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*Problems*  
*of*

**DECENCY**

by R. E. Southard, S. J.

*THE QUEEN'S WORK*

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# PROBLEMS *of* DECENCY

*by R. E. Southard, S.J.*

## 1. Modern Emphasis on Sex

**B**EAUTY contests, sexy movies, books, magazine articles, stories, advertisements, pin-ups and things of this kind, all contribute to the current idea that sex is about the most important thing in life. "I try to make a woman look as sexy as possible, and yet look like a perfect lady . . .," says a prominent fashion designer. All this emphasis on sex greatly complicates the age-old problem of Christian decency, especially for unmarried persons.

The problem of decency is of critical importance to Catholics. It takes serious effort for Catholics to be entirely decent in matters of sex because the Church is both definite and exacting in her standards. Those Catholics who become lax begin easily to question the Church's right to interpret God's laws and frequently this is the beginning of their loss of faith. Prevention of such tragedy is far easier than its cure. If this booklet helps to prevent this and lesser tragedies, it will serve its purpose.

## 2. A Confessor's Advice

A confessor is the first and indispensable source of advice in this as in all moral matters. Confessors are trained in technicalities; they

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THE QUEEN'S WORK



have practical experience of a great variety of cases; they can estimate personal differences which necessitate different advice and treatment for different penitents. An understanding confessor can also offer encouragement such as no book or pamphlet can. The precise purpose of this booklet is to help persons in dealing with confessors, whether it be for their own guidance or for others. It provides a brief outline of main points on the matter with handy explanations and general rules. Because it is merely an outline, a person would be unwise to solve serious problems with reference merely to the book and without consulting a confessor.

### **3. God's Plan and Law**

The body of a baby grows inside the body of its mother, in her womb. It begins to form at the moment when a father cell joins a mother cell. The joining of these cells in the mother's womb is called "conception." At the baby's conception, God creates its immortal soul.

The external sex parts of a man's body were created different from a woman's so as to make possible the joining of the mother cell and father cell, for the production of children. The act by which the father cell is deposited at the opening of the mother's womb is called the sex act and is accompanied by physical pleasure. In this booklet this physical pleasure is called venereal or sexual pleasure.

Because conception and the production of children naturally result from the sex act, God permits it only to married persons. Thus the marriage contract guarantees to children a home, education, and the care of parents.

Unmarried persons, therefore, are forbidden, under pain of serious sin, to desire sex pleasure or intentionally to cause it by thoughts, words, or actions. The right to sex pleasure is limited to husband and wife and can be acquired only by entering into the marriage contract.

#### **4. What Is Decency?**

The words "modesty," "decency," "purity," and "chastity" are frequently used with about the same meaning. In this booklet we use only the two terms "decency" and "purity," and this is the difference between them:

Purity consists in habits which control the sex appetite according to God's law.

Decency consists in habits which provide safeguards and motives for Christian purity.

Decency, therefore, as we understand it here, is concerned with the means which are necessary to control sex according to God's law; it deals with rules of caution toward thoughts, pictures, persons, and other things which are a danger to purity.

#### **5. The Laws of Appetite**

In order to control a car, typewriter, printing press, or anything, you have to know something about how it works. Sex is one of the many human appetites. So, to control it you have to know something about how a human appetite works. An appetite is usually considered as part of a human instinct. Here we take instinct and appetite as meaning the same thing.

For our purpose we can define an instinct or appetite as an "inborn tendency to act in a certain way or pattern." Take, for example, the instincts of a newborn baby. It cries for

food, shows fear, surprise, and anger. All of these reactions are complicated. A feeding baby manages the complicated operations of sucking and swallowing, and it reacts to the feeling of hunger with effective yells. Touch the lips of a newborn child and it will start to suck and swallow. It is born with this tendency.

If an instinctive action is broken down into its several steps, you notice it starts with a stimulus; the stimulus causes a feeling or emotion; next comes an urge or impulse to act; then follows the pattern action. Roughly speaking, this is the formula for any instinctive action: **STIMULUS—FEELING—IMPULSE—ACTION.**

We are conscious of these related steps in our own experience. Take anger. Becoming aware of an enemy or something unpleasant is the stimulus. Like a trigger, it starts the instinct of anger. There follows an emotion and feeling of dislike, possibly accompanied by fear. Then comes an impulse to avoid the disagreeable person or thing, or to attack with words or blows. Unless something comes in to check the impulse, action follows, either flight or a fight.

### *So With Sex*

The sex appetite operates according to this same pattern: **STIMULUS—FEELING—IMPULSE—ACTION.**

From these elements of an instinct we can conclude its laws of operation and control. The primary law of instinctive operation is this: A stimulus tends to arouse desires and impulses toward the instinctive action. There-

fore, the primary law for controlling any instinct is: **CONTROL THE STIMULUS.**

Now we can define decency in terms of the psychology of instinct: It consists in habits which control the stimuli of the sex appetite.

Because human beings have the power of free will, they can struggle against an impulse to instinctive action. One who is impelled to strike another in a fit of anger can turn and leave the person or thing which stimulates the anger; or even resist the impulse at the scene. But this fact is plain: The best time to control impulses is before they arise, that is, by controlling the stimuli which arouse them.

#### **6. Sex Stimuli**

To control stimuli to the sex appetite we must know what they are. Drawing on the common experience of most people as regards sensitivity to sex, theologians recognize various areas of the body as being safe for normal people to touch, look at, talk about, without any danger of arousing the sex appetite. These parts we can call "safe." They are the hands and feet and head.

Other parts are so sensitive that handling, looking at, talking about them is practically certain to arouse the sex appetite. These are a woman's breasts and the reproductive or sex parts of a man or woman.

The rest of the body is more or less sensitive to sex, depending on the degree of personal sensitivity of the individual. Take notice of this important point. People differ in their sensitivity to sex, just as they differ in other ways. Some persons are very sensitive, some are rather insensitive. Most people are neither very sensitive nor very insensitive. These we



call normal people. It is important to remember that a person can be normally sensitive to sex and still be more or less sensitive than another normally sensitive person. Normalcy in this matter consists merely in not being more sensitive or more insensitive than most people.

### *Especially Men*

Women in general react to sex stimuli more slowly than men do. It is important for decent people to remember this. Knowing it, a decent girl will take care not to risk her escort's purity just to play up sex appeal on a "stylish" gown or swim suit. Knowing it, a decent boy will not immediately conclude that a sex-appeal gown is a sign of indecent intentions in a girl. But if a girl wears this sort of gown, he will rightfully have his doubts about her and will check up on the point before he shares her company.

It is too evident for emphasis that the normal sex appetite is more easily aroused by the opposite sex than by the same.

Actions and pictures make a deeper and more lasting impression on us than do words. This must be remembered in judging the strength of sex stimuli. It is more arousing to handle sex sensitive parts of the body than it is to look at or talk about them. Note, too, that the word HANDLING means more than mere touching; LOOKING or GAZING mean more than mere seeing or glancing; TALKING or LISTENING mean more than merely hearing. Handling, looking or gazing, talking, listening always mean that the action is done with some degree of deliberate attention and wilful choice.



All these differences among sex stimuli, persons, and actions explain why a confessor may give one person certain instructions to fit a given situation, while he will give another person in a similar situation instructions which are different. This also explains why some persons can honestly say about a book or motion picture, "It didn't bother me," whereas other persons more sensitive to sex would experience serious temptations from the book or movie.

### 7. The Law of Decency

Decency consists in habits which control stimuli to the sex appetite in order to make Christian purity possible according to one's state of life. This booklet is limited to decency as it applies to persons who are still in an unmarried state of life.

Laws are made with normal persons in mind. Exceptional persons who are extremely sensitive to sex stimuli or hardly sensitive at all cannot be quoted as examples of how to apply the laws of decency to normal persons in any given situation. And no person should judge himself exceptional in the matter without advice from his confessor.

The law of decency for unmarried persons is this:

Unmarried persons are forbidden to do anything **IN ORDER TO AROUSE** sex pleasure.

Unmarried persons may engage in thoughts or words or actions which **TEND TO AROUSE** the sex appetite only under the following conditions.

1. The action must be good in itself.

2. They must intend doing the action only for its own effect, **NOT IN ORDER TO AROUSE** sex pleasure.
3. To do the action they must have a reason which is sufficient to justify the risk to purity.
4. In doing the action they must take safeguards which are sufficient to prevent wilful enjoyment and consent in any sex pleasure which the action may arouse.

### *For Example*

Explanation of these points, with examples, will show how they apply in practical situations.

An action is good in itself if it does not defeat the purpose God had in creating things the way He did. Some actions which are good in themselves may also tend to arouse the sex appetite. Such actions are bathing, dressing wounds or sores, studying anatomy, studying art, wrestling, swimming, bicycle or horseback riding, and the like. These actions, because they are good in themselves, may be done even though they tend to arouse the sex appetite, provided a person can honestly clear his or her conscience on the following points.

*Am I doing this action IN ORDER TO AROUSE the sex appetite? If I am, decency forbids it.*

*Have I a reason for doing the action which is sufficient to justify the risk to purity? Sample sufficient reasons would be, to study the anatomy of the human body in order to learn the profession of medicine; to care for bodily diseases and wounds; to secure information on*

sex sufficient to make possible proper fulfillment of the duties of married life; to secure information necessary for controlling the sex appetite (such as that contained in this booklet). What the law of decency forbids is doing things which are also sex arousing, even when one has no better reason than mere curiosity or the desire for the thrill.

*Have I taken safeguards sufficient to prevent wilful enjoyment and consent to any sex pleasure which may be aroused?* Persons who have reason for risking situations dangerous to purity are bound to take safeguards which are sufficient to protect themselves from sin. In our days, when sex gets such constant publicity through advertising, newspapers, magazines, and movies, almost everybody needs to take constant safeguards in order to keep pure.

### **8. Some Safeguards**

The first and most important safeguard against wilful consent to temptations against purity is a strong Christian life in the soul. To be solid, this life must be built on an extensive and accurate knowledge of Christ's ideals and principles. It must be enlivened with faith and nourished by frequent prayer and reception of the sacraments. Those who have God's grace stay pure; those who do not have it, don't. The ordinary channels of grace are prayer and the sacraments. Make no mistake about this! The Christian ideal of purity in thought and word and deed is high. It is beyond the strength of unaided human nature. But with God's help, all things are possible.

Prayer and the sacraments are sure sources of divine help; but God does not guarantee



purity to those who do not help themselves. To preserve purity one must acquire habitual occupations and thoughts which will block off the temptations that arise from the overemphasis of sex all around us. Reading good books, seeing good movies, cultivating interesting hobbies, keeping good company—these are not only good things in themselves, but more than that, they occupy the mind and leave no room for thoughts which are dangerous to purity.

### *Self-discipline*

The inclination of our modern world to soften up everything we have and do: soft clothing, beds, furniture; and to remove pain and discomfort from everything we encounter, does not help much the struggle for purity. We gather that from the very word “chastity” which is another word for purity. “Chastity” comes from a Latin word which means “having been beaten.” Chastity or purity is the result of self-discipline. It is a victory over a very strong appetite. Soft and easygoing persons, as a rule, find purity a bigger problem than do rugged individuals who take life’s hardships in stride and make them simply a part of their daily self-discipline.

Strong motives for Christlike living are essential to purity. We shall list a variety of motives when we come to explaining how habits control our instincts.

Finally the advice and encouragement of a competent confessor who knows and understands your personal circumstances and difficulties is one of the main external helps to purity.

## 9. Two Practical Rules of Decency

Decency is concerned especially with the safeguards which are necessary for keeping the law of purity. It follows, therefore, that the rules of decency are as logical as the rules for safety which apply to anything that is dangerous. Firemen and others who must risk their lives in line of duty have their safeguards and rules of safety. So must anyone who has to run any risk.

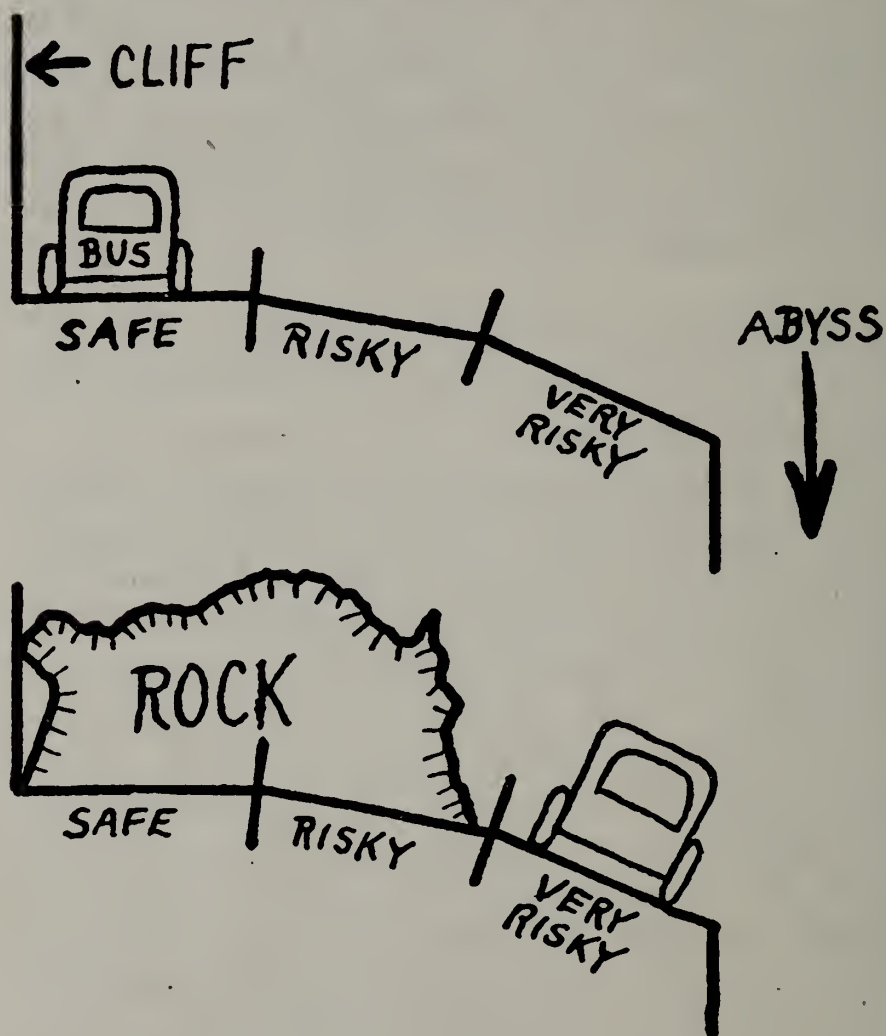
An example from two practical rules for safe driving gives us two practical, reasonable rules for decency.

Let us suppose that a safe driver is taking a busload of school children along a twenty-foot, one-way mountain road with a cliff on his left and a straight, unguarded drop-off on his right. Because sections of the road slope toward the drop-off, the road is divided into three parts: the **SAFE** part which is a section extending ten feet from the left-hand cliff; the **RISKY** part which extends from the safe part five feet and slants toward the abyss; the **VERY RISKY** part, five feet wide, extending from the risky part to the drop-off and slanting dangerously toward the drop-off.

In such a situation reason demands that the driver:

1. Take no unnecessary risks but stay on the **SAFE** part of the road.
2. When an obstruction such as a rock necessitates driving on the risky or very risky parts of the road, take safeguards such as putting the gears in low and shifting weight of the passengers.

It would be unreasonable to risk the lives of children just to give them a thrill. And so, when the need for taking a risk is past, a safe driver returns to the safe part of the road.



Applying this reasoning from safety in driving to safety in regard to purity, we get two very reasonable rules.

1. Take no unnecessary risks by handling, talking about, looking at things which are risky or very risky to purity.
2. When something makes it necessary to risk rousing the sex appetite, take safeguards which will reduce the risk to a minimum and prevent sin by consent.



If it is unreasonable to risk human lives by reckless driving, how much more unreasonable it is to risk the eternal happiness of human souls by carelessness in regard to purity!

### **10. Proximate Occasions of Sin**

A proximate occasion of mortal sin is anything (person, place, action, thought, thing) which, more often than not, leads a person into serious sin. All persons are bound to avoid proximate occasions of mortal sin; if they cannot possibly avoid the occasion, they must take whatever safeguards they can to reduce the danger of their sinning. Why? Because freely and without necessity to remain in a situation which seriously tempts one to mortal sin is equivalent to choosing outright to commit the sin.

Anything which is sexually stimulating is an occasion of sin, more or less serious, for an unmarried person. Because persons differ in the degree of their sensitivity, some sex stimuli would be seriously stimulating—proximate occasions of sin—for some persons but not for others. All persons must learn to recognize in their own lives situations which are proximate occasions of sin for them. This requires an estimate of one's past history, character, and the situation itself. This calls for the help of a reliable confessor.

Some situations, like burlesque shows, are so stimulating to the sex appetite that they must be recognized as a proximate occasion of serious sin to all unmarried persons. When a person doubts about the degree of danger in a given situation, the confessor's advice should be asked.

## 11. How Much Sin?

The divine law of purity forbids unmarried persons, under pain of serious sin, to desire sexual pleasure or intentionally to cause it. The laws of decency command persons to avoid things which they cannot keep from being a proximate occasion of serious sin for them.

The law of purity is concise and clear enough. But the laws of decency bring into play so many personal factors and varying circumstances that they call for interpretation in many, many cases.

It is clear enough that some things are so sexually stimulating that decency forbids them under pain of mortal sin. There are other things, more or less sexually stimulating, which cannot so easily be classified as mortally or venially sinful. To classify a great variety of cases of this kind is impossible in anything as short as this booklet.

For the foregoing reasons the best suggestion that can be made here is this: When you have solid reasons to doubt whether a given thing is seriously sinful or not, ask your confessor. Do not dismiss the problem, saying, "Since I am in doubt, I can go ahead and do it." To do something which solid reasons lead you to believe is seriously sinful, is equivalent to committing a serious sin. It is the same as saying, "It may be a mortal sin, but I'll do it anyway."

Temptations against purity are a fertile source of worries, doubts, and scruples for not a few persons. In most cases these worries, doubts, and scruples can be remedied by stating the problem simply to a confessor and following his advice.

## 12. Did I Sin?

Worries about temptations against purity are the devil's most fruitful field for sowing and reaping discouragement. To avoid these worries one must keep clear what things are required to make a sin mortal: (1) knowledge that the matter is seriously sinful; (2) awareness of the evilness of the matter at the time of the sin; (3) full consent of the will to the matter.

Clear understanding of what is seriously sinful against purity must be sought from a confessor.

Awareness concerns the state of attention. When you are asleep you cannot be fully aware of anything really apart from you. You may experience dreams, but these are not your responsibility because you are asleep and so are unable to choose having them or not having them. When you are half asleep you are at best only half aware of things about you. A mortal sin requires full awareness—not half awareness. Even when you are awake, sexy images may drift into your imagination and linger briefly before you are fully aware of their presence and their danger to purity.

What do you do when you actually become fully aware of the presence of something which tempts you to sin? The answer to this question determines whether or not you have wilfully consented to the temptation and sinned.

### *Distinction*

When it is an action that is in question, the answer usually is not too hard to find. Thoughts and desires which slip uninvited into the imagination are what give good people most doubts and worries.



It is necessary to remember that thoughts and desires about sex are part of the normal experiences of normal people. Therefore, they are not sinful in themselves. But for unmarried persons they are an invitation, a temptation, to sin. Perhaps the following example will help keep clear the difference between thoughts and desires against purity which remain mere temptations and those which are consented to and thus made sinful.

You are sitting quietly in your living room with a good book one nice afternoon. There comes a loud knock at the door. You have not invited anyone for the afternoon and you don't want to be bothered by strangers. So you ignore the knock and go on quietly reading your book. Then the door bursts open and in comes an attractive stranger who says: "Wouldn't you like to buy and read MY book?"

You can't help hearing the stranger talk. There you are. There the stranger is. But you ignore the stranger's voice as well as presence. You have found from previous experience with strangers like this that they are hard to get rid of and that yelling only causes a scene. If ignored, they eventually leave.

Although not invited and apparently not welcome, the stranger persists, pulls over a chair, sits down, and starts to read to you a sexy passage in a loud, clear voice. It breaks in on your attention but you go on ignoring it the best you can by simply reading your own book.

Finally the uninvited stranger realizes that the "welcome" on the doormat applies to somebody else and leaves. Now the question

is: Are you in any way responsible for such a stranger's entrance into your parlor or for anything that was said? It is easy to see that you are not. You did not invite or welcome or entertain the stranger. So, you are in the clear.

### *Invite or Entertain*

This example shows what confessors mean when they ask, "Did you INVITE or ENTERTAIN the thought or desire against purity?" To engage in sexy conversation or look at sexy pictures, or the like, would be to invite temptation. If you did nothing like that and if you did not welcome the thought or desire, then there is NO QUESTION OF YOUR HAVING COMMITTED ANY SIN WHATEVER, no matter how vivid the image, how strong the desire or feeling, how long the temptation.

If, on the other hand, you half invited the temptation by carelessness in regard to sexy pictures, etc., or if the thought came uninvited but you half entertained it by dwelling on it momentarily, briefly—then you should accuse yourself of half consenting to the temptation. Half consent, as you know, makes the sin VENIAL, even when the matter concerned is seriously sinful.

When a temptation is past, it should not be recalled to mind. If there remains doubt about full consent, persons who habitually resist such temptations may conclude that their consent was not full. But persons who habitually sin in the presence of such temptations should rather conclude that their consent was full, since that is in line with their habitual reactions in such situations. All doubts which persist should be settled with the help of a confessor.

### 13. How to Control Temptations

To know what causes sexual images in the mind helps one both to avoid them and to resist them patiently. Poor health, fatigue, and other physical disturbances can cause particularly bothersome temptations. Sex tension which normal persons experience more or less periodically causes temptations to be strong and more frequent than usual.

Deeper than these immediate influences are the habits one has contracted over the period of a lifetime. As psychologists point out, our habits of thought and speech make records in our memory and imagination. Naturally these recorded thoughts reappear in the mind when occasion presents itself. Thoughts of the same or similar things tend to cling together and reappear together. This psychological fact which is called the association of images and ideas can be pictured, to show how our imagination works, in the story of Mr. Black and Mr. White.

Mr. Black and Mr. White, both managers of hotels, went down to Father John's church for a mission. Mr. Black's hotel suited his name; it was peopled by immoral men and women. The lobby was decorated with indecent paintings. Persons of bad reputation habitually clustered about the bar.

Mr. White's hotel, by contrast, was morally high class. Patrons of bad repute were rarely allowed as guests.

The mission was fiery and inspiring. Both Mr. Black and Mr. White resolved to mend their ways. Mr. White went back to his hotel and evicted the one questionable character

whom he had let hang around. Then he fired his bartender who had a weakness for indecent language. The clean-up was little or no trouble at all for Mr. White, and all his guests congratulated him.

### *Lost Resolutions*

Mr. Black also went back to his hotel with brave resolutions and a long list of guests to be got rid of. He entered the lobby, determined to tear down the indecent pictures from the wall, fire the immoral bellhops, weed out the shady tenants. He got no farther than the desk when his resolutions came under attack. All his old, easygoing companions crowded around him, joking, crying, pleading. In no time at all they had battered down his resolutions and his hotel went on in the same rut as before.

Our memory, like a hotel, stores away thoughts and images, like tenants. The thoughts of a kind stick together. So, remember this: All the sex experiences of a person's life tend to cluster together in one's memory. When a temptation against purity comes, this cluster of sex experiences old and new, sinful or not, tends to strengthen the latest temptation.

Therefore, to avoid temptations and to lessen the strength of those that come unavoidably, a person should practice, always, the rules of decency: Take no unnecessary risks to purity; when a risk is necessary, take safeguards against sin.

### **14. How to Confess Sins**

Many high-minded Catholics live in our world today completely free from sins against purity. This is a wonderful thing, considering



the many temptations they encounter. And yet, other Catholics fall. Their first problem after falling into mortal sin is to confess it and get rid of it. But the shame of having sinned and an embarrassing want of words to express their guilt sometimes keep them from going to confession.

Such persons would realize that priests are professional men with a professional attitude toward penitents. Certainly all sins, like all serious diseases, are horrible. But priests are no more horrified by the disclosure of a mortal sin than doctors are by bad teeth or cancers. Priests are physicians of souls who are familiar with soul maladies and have a sympathetic understanding of those who suffer from sin. If you encounter exceptions to this rule, avoid them. And when you find a priest who shows a sympathetic understanding of your weaknesses and aspirations, go to him frequently and regularly. This enables him to learn your needs and to give you better advice.

Because a priest is obliged to furnish advice as well as absolution to repentant sinners, confess your sins by name and numbers. Thus the priest can suit his advice and the penance to your needs.

### *Name and Important Details*

In confessing sins against purity, name the sin and omit all details that do not change the seriousness of the sin. The sixth commandment mentions adultery. Adultery is the sexual act with the husband or wife of a third person. Fornication is the sexual act between unmarried persons. Securing sex pleasure alone is called self-abuse.

Sinful thoughts, words, handling, talking, reading, should be simply told that way, "I entertained thoughts against purity . . . so many times."

When another person is involved in a sin against purity, this fact should be mentioned. Also, any detail which would make the sin worse, for example, if the person is married.

Persons who habitually worry about thoughts against purity should mention this fact and then follow the confessor's advice exactly. Any inclination to recall a temptation and recount its details should be considered just another temptation and should be resisted.

When a confessor asks you, "Did you want the thought?" he is inquiring as to whether the temptation was invited or entertained.

### **15. How to Correct Bad Habits**

Persons who have repeated sex sins until they have grown into habits have great trouble with impurity. The main cure for such persons is to establish new habitual occupations and thoughts which will block off or sidetrack and thus control sex temptations.

Usually these persons have almost lost confidence in their power to control themselves. Like slaves to liquor they feel helpless in the clutch of habit. To work a cure for bad habits it is necessary to understand how habits work and why evil sex habits are so forceful and difficult to correct.

#### *Kinds of Habits*

We described instincts as "inborn tendencies to act in a certain pattern." They consist

in a STIMULUS—emotion—feeling—impulse—ACTION. Habits, like instincts, are tendencies to act in a definite way or pattern. But they differ in this: They are not inborn like instincts but must be acquired.

Our many habits fall into three classes as regards their origin:

1. Habits of circumstance
2. Habits of instinct
3. Willed habits

### *Habits of Circumstance*

Habits of circumstance are those which we pick up mostly as a matter of course by imitating those around us. The way we speak, our manner of dress, gesture, and the like, are habits of circumstance. For our present purpose, the thing to note about habits of circumstance is this:

THEY ARE EASY TO SLIP INTO  
FAIRLY HARD TO GET OUT OF  
EASY TO SLIP BACK INTO

You can prove the foregoing facts about habits of circumstance to your own satisfaction by performing this simple experiment. Say the alphabet starting with *a* but omitting every other letter; that is say *a c e g* and so on to *z*. You will find that you cannot say *a c e g* on through to *z* as accurately or as fast as you can say *a b c d e* and so on to *z*. The reason is, you have the habit of saying the alphabet without omitting letters, and you can't break that habit without willed effort and considerable practice. Remember, then, habits of circumstance are EASY TO GET INTO, FAIRLY HARD TO GET OUT OF.

## *Habits of Instinct*

Habits of instinct are those which grow onto our instincts. Anger is part of our instinct for self-preservation. It has its own automatic force, which is inborn and normal. But a person who habitually gives in to his anger develops a habit on top of the instinctive force of anger. Thus his natural instinct acquires the added force of habit and he becomes a victim to uncontrollable outbursts of rage.

It is easy to see that habits which are developed on top of instincts are more forceful than habits of circumstance. They have a double force: force of habit and force of instinct.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Force of habit} \\ + \\ \text{Force of instinct} \end{array} \left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{l} \text{Force of habit} \\ + \\ \text{Force of instinct} \end{array}} \right\} = \text{DOUBLE FORCE}$$

Remember, therefore, habits of instinct are **DOUBLY EASY TO GET INTO, DOUBLY HARD TO GET OUT OF.**

## *Willed Habits*

It is only by willed habits that we can control our appetites. Willed habits are those which we select of our own free choice and then acquire by practice. Examples of willed habits are skill at typewriting, penmanship, juggling, and other mechanical skills which people acquire in order to achieve some aim in life, a job, a prize in a contest, and the like. These habits are **HARD TO GET INTO, EASY TO GET OUT OF.** Anyone who neglects typing, or shorthand for a while knows how easy it is to get out of practice.



Willed habits are the key to controlling our instincts and appetites and, therefore, to sex control. Habits acquired through force of circumstance and even habits grown onto an instinct can be forced to give way to willed habits.

The rules for acquiring willed habits are few and simple, but keeping each rule is necessary for success.

1. Get a clear idea of the action to be acquired as a habit.
2. Get a motive sufficient to move your will to choose the action.
3. Make resolutions which will provide for removing or avoiding obstacles to your doing the action.

Make resolutions which will provide an exact time, and place for practicing the action.

4. When you break a resolution find out why you broke it and provide in your new resolution a safeguard against repeating the break.

The first rule is plain in itself. Without a clear idea of what you are to choose or to practice, it is obvious that you can never acquire a definite habit. That is the reason for teachers and instruction manuals.

Without a motive sufficient to move your will in choosing, you will never acquire a willed habit. There are many people in this world who "wish" they could play the piano, or draw, or typewrite, or what-have-you. But they never will. They never bother to build up motives sufficient to move their will to choose a line of action and practice it until it becomes a habit.

Motives are ineffective if not put to work in good resolutions; so we shall first examine how resolutions are formed and kept; then motives.

### **16. Resolutions and Motive Power**

A resolution is an act of free choice which is made before the time when it must actually be carried out. Many people have high resolves but low results. This is because their resolutions are defective. If a resolution does not provide for overcoming obstacles which will hinder carrying out the choice, if it does not provide strong motives which will empower the will to choose, then it is no good. Persons who have trouble keeping resolutions should examine carefully the following requirements for good resolutions and see whether theirs measure up.

A good resolution must:

1. Be written in a few short words and memorized
2. State exactly the thing to be done, for example, the person to be avoided, the time, the place
3. Contain clear, strong reasons why the action should be done—**MOTIVES**
4. Be recalled to mind frequently, with clear attention to **MOTIVES**

We have to make resolutions to take care of situations where habits, evil persons, or other circumstances are likely to break our determination to choose what we know we should. Broken resolutions should be investigated. They will usually be found to have been defective in one or more of the four points given above.

## *Motives Most Important*

Of these four points, the most important is MOTIVES.

Motive power is WILL POWER. Your will has no power without motives to move it. If you throw a handful of dollar bills from a fourth-story window onto a busy downtown street, you can tie up traffic for as long as you want to throw bills and can escape the police.

Why? Because people recognize in money a means to many things which they want. Money is a strong motive in their lives.

Persons having trouble with mortal sin should take time to inquire into the motives which are strongest in their lives. Why do they do the things they do? This inquiry will reveal that sin results from an uncontrolled desire for attention and praise, or pleasure, or authority and power, or some similar disorderly inclination. They should then inquire into the condition of their Christian motives for right living.

Even a brief review of the motives for avoiding sex sins shows their effectiveness. Repeated sins of impurity find persons with habits which result in practical slavery. Persons given to sex sins with others easily contract diseases which are among the filthiest and most damaging known to modern science. Lack of sex control is a cause of great unhappiness in married life because it leads to selfishness, thoughtlessness, and even brutality between husband and wife. Impurity destroys love, leads to broken homes, and throws innocent children into circumstances where they fall into lives of sin for want of parental love

and guidance. Abuse of the marriage right by artificial birth control robs many families of children, curses the marriage with selfishness, and brings untold sorrows to childless husbands and wives in their declining years. Apart from these sad results, a single mortal sin deserves the fearful punishments of hell.

The foregoing truths appeal to our instinct for self-preservation. What reasonable person would risk such fearful evils knowingly, willingly, for a brief pleasure?

### *Power of Motives*

Motives have power to influence our choice in proportion to their strength and our mind's awareness of this strength. Thus, a person ignorant of the dangerous properties of dynamite will handle a stick of it like a wax candle. Likewise, a person ignorant or forgetful of the punishments of sex sins will commit them with hardly a thought of the consequences. This explains so much laxity in this regard nowadays. Those who sin, are ignorant of, or deny, or keep out of their mind the thought of the fearful punishments which follow such sins, even in this life.

All the motives discussed appeal to fear. Fear is a very effective motive because it appeals even to selfish persons. Any reasonable person has enough desire for personal safety to avoid things which can destroy him.

The noblest, strongest, most pleasant motive for purity, however, is love. Fear is unpleasant, so we prefer to keep things we fear out of our mind. To entertain thoughts of love is natural and pleasant and easy.

The saints and, for that matter, good practicing Catholics are a proof to the world that



the love of God can inspire purity. Inquiry into the nature of God's love unfolds the deepest reason why human love and sex should be held sacred.

### *Holy Trinity*

God is one in nature, but three in person. Two of the divine persons, Son and Holy Ghost, are produced in God by a process which is entirely spiritual and without beginning or end—timeless. An explanation of this spiritual production of persons in the Holy Trinity is this: The Father produces the Son, and the Son is an infinite, all-perfect image of the Father. The infinite and all-perfect love of the Father and Son is itself the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity.

These relations in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit of love, are reflected in a human family. A human father and mother love each other so much that they are willing to produce by sexual generation a child which is an expression of their love and an image of themselves. So, in the divine Trinity we find the deepest meaning of human love and the sexual powers of human beings to reproduce human life. Is it any wonder that Christians who realize this deep spiritual meaning of love and sex are fiercely determined to protect themselves from both the danger and destruction of sin!

### **17. Falling in Love, Kissing, Liquor, Indecent Dress** *Love*

Among things which affect the strength of sex stimuli, some points come up for special mention.

Human love, especially between boy and girl, tends to express itself sexually. This is

part of God's plan for the reproduction of the human race. This does not mean that human friendships always lead to a desire for sexual union. It simply means that if a boy and girl are in love there is more danger of their being tempted in regard to sex than if they aren't.

So for this, as well as other reasons, persons must control their affections. If you let yourself fall in love with someone you can't possibly marry, you are simply making yourself lots of trouble.

Control of one's affection is not always easy. Most people are lovable, some more, some less. Some persons, parents and other relatives, benefactors, and lawful superiors, are more deserving of our love than are others. To keep one's affections in proper order it is necessary not only to know how to make love but to unmake it.

To make love you think of a person's good qualities and keep yourself reminded of them with keepsakes such as pictures, locks of hair, phone calls, and whatnots. You seek the person's company and show your affection with favor and gifts. You "think more of" them. You "give more time to them." And in these two, short, familiar phrases is summed up the psychology of making love.

To unmake love, you reverse the process of making it. You keep the person's good points out of your mind, get rid of keepsakes, avoid their company, "think less of," "give less time to them." In a phrase, you cut them out. The process is painful. But you have to do it if the person in question is an occasion of sin. Be wise and avoid the painful process in the

first place by not allowing yourself to fall in love with someone you can't marry.

Engaged couples who find each other's company an occasion of sin are bound to take whatever safeguards they find necessary to avoid the sin.

Catholics should not keep company with a divorced person for two reasons: because of the danger of falling in love and losing one's faith, and because of bad example.

### *Kissing and Embracing*

Kissing and embracing, if long, tight, and frequent, tend strongly to arouse the sex appetite. People have to be honest with themselves about this matter. A decent good-night kiss is one thing. The kisses decency forbids are something quite different.

### *Liquor*

Strong liquor is poison to purity. Why? Because it paralyzes our nerves and our brain. These are the instruments through which we exercise will power to control our appetites. Drunks walk crooked because they cannot think straight. And persons who cannot think straight cannot keep in mind the motives which keep them pure. Many, many boys and girls make their first serious mistake against purity when they are under the influence of strong liquor.

### *Indecent Dress*

As regards dress or the lack of it, anything is indecent which is calculated to emphasize and play up sex appeal. There are many ways of playing up sex appeal either by adding to the clothing usually worn or subtracting—to the point of near nudity.



When a moralist draws attention to indecency in dress he is often reminded that women wear far less at bathing beaches than in ballrooms and that savages in the tropics wear almost nothing. These references to bathing beaches and savages only serve to obscure the key question which decides the decency of any kind of dress anywhere. Here is the question. Does this dress or degree of nudity (or this action, for that matter) serve as a sex stimulus? If it does, it is indecent. And the degree of indecency depends on how strong a stimulus it is for normal people.

Clothing serves several purposes, some of which are more important than others. It is a protection against the weather and against temptations of impurity. It serves as ornamentation and as a symbol for a particular state of life. Uniforms of policemen, soldiers, sailors, nurses, and the characteristic garbs of religious men and women are samples of symbolic clothing. Late and expensive styles are also supposed to symbolize the rich and high social sets.

Decency is one of the most important purposes of clothing. It is wise for women to remember that clothing designed to play up sex appeal, whatever the style designers may say, is also a symbol of station in life and of character. "Daring," "sexy" dress has always been the sign of recognition for women who make a business of prostituting love and sex. As a matter of history, all the tricks of sex appeal were developed first and used by such women as these. Sex appeal is a sign of their immoral profession. So if a decent girl dresses for strong sex appeal, she should not be surprised to be mistaken for a woman of careless morals.



## *Bathing Beauty Contests*

Bathing beauty contests, with body measurements, parading, and so on, are primarily sex appeal shows. Does a Catholic girl lower her standards by appearing in such a contest? She surely does. Christ said, "Blessed are the pure of heart." Bathing beauty contestants tempt many to sin, at least in thought and desire. Christ told us to give good example. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." All girls in such contests give bad example.

It is one thing to go to a bathing beach to swim. Going to a beach or a contest to look at bathers in abbreviated suits is something quite different. This is an occasion of sin, more or less serious to normal people. The same goes for boys and girls lolling around in abbreviated clothing at picnics, beaches, or anywhere else.

Girls in general react more slowly to sex stimuli than do boys. Therefore, girls are bound in conscience to avoid styles of dress, certain postures, and actions which they know are strongly stimulating to boys. Girls who are knowingly careless about such things and knowingly cause boys to sin mortally in thought or desire, are themselves guilty of mortal sin. Why? Because it is a mortal sin to be the occasion of another person's sinning mortally, except in situations where nothing can be done beforehand or at the time, to prevent the other person's sin.

### **18. Movies, Plays, Burlesque, Books**

Of the common public commercial pastimes, motion pictures, whether in theaters or on

television, have the most widespread and deepest influence on people. They are usually built around strongly emotional situations and characters. Hollywood has glamorized movie stars so that they get more affection from modern youth than do many parents. For these and many other reasons motion pictures form ideas and plant attitudes in the minds of millions of Americans. Consequently Catholics are obliged to choose very carefully the films they see.

For Catholics the problem of choosing morally good movies from the hundreds that roll out of Hollywood is simplified by Legion of Decency classifications. Legion classifications are printed in many diocesan papers. Much more regard would be given to the Legion's ratings if Catholics knew the qualifications of those who do them this valuable service.

The work of reviewing films for the Legion of Decency is done on their own time, free of charge, by members of the National Federation of Catholic Alumnae. Each film is reviewed by a group of three hundred alumnae and rated on a standard form with regard to the morality of its theme, plot, characterization, and general treatment. Most of the women in this group are under thirty-five years of age. The rating is submitted to a picked group of twenty or thirty Catholic laymen who pass on the classification. These laymen are assisted in their judgment by clergymen who give the final approval to the rating.

The Legion classifications are familiar to conscientious Catholics. A-1, unobjectionable for all; A-2, unobjectionable for adults; B, objectionable in part for all; C, totally objectionable for all.

## *Moral Obligation*

Moralists agree that pictures classed "C" are so objectionable for all normal persons that they are forbidden under pain of mortal sin. An exceptional person might judge that a certain "C" picture would do him no harm. But he would be forbidden to attend anyway because of the bad example he would give.

Moralists also agree that all persons should make it a rule to stay away from "B" pictures. Indecent scenes; plots that discredit faithfulness in marriage; evil means justified because they bring about something good, situations approving or treating sympathetically divorce, suicide, mercy killing; glamorized stories of gangsters and evil women—any one of these objectionable features will throw a picture into the "B" classification.

Adults who make a habit of attending "B" movies without regard for the danger involved are practically sure to suffer damage to their Christian ideals and morals sooner or later. Teen-agers who are equally careless risk worse damage. Catholics may attend "B" movies when they have a sufficient reason for attending. The reason should be in proportion to the danger in each case. Safeguards should be taken to prevent harm to morals.

Is mere entertainment or curiosity or the desire to be sociable a sufficient reason for going to "B" pictures without restriction? No! Before going to "B" pictures, a person should try to discover from movie reviews what is morally objectionable in the picture and so judge whether the reason for going is sufficient to risk the danger.

Usually the part of an "A-2" picture which is considered objectionable for non-adults is

something with decided adult interest, or something which only adults are presumed to be able to experience without harm. Such would be false philosophy of one kind or another. Conscientious young Catholics will, as a rule, avoid "A-2" pictures.

Risque floor shows, risque plays are to be considered in a class with "C" motion pictures and are forbidden under pain of mortal sin.

### *Books*

Reading printed stories does not create such a vivid impression as seeing sound motion pictures. Still, it must be noted that many present-day writers make their stories much sexier than would be permitted on the screen.

Various Catholic newspapers and magazines review current books and list their moral failings, just as the Legion of Decency reviews films. In general, books that a majority of Catholic reviewers condemn share the same moral rating as "C" movies. This means that Catholics should neither read them nor have them around the house. Books that are reviewed as partially objectionable because they feature indecency, divorce, and other immoralities, share the same moral rating as "B" motion pictures and should be regarded likewise.

### **19. Sex Education**

How much should a person know about sex? As much as is necessary to satisfy their present needs. Suppose a little boy in first grade is destined by a fond parent for the profession of medicine. One day he will need to know the biology of sex in complete detail. But he doesn't need detailed biological knowledge as a child or even as an adolescent. Knowledge



should be proportioned to him, according to his present needs—as a child, as an adolescent, and as a medical student.

The interest of small children in all the parts of their own body and in where they came from is prompted by normal curiosity. A child's questions about such things should be answered truthfully and briefly for two important reasons. A strong natural motive for love and respect of parents is the fact that a child is physically dependent on them, especially its mother, for the very substance of its body. It is a sad mistake for parents to deprive a child of this beautiful truth. Besides, curiosity about these matters builds up if not satisfied. And so, in time, anything connected with sex assumes the dimensions of a major crisis for the child. Eventually such ill-trained little boys and girls gather whatever information they can on sex from comic books, movies, magazines, newspapers, and other "wise" little boys and girls. In the process, the beautiful truth of their physical relationship to their mother and father is turned into a subject for sneaky conversation and a thing to be considered funny and dirty.

### *Sufficient Information*

Enough information about sex should be given a small child to teach it to respect its parents, to satisfy normal curiosity and to balance off the sex information which ill-trained little boys and girls pass around. The most important point of the instruction and training is to teach children to curb needless curiosity about sex; to train them to cover and not to handle unnecessarily the sex parts of their body; to avoid sex as a subject for general conversation.

As children grow older they should be given more sex information according to their needs. Naturally grade-school boys begin to wonder why the girls play different games and begin to look much different as they grow. Their innocent questions about such things will not call for a major revelation by father or mother, teacher or priest, if sex instruction at home from childhood is properly tended to.

Children properly instructed in sex from childhood are thus equipped to accept the changes of adolescence and solve its problems. Little girls who learn that their bodies are designed by God so they can give birth to children are not mystified and frightened by changes during adolescence which fit their bodies to this purpose. Boys who have learned that their bodies are designed for the part of fatherhood will escape the unbearable curiosity which afflicts children raised in total ignorance of sex. With this knowledge, an habitual sense of moral responsibility and a grasp of the proper safeguards for purity and the divine helps of religion are the only sure solution to sexual delinquencies.

### *Public Sex Instruction*

When parents neglect their duty of properly instructing children in sex, it raises a real public problem. Many non-Catholic educators presume that the answer to the problem of sexual delinquency among adolescents consists in group sex instruction of boys with girls. The ideas behind this program are that such public treatment as this will bring sex right out into the open; and that when the biological facts of reproduction are known and discussed

by young people, the sex problem will take care of itself.

Catholic educators have these main objections to this idea of sex education.

1. It omits religion as an essential source of moral standards and sanctions, as well as a means of divine help.
2. It starts with the wrong idea that knowledge about the biology of sex (facts of life) will curb experimentation and insure control.

As regards sex and religion, it is a true Christian doctrine that perfect Christian purity is impossible without the help of divine grace. To teach sex without reference to God's law is like trying to teach the control of dynamite by studying the chemicals which make it explode. Sex control, as God wants it, is impossible for human beings without the aid of religion. Therefore, sex education without reference to religion will certainly fail to produce sex control.

As regards sex and biology, this is certain: Sex, in human beings, is something far deeper than the mere biological functions of human reproduction. Human love is most of all a property and possession of our spiritual soul. And because sex is linked with human love, as part of its fullest expression, it takes on a dignity beyond that of any of our other bodily appetites. Therefore, to consider sex merely as another biological function like respiration or digestion is to lose sight of its full meaning.

Sex is in a different class than biological processes like digestion for other reasons also. It involves strong impulses and emotional complications and falls under the very exact divine

law of purity. Therefore a discussion on sex with a mixed group of adolescents can easily defeat the very purpose of the instruction, which is to educate toward sex control.

## 20. How Much Is Enough?

Sex will always be an attractive subject for conversation and reading. The attraction is part of the working of the appetite. So there will always be a tendency among people to play up sex.

Those who are ignorant of, reject, or refuse to live up to, Christian standards of purity are the ones who are responsible for a widespread lack of Christian decency today. There is no end of writing on the subject and apparently no end of playing it up in movies, comics, magazine stories, and illustrations of women's styles.

So, we end where we started. Nowadays, Catholics, to be decent, have to exert themselves more than ever. They have to be clear in their ideas, strong in their motives, and firm in their resolutions. They will have to withstand the criticism and ridicule of many of their associates who drift with the current sex trend. But they take comfort in the assurance that purity is the price of real love and that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And they are only too willing to pay that price.

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