

Consider the acts of disrespect committed before the Blessed Sacrament today; how many people act out in church: chatting, laughing, and not paying attention. Before and after Mass some people gather in small groups around the pews and turn the church into a market place with no regard for Christ's Real Presence in the tabernacle.

The Blessed Sacrament is no laughing matter. There is a price tag to all we do or say. Those who neglect to give the Blessed Sacrament the adoration and respect that Christ deserves will be held accountable. The pastor may or may not put up with it; but God will have his day in court.

We are attending a banquet, not a Bar-B-Q and should dress accordingly. As a matter of fact, a good rule of thumb would be if you could go to a picnic without first changing your clothes, you are improperly dressed for Mass.

Section 1387 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* simply states: "Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest."

Some people say that it does not matter how a person is dressed, that what matters is the disposition of one's heart. On the other hand, if one has proper disposition they will want to show respect for God's house, and more importantly, for His Eucharistic Presence in the tabernacle.

We are attending a heavenly banquet and our attire should demonstrate our belief. Even the poorest individual can purchase items of clothing from a thrift store, which would be more appropriate than casual clothing.

No article of clothing worn should distract others from the central act of worship. Those who serve in the sanctuary have an even greater responsibility as the congregation will be attentive, not only to their manner, but also to their dress and should not be distracted.

The *Catechism* expounds upon these principles: "Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to

whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of person and their solidarity. Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled. Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet" (§ 2521, 2522).

Common sense should be the rule. People participating in the Eucharist celebration should dress modestly, and in their best attire.

Psalm 96, verse 9, sums it perfectly: "Worship the Lord in holy array; tremble before him, all the earth!"

* Special references would be too numerous to mention. I refer in general to *Mish, Yoma* and the *tractates* of Rabbi Maimonides (Moses Ben Maimon, 1135-1234 AD)

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The Sanctity of God's House

"Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground" (Acts 7:33).

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A Catholic church is not a mere building or meetinghouse, nor a platform or pulpit; it is a temple in which there is an altar. The altar is erected for sacrifice, the church is built as a sacred dwelling for the altar and for the celebration of Mass; the priest is consecrated for the service of the Mass, and Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, dwells in person in the tabernacle as a consequence of the Mass.

A Catholic church is also a holy refuge, a place where one can be in God's presence in a most special way. It is a place where we can speak to God intimately in the quiet of our hearts, and when we listen, a place where He can and will speak to us.

Man has always sought ways in which to communicate and honor God, as he understood Him. The innermost and most sacred place in the sanctuary of the Temple built by King Solomon was called the tabernacle or Holy of Holies. Just as our churches are laid out today, the level of holiness increasing as one progressed from front/outermost to back/innermost. The Ark of the Covenant and the two Cherubim were housed in the innermost room (1 Kings. 6:19, 23-28). Since the Ark was considered a sort of throne of God and was the particular abode of God among His Chosen People, this inner room was the most holy of all holy places. The Holy of Holies had no windows and if repairs or maintenance were required, a workman was lowered by rope from the roof, since it was forbidden for anyone other than the High Priest to touch the floor.

Leviticus 16:29-34 describes one of the solemn feasts of the Jews, Yom Kippur also called The Day of Atonement or the Feast of Expiation. Once each year, on the tenth day of the month of Tishri, which means "beginning of the year", the high priest could

enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of a bullock to offer sacrifice for his sins and the sins of all Israel. St. Paul gives a vivid description and explains the typical character of these ceremonies in Hebrews, Chapter 9, verses 1-5:

“Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.”

On the Day of Atonement, not ordinary priests, but the high-priest alone officiated, not in his ordinary priestly “golden garments”, but in simple, white, linen garments, expressive of purity. He was to be the representation of perfect purity, which was sought in the sacrifices of the day. Those who stand nearest to God are always described as arrayed ‘in white’ as in: Ezek. 9:2; Dan. 10:5 and 12:6. He prepared for this moment by separating himself from his family a week in advance and remaining inside the Temple.

Leviticus, Chapter 16, verses 32 thru 34 outline the sacrifice of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement:

“And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen

garments; he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be an everlasting statute for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him.”

On this holiest of days there were continual offerings throughout the day. According to Jewish tradition,* the High Priest sacrificed fifteen animals with the assistance of more than 500 other priests. Only while officiating in the distinctly expiatory services of the day did the High Priest wear his ‘linen garments;’ in all the others he was arrayed in his usual “golden vestments.” This necessitated five changes of dress, and before each he was required to bathe his entire body. In addition, he was to wash his hands and bathe his feet an additional ten times over the course of the day. Normally, a priest only had to bathe his feet and wash his hands prior to offering sacrifice. Once used in the Holy of Holies, the simple, linen garments were never worn again.

The garments worn by the High Priest had bells of gold attached to the hem and when he entered the Holy of Holies it was with a rope tied around his waist. Because of the supreme sanctity of the Holy of Holies, if any part of this service was performed incorrectly or if for any reason the sacrifice was not acceptable to God, or in the event that he was not pure at heart and clean of person, the High Priest would incur the death penalty by the hand of God, the bells would no longer ring and the rope was used to pull the body out of the sanctuary.

There are other instances in the Holy Bible that show that God punishes the profanation of what is dedicated to Him. For example in 2 Samuel, Chapter 6, verses 1-7:

“David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose

and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. And they carried the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God.”

The New Testament is also not silent on this issue. John, Chapter 2, verses 13-17 describes the anger of the Lord when he found that His Father’s house was being profaned:

“Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the moneychangers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, ‘Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.’ His disciples recalled the words of scripture, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’”

A Catholic Church is holy ground as we are in His Presence; there are choirs of holy angels all around. We should never allow a spirit of complacency to enter the sanctuary.