornment. These are "so deeply rooted in nature that they cannot be disregarded or contradicted without provoking hostility and prejudice."

Hygiene pertains mostly to "the climate, its variations, and other external factors" (e.g. discomfort, illness). Decency involves the "proper consideration for the sensitivity of others to objects that are unsightly, or, above all, as a defense of moral honesty and a shield against disordered sensuality." Adornment is legitimate and "responds to the innate need, more greatly felt by woman, to enhance the beauty and dignity of the person with the same means that are suitable to satisfy the other two purposes."

Fashion "has achieved an indisputable importance in public life, whether as an aesthetic expression of customs, or as an interpretation of public demand and a focal point of substantial economic interests.

"The rapidity of change (in styles) is further stimulated by a kind of silent competition, not really new, between the 'elite' who wish to assert their own personality with original forms of clothing, and the public who immediately convert them to their own use with more or less good imitations."

The Pontiff then isolated the difficulty with fashion. "The problem of fashion consists in the harmonious reconciliation of a person's exterior ornamentation with the interior of a quiet and modest spirit." Like other material objects, fashion can become an undue attachment—even perhaps an addiction—for some persons. The Church "does not censure or condemn styles when they are meant for the proper decorum and ornamentation of the body, but she never fails to