

immodest low-cut dresses or blouses. **Women and girls should be careful that their dress is not revealing at all, even when they bend over or kneel down.** Maybe some women do not know that revealing clothing is a source of temptation for most men. If you doubt this, ask a man. If a woman knows that such is the case, and still she would wear such clothing, then she would be committing the sin of scandal.

### **Immodesty Is Wrong At All Ages**

Unfortunately, even some older women of otherwise upright character, even daily communicants, sometimes wear such revealing clothing. Maybe they think that they're beyond the age of posing a temptation (and maybe they are). However, they are giving bad example to others - most notably their own daughters and grandchildren. They, too, are committing scandal. Those who see them will think: "She's a good Catholic, and she wears revealing clothing. It must be okay."

### **Immodesty Does Not Fit God's Standards**

Someone might argue that the wearing of revealing clothing now meets with society's standards. It may indeed meet with society's standards; however, we can safely say that it does not meet with God's. **As Christians, we are not to be followers of society's standards, but the standards of Christ.** We urge

every woman to examine her wardrobe (and that of her minor children if she has any), and get rid of all clothing that is immodest unless it can be adapted to be worn modestly.

### **What Would Mary Do?**

If a woman has doubts about the modest use of a particular article of clothing, it may be helpful to ask herself if our Blessed Mother would wear such clothing if she lived in this day and age. Or, to ask herself if our Blessed Mother would be pleased with her wearing the article of clothing in question.

### **Let It Be Known**

We suggest that you cut out this bulletin article, make copies of it, and give it to women and girls who need to hear this message. Even give or send the article anonymously, if necessary. Those who desire to do what is right will take the correction to heart and put it into practice.

Taken from the church bulletin. St. Peter Chanel Catholic Church, 12001 E. 214<sup>th</sup> St., Hawaiian Gardens, CA 90716. (562) 924-7591

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Pamphlet 455

## **Immodest Dress in the Church: Like Frogs in Boiling Water**

Jenna Murphy

In recent years what with acceptable fashion standards taking a major plunge (literally) into the realm of 'anything goes', young women are left to face conscious decisions in how they dress themselves, not realizing the weight that such decisions carry.

Speaking to youth in Australia on July 18, 2008 Pope Benedict XVI mentioned modesty as he told of how becoming fully human means rejecting those voices that lead us into worshipping 'false gods.'

"People sometimes treat others as objects to satisfy their own needs rather than as persons to be loved and cherished. How easy it is to be deceived by the many voices in our society that advocate a permissive approach to sexuality, without regard for modesty, self-respect or the moral values that bring quality to human relationships! This is worship of a false god. Instead of bringing life, it brings death."

Those women who wish to remain modest in their dress have been increasingly left to their own defenses as recent fashion trends leave 'conservative dress' virtually impossible, if not extinct. Nowadays, anyone left clinging to conservative dress in the incoming tide of cleavage-baring tank-

tops and clothing requiring classification (i.e. 'is that a shirt or a dress?') is left feeling, quite simply, alienated.

A specialized group called 'Pure Fashion' <http://www.purefashion.com/> has suggested that being fashionable does not need to mean lowering ones standards and one's dignity. Pure Fashion challenges young women to embrace the fullness of their femininity: which means recognizing the power inherent to the human body and respecting this great gift (through dressing modestly) instead of harvesting its power for selfish reasons.

In his bulletin article become blog entry entitled "Immodest Dress: A Priest Cries for Modesty," Father John Lyons OMV, addresses the issue of immodest dress even among the most faithful Catholics ('daily communicants') let alone the general population.

Defining immodest dress vaguely as 'anything revealing,' Father Lyons mentions that the problem is not only relevant for young women but more particularly for older women.

"Maybe [immodestly dressed older women] think that they're beyond the age of posing a temptation (and maybe they are). However, they are giving bad example to others - most notably their own daughters and grandchildren. They, too, are committing scandal. Those who see them will think: 'She's a good Catholic, and she wears revealing clothing. It must be okay.'"

And so begins the downward spiral towards the complete dilution of a sense of modesty.

In a time where what was previously morally unthinkable has become our reality, it seems that modest dress has become an 'irrelevant' consideration, even amongst some of the Church's most faithful. At the very least it seems to have taken a backseat in the effort to uphold the larger moral framework that continues to threaten its own collapse. Pro-life groups have even suggested modesty should not be 'part of the program'.

In an era where the 'wisdom of the ages' has little to no weight, and, like rebellious teenagers, our society seeks to forge their own feel-good method of approaching morality, it is widely believed that traditional views on the intrinsic value of modesty have been proved to be laughable.

In the 1950s, however, Pope Pius XII was very frank with Christian mothers, underscoring the central importance of modesty: "The good of our soul is more important than that 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 knew 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 the

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

In many efforts to 'build up' and to 'empower' women, the world often facilitates precisely the opposite. Womanhood has been contracted and constricted to an unattainable, inhuman picture of pseudo-femininity and the sooner we jump out of the pot, the better.

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## **Immodest Dress, "A Priest Cries For Modesty!"**

Father John Lyons, OMV

Parents are often obliged to correct their children over and over again - about the same thing. They would really prefer not to have to do it, but if they didn't they would be guilty of sinning by omission. Priests feel the same way. One of the things that we often have to correct people about is the use of immodest clothing.

### **Dressing Immodestly Is A Sin**

At this time we most especially need to remind girls and women to not wear