



Point Made! **by Joe Sixpack**

The following brief announcement was found in a parish bulletin recently. If you're reading this during the warm summer months it will have a greater impact than it will in the winter, but I think the intent of the message makes a great point no matter when you're reading this.

Plans for Parish Swimming Pool Scrapped!

After much study, our finance committee has determined it would not be feasible to construct an indoor swimming pool in our church. As a result, we can now announce with certainty that those who have been arriving for Mass as if dressed for the pool need not do so. Also, we hope to keep the air conditioner cranking all summer long. So you do not need to wear shorts, halter tops or bikinis to Mass.

I believe the pastor who had this inserted into his parish bulletin made a very good point, and his message was one that allowed him to practice his role as shepherd and practice one of the spiritual works of mercy at the same time while he taught volumes with humor instead of confrontation.

Nobody likes confrontation, but that is often necessary. This is especially so in practicing one of the spiritual works of mercy—"To admonish the sinner." Nobody likes admonishing the sinner for his or her public sins, but nobody said doing what Jesus says we have to do would be easy. Indeed, there is little reward to Christianity if it doesn't cost us personally!

There are two primary issues being taught by this pastor's message here. The first is respect for the Most Holy Eucharist. Yes, how we dress and comport ourselves at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass does matter. Why? Well, think about it.

When the priest says the words of consecration (This is My body. This is My blood.), the entire substance of the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine to become the real body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ—true God and true man. He's there outside of Mass, too. See that red lamp off to the side at the front of the church? When you can see that red light you can

know with moral certitude that the real physical Jesus is reposed in the tabernacle. Translation: Jesus is just as physically present in our parish churches as He was at the wedding feast of Cana, the sermon on the mount, and the Transfiguration. That reality should give us pause.

Maybe there needs to be a little self-examination. If you were invited to a private dinner with the pope, would you go dressed the way you dress for Mass? If your honest answer to that is in the affirmative, you're probably in great shape. If, on the other hand, you are thinking to yourself that you would dress better for a private dinner with the pope than you do for Mass, I would ask you one simple question: Why? Why would you dress better for the pope than you would for the pope's only Boss? Does that make sense? Do we owe the pope more respect than we do Jesus Christ, our Creator and Savior?

But that's not the only thing the parish priest is pointing out in his announcement. There are also a couple of little minor inconveniences called the sixth and ninth commandments. The sixth commandment tells us to be modest in our behavior—including the way we dress in public. The ninth commandment tells us to be pure in all our thoughts. Modesty in dress means not showing too much flesh. When you show too much flesh, you sin against the sixth commandment, and you are likely contributing to the sin of others against the ninth commandment by causing them to have impure thoughts. Of course, that means you're also sinning against the fifth commandment by causing scandal—all of which are mortal sins.

“But, Joe, I'm only dressing in the current style and fashion.”

If the style and fashion was total public nudity, would you go everywhere nude? Use your head! Is the “current style and fashion” worth eternity separated from Almighty God? How much does eternity mean to you? How much does God mean to you? If He and the faith you have from him are not paramount in your life, you probably need to rethink your position.

I don't know if the pastor who wrote that announcement also intended what I'm about to point out, but it's certainly implied.

St. Paul wrote, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be subject in everything to their husbands” (Ephesians 5: 22-24). He also wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.... Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1, 4).

Although the world around us changes all the time, God and His laws never change! He's the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). So contrary to the political correctness of today, the above passages from Ephesians are just as valid in the 21st-century as they were in the first century. So it's time you husbands and fathers took your rightful place as the spiritual head of your family and begin insisting on them living as God commands. In this case, that means insisting that your wives and daughters only leave the house modestly dressed. Stand up! Be a man! Fulfill your God given responsibilities and duties! Like it or not, folks, this is *What We Believe... Why We Believe It*.

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