MODESTY IN DRESS: TWO ARTICLES

J. M. Cavanna, C.M.

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Modesty in Dress

Towards clear ideas on a perplexing problem in the Philippines of today.

There is a lot of confusion in our days among Catholics regarding what ought to be considered as modest or immodest dress for women. And the root of this confusion lies preciselyin [sic] the lack of uniform standards or norms to appraise and judge the modesty befitting Filipino womanhood. Not rarely good Catholics and even spiritual directors cannot agree with each other, especially on account of the tendency to consider modest here what is perhaps an established custom or accepted fashion in other country, forgetting that, as St. Thomas says, modesty has *"to have regard to place, time and person"*.

Often times our Catholic papers have published interesting articles on the subject, but avoiding to give precise norms for modesty in dress, and even maintaining that this is not possible, that each one should follow the God-given instinct of shame, that it is lawful "to follow the prevalent fashion (but carefully avoiding extremes, naturally!), that the erotic character of modern fashions depends on whether they become a custom or not, and that to dress *a la mode* is of supreme importance for woman".[1] Such statements may have some truth in them, but doubtlessly they foster a disconcerting laxity of criteria on the matter.

1 Cf. *The Cross*, Sept. 1955; also, March 1957, pp. 9; 13.

And what is worse, they seem to contradict the voice of the Church and of its Hierarchy, since in different occasions, our Bishops have raised their voice to give specific norms and precise laws concerning modesty in feminine apparel. We intend with this article to clarify the issue and to find a common ground of assent for the apparently dissenting opinions of well-meaning Catholics. To this end we shall study the following points:

2) *Is modesty a merely subjective question?*

2) *What does modesty means?*

3) *What is the diference [sic] between obscene, immodest and not modest?*

5) *What are the norms of modesty in dress for the Catholic Filipino women?*

1. Is modesty a merely subjective question?

We quote here from a lecture of Rev. Fr. Antonio PIÑON, O.P.[2]: "There is widespread tendency to appraise moral problems from a purely subjective point of view. Too often the stand is taken that if a certain thing causes no moral harm to me, then the thing is morally right or at least indifferent in itself. And one repeatedly hears the dictum "Evil to him that is evil; to the pure all things are pure". Which is all right only to a certain point, in the sense that the evil man will abuse unto evil even the holiest things, and the good man will make of evil an opportunity to practise virtue. A pure man will, with God's grace, preserve his virtue unsullied even in the midst of a colony of nudists. But it does not follow that nudity is therefore proper and morally right. All moral problems, it is true, do have a personal and subjective aspect. But this subjective aspect is not the only, nor even the paramount, consideration. Above the subjective considerations there is the objective aspect which is of primary importance because it is this that gives a thing its essential morality. This is the primary consideration. Subjective reasons are of secondary and subordinate value".

2 PIÑON, Rev. Fr. Antonio, O.P., "What's in Ballet...? — Speech delivered under the auspices of U.S.T. Pax Romana, November 20, 1955.

Modesty, then, must be appraised not subjectively, but objectively, according to the principles of morality. "The principles of morality of which I speak are the Catholic principles. These principles are God-given. We have not invented them. They have been divinely revealed by God Himself. Consequently, these principles are not the object upon which we are to pass judgment. Rather, they are the criteria by which we must judge things. To attempt to pass judgment on them would be to attempt to pass judgment on God's infinite wisdom, on God Himself. Therefore, it is absurd to try to accommodate Catholic moral principles to the ways, customs, usages, and behavior of the times. It is childish to advocate a relaxation of these principles of morality, of the Ten Commandments, in order to fit them into the pattern of modern civilization; our customs and usages are the ones that must come to judgment and be censured by the yardstick of the eternal, God-given principles of morality".

No doubt, different ways, customs and usages that come with the changing of times may create different situations and new problems may arise demanding a new solution. But this solution has to be worked out from the very same changeless principles given by God, not invented by man.

2. What does modesty means?

We quote now John L. THOMAS, S.J.: "Following St. Thomas, we find that modesty is one of the virtues annexed to temperance in a secondary sense. Specifically, modesty is the virtue which moderates *"the external manner, in style of dress, comportment, conversation, so as to order all things by reasonable decorum, having regard to place, time and person"*. According to St. Thomas, lack of moderation in dress arises from failure to follow the customs of those with whom one lives or from an inordinate attitude of mind. Classified as inordinate attitudes are seeking glory through display in apparel, immoderate seeking of bodily comfort through clothing, over-solicitude for dress, slovenly carelessness and negligence in dress used to gain esteem".[3]

3 John L. Thomas, S.J., *Clothes, Culture and Modesty*, in the *The Cross*, Sept. 1955, p. 26.

The God-given instinct of shame — "*pudor*, in Spanish, for which there is no English equivalent — when consciously cultivated, is the virtue of modesty. In its natural, instinctive stage, it may not be a virtue. Nevertheless, it is a God-given instinct and sense intended by the Creator as a natural defense of purity. *Pudor* is the outer barricades and battlements of chastity. Without *pudor* innocence and purity are like a fortress whose moat is dry, the drawbridge lowered and ramparts deserted. *Pudor* is the brake which holds back the impetus of animal passions. Without *pudor* a man becomes like a car running downhill without brakes. That is why anything that impairs the sense of *pudor*, the sense of modesty, initiates a process of degeneration the results of which are in the long run fatal to the soul."

"Modesty is a characteristic Christian virtue. It blooms only in the garden of an exquisitely chaste soul. It is chastity's most delicate bud. Modesty stands guard in the antechamber of chastity. It is perceived and sensed only by souls with a finely triggered judgment of values and nuances. For modesty in the field of the spirit is akin to the delicacy of pastel shades in painting. Only finely balanced souls of exquisite sensitiveness capture it. Coarse souls may distinguish what is obscene and lewd, but fail to capture the fragrance of modesty. They see what is wrong in a *bikini;* they cannot see what is wrong in sleeveless dresses. For this very reason, modesty is easily hurt, its fragrance easily dissipated".

"And that is also the reason why, although the world scarcely pays any attention to modesty, the Church, finely attuned to the things of the spirit, takes what seems to be a rather severe stand on the matter of modesty. Witness the following regulations issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Council by the mandate of the Holy Father, on Jan. 12, 1930:

> "1. The parish priest, and especially the preacher, when occasion arises, should, according to the words of the Apostle Paul (II Tim., IV, 2,), insist, argue, exhort and command that feminine garb be based on modesty and womanly ornament be a defense to virtue. Let them likewise admonish parents to cause their daughters to cease wearing indecorous dress...
>
> "3. Let parents keep their daughters away from public gymnastic games and contests; but if their daughters are compelled to attend such exhibitions, let them see that they are fully and modesty [sic] dressed. Let them never permit their daughters to don immodest garb...
>
> "5. Said Superioresses and teachers (in schools for girls) must not receive in their colleges and schools immodestly dressed girls, and should not even make an exception in the case of

mothers of pupils. If, after being admitted, girls persist in dressing immodestly, such pupils should be dismissed.

"6. Nuns, in compliance with the Letter dated August 23, 1928 by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, must not receive in their colleges, schools, oratories or recreation grounds, or, if once admitted, tolerate girls who are not dressed with Christian modesty; said nuns, in addition, should do their utmost so that love for holy chastity and Christian modesty may become deeply rooted in the hearts of their pupils...

"9. Maidens and women dressed immodestly are to be debarred from Holy Communion and from acting as sponsors at the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; further, if the case demands it, they may even be forbidden to enter the Church". (A.A.S. XII, Jan. 1930, pg. 26).

"In view of the frequent exhortations to modesty in dress, it is often asked whether there is any authoritative statement by the Holy See concerning a criterion of modesty in women's apparel. The MARYLIKE CRUSADER (Vol. I, no. 1) quotes a passage from the Homiletic and Pastoral Review (Sept. 1930) which refers modesty standards set by His Holiness Pope Pius XI in the following terms: *"In order that uniformity of understanding prevail in all institutions of religious women.... we recall that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers' breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows, and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent material are improper...."*

Worldlings, may hide behind the convenient facade of "art" and sneer at what they call "prudishness". There are still people, sad to say, who believe name-calling to be an effective substitute for sound argument and a good camouflage for shallowness of thinking and of spirit. But the Church is unruffled. She stands secure in her divinely guided wisdom, and where the good and salvation of souls is concerned, she does not hesitate to call a spade a spade. Wherefore, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in the above quoted instruction, commends and exhorts the Bishops and other Ordinaries to continue "bearing with fortitude the derision and mockery leveled against them for this cause". (A.A.S., loc. cit.)"[4]

4 Rev. Fr. A. Piñon, loc. cit.

3. What is the difference between obscene, immodest and, simply, not modest

"The word *immoral* or *indecent* covers a wide range from the downright *obscene* or *lewd* to the merely *immodest*. To avoid imprecision we shall refrain from using the word indecent and employ instead the words *obscene and immodest*. These two words do not mean the same thing. What is *obscene* is gravely sinful; what is *merely* immodest is only venially sinful. There exists an objective criterion which separates the obscene or lewd from the merely immodest. Obscenity deals with veneral pleasures or what is proximately connected with it. Immodesty, in the special sense in which it is employed in this discussion, is concerned with *remote* occasions of impurity. Thus, to illustrate the point in matters of feminine apparel, the uncovering of organs of procreation is obscene. Also, the uncovering of the regions in the immediate vicinity of the sexual organs (for instance, a bikini, plunging low-cut necklines) is obscene because it draws attention powerfully to the seats of veneral pleasures. For the same reason transparent clothes and tights which reveal the contour of sex organs themselves, although fully covering them, are obscene. On the other hand, the uncovering of those parts of the body which are close to, but not in the immediate vicinity of, the sex organs is immodest because it draws attention to those same organs, although in a milder way. Thus, sleeveless dresses are immodest; and those with wide arm holes come very perilously close to being obscene. The fashion of many woman today wearing only half slips with the result that it is clear there is nothing between the outer garment and the flesh except a clearly etched brassiere is also immodest".[5]

5 Ibid., l.c.

Modesty of dress, as we have seen, is the moderation in its style that keeps a reasonable decorum having regard to place, time and person. Any style of dress wanting in that moderation but without offering any occasion of sin, will be "not modest", although it is neither immodest nor obscene. Thus, a dress with sleeves of less than quarter length (i.e., less than one-half way between the shoulder and elbow) is "not modest", because it is not in keeping with modesty standards (as indicated above, given by the Church), though perhaps it may not be yet reckoned as indecent (that is, immodest or obscene) because it does not afford occasion of sin, either remote or proximate. A "sleeveless" dress is immodest, in more or less degree; a strapless, backless dress is often times obscene.

How then do they sin who wear obscene, immodest or merely not modest dresses? Judging the matter objectively, regardless of the knowledge, intention, and voluntariness and other circumstances of the wearer, those who wear obscene clothes sin grievously; those who wear immodest clothes sin venially; those who wear "not modest" dresses (which are not immodest nor obscene) commit only an "imperfection", a "fault" or "defect", which may be no sin at all, if there is some justifying reason for the use of such dress, or at most a venial sin if it is used without any sufficient reason at all.

Subjectively, and hence for each particular case, much will depend on the knowledge, intention, voluntaries and other circumstances of the person who wear such dresses. Many persons do not really know what are the norms or standards to be followed regarding modesty of dress (and that is why it is imperative to illustrate the faithful on this matter), or if they heard about such norms they do not consider them binding in conscience, they think such norms too strict, as coming from Church leaders who (so they think) are not acquainted with the world of fashion and are somewhat

behind the times. Other persons feel justified in wearing such dresses because they have no bad intention; "they find nothing reprehensible in fashions which aim at making them "attractive" through the subtle interplay of natural bodily form and artfully designed clothing. Since husbands are not selected for women by their families, they must 'attract' a suitable male and continue to attract him in the face of all future competition. Consequently, to be dressed attractively, which often means little more than to be dressed *a la mode*, is of supreme importance for women".[6] Other argue in favor of such dresses with this sort of reasons: "It takes no exact measuring of lengths and depths and no weighing of cloth or discussion of sheerness and clinging qualities to instruct instinctive and God-directed nature. If your costume is meant for the occasion, it's probably right. (*This is a picnic, a party, a swim, you know; such costumes are meant for these occasions.*) If in it, you can do the things the occasion calls for, from sleeping to playing hockey, it is probably correct. (*Well, nothing better to enjoy the picnic and the party than these costumes...*) If it leaves you without embarrassment (*and certainly, I don't feel ackward with this, rather if I'd wear other so-called 'modest' dresses in this occasion when everybody simply do not wear it, I'd feel embarrassed!*); if it leaves the audience without nervous tension, overinterest or embarrassment (*why?, on the contrary, the audience shall be delighted with this dress... everybody wears something like this!*); then, IT IS LIKELY TO BE MODEST..."[7] "Let us not forget that, wearers of the most extreme fashions learn in time to brazen it out. They get so that they don't care what they wear or don't wear".[8] And as such wearers are wont to be in the company of people like them, *"birds of the same feathers..."*, and because "the audience of an immodest style is supposed to act (and in the case will generally act) as if they didn't know why the girls had cut the dress",[9] it will be in most cases useless "to turn the attention of the fashion analyst to the normal audience made up of normal men and women".[10] Finally, there may be cases and we know certainly that these are not imaginary but do really happen, when girls have to don immodest dresses against their will because their worldly-minded mothers or fathers compel them... to ignore the claims of their inborn or acquired modesty.

6 *The Cross*, Sept. 1955, pp. 27.

7 *The Cross*, March 1957, p. 13. We have introduced between parentheses the wrong way how worldly people would interpret what Fr. Lord meant for good Catholics only.

8 Ibid. p. 11.

9 Ibid., l.c.

10 Ibid., l.c.

J. M. CAVANNA, C.M.

(*To be continued*)

Modesty in Dress

Towards clear ideas in a perplexing problem in the Philippines of today.

4. What are the norms of modesty in dress for the Catholic Filipino women.

(Continued)

All these factors and other special circumstances of time, place, or persons, may affect the *subjective* guilt of wearing immodest or obscene clothes. And that is why, although the faithful should have clear cut ideas and definite norms about modesty in feminine apparel, no one should judge rashly of his neighbor who departs somewhat from such norms. That judgment is reserved to the tribunal of God in the last day, and to the tribunal of human conscience in the Sacrament of Penance.

One thing calls our attention in this matter, and it is this. Although Rome has talked again and again about modesty of women's dress, it has not issued general norms for all nation and for all times indistinctly, because the Church knows well that modesty, by its very definition, has different demands according to places, times or persons. That is why in every country the Bishops, the lawful pastors *"placed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God"* under the authority of the Pope, are the ones called upon to issue norms about modesty, whenever the need for such norms arises.

"Lay groups do not have authority to set up minimum standards of modesty in dress. Nor do even priest have such authority, because it is a question of public morality. Only Bishops are competent in this question under the guidance of the Sacred Congregation of the Council. This is clearly indicated in the special instructions sent by this Sacred Congregation to the Hierarchy on January 12, 1930, concerning modesty in dress, in these words: "Therefore this Sacred Council, which watches over the discipline of clergy and people...."[11] And in this matter there is "need to be cautioned against the 'Feminist movement' which is trying to bore itself into the Church and which seeks to give women a voice in the government of the Church. Christ has made no such provision in his Church. This error St. Paul clearly refutes in I Cor. 14:34, 35: *"Let women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted them to speak but to be subject, as also the law saith. But if they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is a shame for a woman to speak in the Church."* Certainly, then, women are entirely out of their rights when they presume the traditional standards of the Church on modesty in dress. Even their unanimous vote would decide nothing".[12] And if any one would say that Bishops do not understand of fashions, we should reply, that may be true but they do understand of morals, and in setting modesty standards they are not deciding on which are the latest or the most glamorous fashions, but on which are the demands of Christian modesty for feminine apparel.

11 Rev. B. KUNKEL, Bartelso, Ill., U.S.A., Address, August 18, 1952: "Re-Enthronement *of Mary as the Perfect Model of Purity*," 2nd Printing, Aug. 25, 1954, p. 12.

12 Rev. B. KUNKEL, Bartelso, Ill., U.S.A., Address, Sept. 25, 1953: "*Mary's Training school*: The Remedy For An Unchaste Generation," 2nd Printing Sept. 15, 1954, p. 15.

We have already seen some of the regulations issued by the Instructions of the Sacred Congregation of the Council on January 12, 1930. On that same year the Bishop of Nueva Segovia in compliance with that Instruction ordered:

> "Serán tenidas por 'modas indecentes' aquellos trajes de mujer que no cubran las rodillas y los codos, con un palmo de tela densa, por lo menos. Serán excluidas de la Mesa Eucarística

aquellas señoras, y señoritas que no lleven mangas largas y faldas que cubran, por lo menos la mitad de las piernas".[13]

13 S. SANCHO C., Obispo de Nueva Segovia, "*Cireular* [sic] *Contra las Modas Indecentes*" Vigan 29 de Enero de 1930; ap. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, Año 1930, p. 244.

In the following year on the occasion of the XV Centennial of the proclamation of the dogma of Mary's Divine Motherhood in the Council of Ephesus, the whole Philippine Hierarchy in a Joint Pastoral promulgated in certain way the Roman ordinances of the Sacred Congregation of Council declaring that 'ladies and girls without long sleeves or with skirts not extending below the knees shall be refused Holy Communion". This Circular Letter signed by the Archbishop of Manila and the Bishops of Cebu, Lipa, Jaro, Nueva Segovia, Calbayog, Zamboanga, Nueva Caceres, Tuguegarao, Lingayen, and the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila and the Apostolic Prefect of Palawan (that is, the whole Philippine Hierarchy at that time) provided furthermore that "all Rectors of Churches and chapels should place in a noticeable place of the vestibule or porch the following notice: CATHOLIC LADIES, DRESS MODESTLY AT ALL TIMES BUT ESPECIALLY WHEN COMING TO THE HOUSE OF GOD".[14]

14 PASTORAL COLECTIVA DEL EPISCOPADO DE FILIPINAS SOBRE EL XV CENTENARIO DEL CONCILIO DE EFESO, 19 de Mayo de 1931. Cf. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO, Año IX, Agosto 1931, pp. 546-549.

Twenty years afterwards the Archbishop of Cebu and Apostolic Administrator of Tagbilaran, renewing the orders of His Holiness Pope Pius XI concerning modesty in women's dress, of Jan. 12, 1930, had to acknowledge:

"When it imposed these regulations, the Sacred Congregation of the Council exhorted all Catholic Bishops to resist with all their energy the immodesty of dress which has everywhere come into vogue, and has done grave injury to that virtue which is the crowning glory of women and also the strongest safeguard of their chastity.

"Despite the response of the Bishops to this exhortations, the fashions of the times have increasingly cast off regard for shame and decency, and we behold and with sorrow that some even among Catholic women and girls have adopted these fashions. We must all bring ourselves to a realization of the grave issues involved in this matter. It is not only the danger to the souls of those who have adopted these shameless fashions that we have to think of, nor is it only the scandal they cause and the temptations to sin that they excite in others, serious though these considerations are. Over and above all these must be our concern for the religion and morals of the coming generation that will be reared by these women, who show in their very dress how lax their own religious and moral sense has become. Who ever reflects on the gravity of these evils and dangers must agree that a vigorous enforcement of the Church's regulations on modesty in women's dress is urgently called for.

"Accordingly, in this our Archdiocese of Cebu, and in the Diocese of Tagbilaran entrusted to our administration, we call on all pastors, preachers, parents, directors of girls' schools and colleges, and on all Catholic women to ponder these regulations and the grave obligation they have of carrying them out, so far as they pertain to them. We declare here and now that these regulations are to be regarded as henceforth fully in force in this Archdiocese and in the Diocese of Tagbilaran. Specifically, as regards the presence in Church of improperly dressed women and girls, we prescribe that, starting

on January 1, 1952, all such women and girls are to be refused Holy Communion, and are to be excluded from participation in baptisms, in confirmations, and in weddings.

"It is our earnest prayer that, with the generous cooperation of our entire flock in the execution of these regulations, we may soon see shine forth once more without a stain that Christian modesty for which in times past our Filipina womanhood has been famous".[15]

15 Julio R. ROSALES, Archbishop of Cebú and Apostolic Administrator of Tagbilaran, PASTORAL LETTER ON MODESTY IN WOMEN'S DRESS, December 8, 1951; ap. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO, Año 1952, p. 18

Some months later the Archbishop of Jaro, after renewing the Roman provisions of 1930, in a Circular Letter to all Vicar Foranes, Parish priests, Chaplains, Directors of schools and associations of the Archdiocese, issued the following norms:

> "1a. Los vestidos ordinarios partiendo del cuello deben bajar hasta la mitad de la pierna.
>
> "2a. Las mangas deben de llegar por lo menos hasta el codo.
>
> "3a. Se califican de inmodestos los vestidos transparentes y los demasiado ceñidos.
>
> "4a. El vestido de trabajo, de recepción (vestidos o trajes de noche, sport, regionales) debe seguir estas normas con un espíritu de acomodación inteligente y modesto.
>
> A las que faltaren a estas reglas se les negará la Sagrada Comunión si se acercan al comulgatorio. No podrán ser madrinas de bautismos, casamientos y confirmaciones".[16]

16 José Ma. CUENCO, D.D. Arzobispo de Jaro, 29 Agosto de 1952, CIRCULAR No. 40, SOBRE LA MODA INMODESTA; ap. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO, Año 1952, pp. 650-651.

On the following month it was the Ecclesiastical Governor of the Archdiocese of Manila in his Circular of September 8, 1952, who prescribed: "that, effective October 26, 1952, Feast of Christ the King:

> 1st No woman wearing strapless, sleeveless or backless dresses be given the Holy Communion, or accepted to act as Godmother in Baptisms and Confirmation;
>
> 2nd No sleeves worn while receiving the Holy Communion be shorter than, at least, five (5) inches from the shoulder".

Then, the Marian Year, commemorating the first Centennial of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, came having as one its main aims proposed by the Holy Father Pius XII, "that our youth may seek their models in Mary and her Divine Son and grow pure and unblemished" (FULGENS CORONA). When the end of that year 1954 was approaching, on August 15, the Sacred Congregation of the Council issued a Letter to all the Most Reverend Ordinaries of the Catholic world. It was again a call for action against the rampant evil of immodest dresses, not only in beaches and summer resorts, but also in the streets of cities and villages, in public and private places, even in the sacred temples of the Lord. Evidently one of the main aims of the Marian Year was far from being attained. The Sacred Congregation of the Council declared emphatically that "the Supreme Pontiff desires vehemently that this campaign for Christian modesty be undertaken with special eagerness" and thereby made a call upon all the Bishops and the clergy, upon all the fathers, and mothers of family, and finally upon all militant Catholics belonging to the ranks of Catholic Action, to consider

"as one of their most important missions of intensifying the successful work already started in this field".[17]

17 CARTA DE LA SAGRADA CONGREGACION DEL CONCILLO SOBRE LA COSTUMBRE DE LOS VESTIDOS DESHONESTOS, ap. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO, Año 1954, pp. 621-624.

These last words of the Pope seem to be an allusion to a wonderful movement started in U.S.A. under the name PURITY CRUSADE OF MARY IMMACULATE, to which just a month before (July 14, 1954) the Holy Father sent His Apostolic Blessing. This movement which although started on Dec. 8, 1944 emerged from seclusion only on the eve of the Marian Year (Oct. 7, 1953) to take the proportions of a "gigantic spiritual and civic Crusade" (Pius XII, Febbruary 10, 1952) sought for by the Holy Father for the Christian renewal of a world "almost universally flooded with moral decadence" (Pius XII, March 1950), has been fully endorsed by the most Rev. Archibishope of Manila who in his Circular Letter of Setember 21, 1955 acclaimed the MARYLIKE DRESS CRUSADE as "the heavenly formula to counteract a most serious evil of our time".

This glorious Crusade has adopted a set of approved "MARILYKE" standards (MARILYKE means *"Whatever Our Blessed Mother Approves"*, based on the standards promulgated by the late George Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, which are in essence the very standards laid down by Pope Pius XI in his own letter of August 23, 1928, in these words:

> "In order that uniformity of understanding prevail in all institutions of religious women ... we recall that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers' breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows, and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent material are improper, as also flesh-colored stockings, which suggest the legs being bare."

The Holy Father incorporated this passage by reference in the special instruction he sent to the Hierarchy of the United States on January 12, 1930, concerning modesty in dress.[18]

18 THE MARILYKE CRUSADE SERIES No. 1. *"The Marilyke Tag with Rome-Approved Standards."* Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate, Bartelso, Illinois, Sept. 15, The Marian Year, p. 2. Also, B. KUNKEL, "Re-Enthronement of Mary" as above, op. cit., p. 13.

The approved MARILYKE STANDARDS for bridal gowns, formals, uniforms, blouses, street dresses, are as follows:[19]

19 B. KUNKEL, Mary's Training School..." as above, op. p. 18.

1) MARILYKE is modest without compromise, like Mary" Christ's Mother.

2) MARILYKE dresses provide full coverage for the bodice, chest, shoulders, back, and arms as indicated in Number 5, with no cutouts in front or in back lower than two inches below the neckline.

3) MARILYKE dresses do not admit the use of flesh-colored, or of transparent materials alone, where full coverage is required.

4) MARILYKE dresses do, however, permit a free use of laces, nets, etc. for ornamentation and trimmings.

5) MARILYKE dresses have at least quarter sleeves, i.e., one-half way between the shoulder and elbow; but three-quarter or full length in gowns for brides and their attendants, and in church and school uniforms. (Gauntlets are tolerated for wedding ceremonies, but only if attached to the sleeves of at least quarter length).

6. MARILYKE dresses do not unduly reveal the figure of the wearer.

7) MARILYKE dresses provide full coverage even after jacket, cape, or stole are removed".

On July 14, 1954, Pius XII sent a letter through His Pro-secretary Monsignor J.B. Montini to the Belleville, Illinois Chancery Office, imparting His paternal Apostolic Blessing to Rev. Bernard Kunkel, founder and director of *Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate*, and all who help in the *Marilyke Crusade*. In that letter His Holiness expressed "His gratification at the success already achieved by this praiseworthy movement, and He prays that our Immaculate Mother may guide and prosper it in the future."[20]

20 THE MARILYKE CRUSADE SERIES No. 1, p. 3.

In the Philippines an adaptation of these standards to special conditions of the country has been made after careful study, and the ecclesiastical authority has approved the publication of these standards, which are the same as the above, with only these variations:

1) As above, 1)

2a) As above, 2)

2b) Adjusting the MARILYKE standards to the Filipina dress a return to the original style is advocated, i.e., the neck line may not be too low, the shoulders must be covered by the camisa to which the sleeves are attached. This necessitates the wearing of a *corpiño* and a *pañuelo*.

3) As above, 3)

4) As above, 4)

5) MARILYKE dresses have at least quarter sleeves, i.e., one-half way between the shoulder and elbow. If gauntlets are used for wedding ceremonies they should be attached to the sleeves.

6a) As above, 6)

6b) The too tight modern Filipina dress, especially if slits are provided at the sides, is not MARILYKE for the reason mentioned in 6a.

7) As above, 8)

8) As above, 8)

The First Plenary Council of the Philippine Islands, approved and confirmed by Pope Pius XII on February 23, 1956, and with full binding vigor since last February 15, 1957, have these decrees concerning modesty of women's dresses:

"*690*. The directresses and teachers in girls' schools must carefully take into account, and strive to put into practice, the statutes issued by the Holy Congregation of the Council on January 12, 1930; to wit:

1. The directresses and teachers of schools must strive so as to imbue in the hearts of their girls the love of modesty so that they may be induced to dress modestly.

2. The same directresses and teachers shall not admit to the colleges and school girls who wear dresses unbecoming modesty, not excepting even their mothers, and if such have been admitted, they shall be dismissed, unless they change their ways.

3) Religious Sisters shall not admit in their colleges, schools, chapels, or places of recreation, girls who do not observe the Christian manner in dress, nor allow them to remain there; and in the education of their charges they shall see to it specially that the love of modesty and Christian decency take deep roots in their hearts.

"*691*. Catholic schools or colleges cannot partake in public exercises and athletic contests wherein the youths and students of both sexes take parts, without the permission of the local Ordinary.

The female students of Catholic schools must likewise be restrained from athletic games and exercises which occasionally are being held only for girls.. However, if they be obliged to take part in them, vigilance should be exercised in a very special manner over the modesty of the girls and all efforts exerted so that they wear dresses which are wholly expressive of chastity, "inasmuch as it is highly unbecoming that they exhibit and show themselves before the eyes of all onlookers." (Pius XI, Encycl. DIVINI ILLIUS MAGISTRI, 31 Dec. 1929, S.C. Congr. Conc. Instr. Jan. 12, 1930).

"*272*. Priests should steadfastly fight, with the help of the lay faithful, dissolute public customs, trying to remove their causes and to apply suitable remedies. They should earnestly strive to deter the faithful from ...scantiness of dress which are today in vogue..."

"*541*. Women should not enter the church unless heads covered and modestly dressed. Those who wear immodest dresses should be refused Holy Communion and the acting as godmothers in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, and, if the case may demand it, even they should denied admittance into the church." (S.C. Conc., 12 Jan. 1930)."[21]

21 ACTA ET DECRETA PRIMI CONCILII PLENARII PHILIPINARUM, Manilae, 1956.

5. Meaning and Necessity of these norms for modesty in women's apparel.

The standards for modest dress given by the Church do not mean to draw a line between what is a sin and what is not yet a sin. This has been the common objection raised often against such norms. It has been said: "Because of various considerations that must be taken into account, it is difficult to tell the precise point where a fashion begins or ceases to be an occasion of sin. Indecent exposure is always and everywhere a proximate occasion of sin, but when is exposure indecent? When styles decree that skirts shall be seventeen inches from the ground? Or is it eighteen?"[22]

22 Harold C. GARDINER, S.J., *"Tenets For Readers" and Reviewers*, America Press, p. 29.

This objection is irrelevant. When we talk about modesty we are not dwelling precisely on what is not impure, unchaste, or obscene. We are talking about a virtue, and virtues have demands that are binding under pain of sin, and demands that are merely directive or by the way of counsel for what is better. The non-observance of these last demands is not a sin, although it may be an *imperfection, a fault, a defect*. Even in the demands that are binding, there may be some justifiable reasons, *at times*, not to observe them. This may happen especially when the demands are not so urgent, and when there are circumstances that may occasionally dispense a person from their observance.

It is a mistake to have modesty as a synonym of chastity. Modesty of dress refers to the "reasonable decorum in the style of dress, having regard to place, time and person." Thus, it is *not modest* for a professor to go to class with torn or dirty clothes, while that may be modest for a mechanic at work or for a beggar in the street. Here, as it is obvious, no question of sin is involved; it is just a matter of the "reasonable decorum in dress" which is demanded by the virtue of modesty in a different way from a professor than from a mechanic or a beggar.

When the Church authorities say that in a certain country women's dresses should have at least quarter sleeves (i.e. one-half way between the shoulder and elbow) it is meant that such is the minimum demanded by the "reasonable decorum" befitting Christian women in that country, taking into consideration its traditions, customs, etc. Less than that, there and then, is not *modest;* but if the departure from the minimum standard is not notable, if no occasion of sin, even remote, is offered, the dress is not yet *immodest*. It is *improper, defective, unbecoming, not approved*, but no one says that it is sinful, not even venially sinful.

If the departure from the minimum standards is notable or if an occasion, even remote, of sin is presented for good normal consciences: then the dress is immodest or even obscene if the style is provocative or scandalous.

And we should not forget that in this question of modesty, approved standards may be different in various countries, according to existing prevailing conditions, usages and traditions. And nobody should wonder if in a country where Catholics are a very small minority living in the midst of an immense crowd of pagan-minded people, modesty norms in dresses, social, recreations, and customs, may not be so strict or severe, as in other countries of centuries-old Christian heritage where the Catholic form the vast majority of the population. And it would be a blunder to try to introduce or make acceptable in these last countries modesty standards prevailing in the first ones. And although it is true that "once a custom is established, a fashion may lose (at least something of) its erotic

character", nevertheless moral theologians hold that "any marked exposure of portions of the body *usually covered in a given society* is *morally reprehensible* since such unaccustomed exposure is likely to be an occasion of sin to others." And, accordingly, those who transfer from one country (where it is already a custom) to another (where it is not) a fashion which is considered immodest in this last, or those who just introduce these fashions, are not free from guilt of sin.

Still some may object saying: "It is erroneous to stress the erotic character of modern fashions in the belief that the simple view of a figure so clad will by its nature arouse passion. Experience shows that once a custom is established this is simply not true."

But shall that justify the establishment of pagan customs among our Christian people, or the lowering of the traditional modesty standards in a Catholic country? Precisely, that has been the organised and methodical deceit followed by the enemies of Christianity to corrupt the world.

A French paper, "The Frenchwoman" explained it thus: "Our children must realize the ideal of nakedness. Thus the mentality of the child is rapidly transformed. To escape opposition, progress must be methodically graduated: first, feet and legs naked; then, upturned sleeves; afterwards, the upper and lower limbs; the upper part of the chest; the back...; in summer, the children will go around almost naked in all weathers..."

As Father Bernard Kunkel (the champion of the Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate) comments: "Make the blouses shearer year after year; the sweaters and jeans tighter; the shorts, shorter; the daytime dresses, sleeveless; the formals, strapless or with thin straps at best; the bathing suits most daring; all with the idea that the fashions should reveal as much as possible, rather than conceal. Who but the devil could devise a clever scheme as this knowing the inevitable result that would follow because of fallen human nature, brought by original sin?"

On May 22. 1941, Pope XII warned mothers, in these words: "O Christian mothers, if only you knew the future of distress and peril, of shame ill-restrained, that you prepare for your sons and daughters, in imprudently accustoming them to live hardly clothed and in making them lose the sense of modesty, you would be ashamed of yourselves and of the harm done to the little ones whom heaven entrusted to your care, to be reared in Christian dignity and culture." And on May 23, 1948 the same Pope XII made this startling announcement: "Mainly through sins of impurity do the forces of darkness subjugate souls." And again: "The greatest sin of our modern generation is that it has lost all sense of sin."

To counteract the devilish strategy of sweeping even Catholic consciences into surging tide of indecency and immorality, a definite set of minimum standards is of vital importance. Without them, Catholics little by little, are carried away by the pagan atmosphere prevailing in modern society, in movies and theaters, in magazines and in advertisements, in radio and TV, in parties and picnics, in beaches and summer, etc. etc.

The only way to raise a dike against the wave of modern paganism, invading all the realms of our society is to form a nucleus, a group of chosen faithful, ever increasing in number, who conscious and aware of their Christian dignity, may oppose pagan fashions with modest styles. The main obstacle in this matter is the tyranny of fashions and of human respect. This obstacle cannot be overcome as long as Catholics are left alone, isolated from each other, in the fight against immodest fashions: to fight in that way would demand real heroism, and not many are called to be heroes. It is absolutely

necessary to form sizable groups whose influence and numbers may be noticeable in all the sectors of our society.

The practical way to achieve this has been well pointed out by the Bishop of Nueva Segovia, back in 1930 in these wise ordinances:

> "4. Todas las Congregaciones o Asociaciones religiosas, como Hijas de María, Apostolado de la Oración, Cofradías del Carmen o de Sta. Teresita, Liga de Mujeres Católicas u otras similares, deberán incluir en sus Estatutos un artículo sobre la "modestia cristiana en el vestir", de acuerdo con el párrafo anterior.

And the Joint Pastoral of the whole Philippine Hierarchy on May 19, 1931 ordered with the same tenor:

> "3.—Las directoras y profesoras de nuestros colegios de niñas y señoritas deben hacer todo lo posible para honrar a la Madre de Dios inculcando en las alumnas horror sumo a la inmodestia, y haciéndolas observar todas las disposiciones de la Sagrada Congregación sobre la modestia en el vestir.
>
> "4.—Los Directores de Asociaciones piadosas, ayudados por las Celadoras y Jefes de Secciones, deberán hacer cumplir a todas las asociadas lo prescrito por la Sagrada Congregación en la misma materia.

And such disposition of thePhilippine [sic] Hierarchy is but an echo of what the Sacred Congregation of the Council ordered in January 12, 1930:

> "VII.—Institúyanse y cultívense asociaciones femeninas que con la palabra, el ejemplo, y la obra se propongan en frenar los abusos que se cometen en llevar vestidos contrarios a la modestia cristiana y promover la pureza de las costumbres y la honestidad en el vestir.
>
> "VIII.—En las asociaciones femeninas piadosas no se admitan mujeres con vestidos deshonestos; y, una vez admitidas, si faltan en esta materia y no se corrigen cuando se les advierta, sean expulsadas."

Here is then the remedy pointed out by our Mother the Church. We have many mandated and auxiliary organizations of Catholic Action in the Philippines with thousands and thousands of girls and ladies in their ranks. Nobody will call to doubt the sincere piety, the apostolic spirit of most of these women. And nevertheless, it is a pity to see many of them carried away often times by the strong current of immodest fashions, joining in their external apparel the big crowd of modern pagans aping the indecencies imported from Hollywood or from Paris. The only explanation of this preposterous attitude is the lack of definite criteria on modesty of dress for women, especially for Christian women.

Even priests and spiritual directors may at times entertain some confusion in this matter. One of the most common sources of confusion is to think only of chastity or impurity when speaking about modesty. From this mistaken idea comes the error of thinking that whatever is not clearly provocative or scandalous (i.e. offering a proximate occasion of sin), whatever "leaves you (and this *you* may be a brazen nudist, why not?) without embarasment, and the audience (and this *audience* may be the "big world", our modern "pagan society", the enemy No. 1 of souls, the only one "for whom Christ did

not pray"!) without nervous tension, overinterest, or embarrasment, IT IS LIKELY TO BE MODEST". Again, from this mistaken idea, comes the error of thinking that it is ridiculous to fix minimum standards of modesty, as if these were meant to mark the boundary line between "sin" and "not yet a sin". "When is exposure indecent? When styles decree that skirts shall be 17 inches from the ground? Or is it 18?"[23] Again, from this mistaken idea, comes the error of thinking that "Catholic women will be innocent of *sinful* exposure in dress if they follow the *prevalent fashion*, but carefully avoiding extremes",[23] without considering what one of the little seers of Our Lady of Fatima, inspired doubtlessly by the Mother of God, said: "Certain fashions will be introduced which will offend Our Divine Lord very much. Those who serve God ought not to follow these fashions..."

23 *The Cross*, Sept. 1955, l.c.

And, as in this last error, mention has been made of *"Catholic* women" and of *"those who serve God...."* we like to point still another common source of error in this matter of modesty. And it is to consider that, Catholics may follow the same standards of natural modesty as upright, decent pagans follow (although, as a matter of fact, women in pagan countries may serve often as models for our Christian "pagans" of ultrafashionable society in many big cities). It is the error of considering, as Fr. A. Piñon, O.P. remarks, "only too often the negative and preventive aspect of modesty, while its positive meaning and content are overlooked, and neglected. Too many people think that we cover our bodies for no other reason save to veil indecencies and remove occasions of sin, to preclude lust. That is a function of modesty, a very fundamental function, and one not to be overlooked. But he who thinks that there is nothing more to modesty is very much mistaken. Modesty, as a safeguard of chastity, was known to ancient pagan philosophers. But there is a higher aspect, a more sublime function of modesty, of which not even the greatest of non-Christian thinkers have had an inkling. This positive function is a characteristic Christian concept. It is that which sets Christian modesty apart from the modesty on which non-Christian sages have wisely and profoundly discoursed. Christian modesty sees the body not merely as a beautiful creation of God. It sees much more. Christian modesty sees the body as a holy thing, as a sacred vessel, as the living temple of the Most Holy Trinity. This, I repeat, is a characteristic Christian concept. The human body is consecrated by its contact with the supernatural, grace-giving Sacraments, especially those of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, to be temples— not in a metaphorical sense, but in actual living reality, of God. The covering we put on our bodies is the expression of awe and reverence. In our churches there are thousands of beautiful tabernacles and ciboria. Yet they are kept covered, not because they are ugly since they are in fact masterpieces of art; they are kept perpetually covered because they are holy, because they are the receptacle of the Body and Blood of Christ. So, too, with our bodies, living temples and tabernacles of the living God. In the ancient Law God commanded that the Holy of Holies be shielded away from the eyes of the people by a thick veil. What less can we do to show our reverence for our bodies, which God has deigned to sanctify and dwell in, than to keep them modestly covered? Only in heaven, where we shall see God face to face, in all the revelation of his infinite glory, may the living temples of the Godhead be unveiled without violating the reverence due them as holy things."[24]

24 PIÑON, loc. cit.

Before closing this study we should call the attention on a widespread misinterpretation of norms or standards given regarding modesty in the church. Some ladies, perhaps many, get the idea that they are to be modestly dressed only in the church or only at the communion rail, not in the streets nor in

social functions. That is why, they find an easy solution for their immodest dresses, in carrying along to the church a shawl to be put on when they enter or even more commonly only when they approach the communion rail.

It is true that, as the Apostle demands, Christian women "are to pray decently attired, adorning themselves with modesty and restraint" (I Tim. 2, 10), and that is why the Church makes *special* mention of modesty requirements at Church, and especially for those who are to take an active part in the liturgy, as the faithful going to receive Holy Communion or act as sponsors in Baptism or Confirmation or witnesses in Marriage. And because the Church has no jurisdiction in the streets or in recreation halls, her sanctions against immodest dresses are reserved for the holy precinct of her temples. But it does not mean that modesty is to be observed only in the house of God. The Apostle said to the first Christian: "Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh". (Phil. 4,5,), and after saying that he wished "that men pray *in every place*..." he adds: "In like manner women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair or gold, or pearls, or costly attire, but as it becomes women professing godliness, with good works" (I Tim. 2, 8-10), "whose adorning,—insists the first Vicar of Christ,—let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quite and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands" (I Petr. 3, 3-5). And this should be the first apostolate of Christian women, more effective, oftentimes, than other apostolic activities, as the first Pope remarks saying "that if any believe not the word (of preaching), they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear." (I Peter 3, 1).

The Scripture does not forbid but rather suggest that women "adorn themselves", not indeed as pagans for the sake of vanity or to allure to sin, but as Christians "with modesty and restraint". To be dressed attractively may be today of greater importance for women than in other times or places where husbands were selected for them by their families. But Christian fashions should aim to make them "attractive" to bring men closer to God, "that if any one believe not the truth of our religion, they may be won without sermons, books or arguments, by considering the chaste conversation of our girls, the incorruptibility of their quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God." There is a gleam in modesty that attracts more than the glamour of impudence.

Conclusions

WHAT'S MODEST . . . .?

In the Philippines of today, taking in consideration the latest regulations, ordinances and norms given by the Church authorities as mentioned above, and as long as such regulations and norms be not revoked or changed by the same authorities, we may conclude:

1. *Minimum* standards of modest dresses for bridal gowns, formals, uniforms, blouses, street dresses provide full coverage for the bodice, chest, shoulders and back(with no cutouts in front or in back lower than two inches below the neck line; sleeves should be *at least* one half-way between the shoulder and elbow. In the Filipina dress the original style should be preserved, i.e. the neck line may not be too low, the shoulders must be covered by the camisa to which the sleeves are attached, and the wearing of a "corpiño" and a "pañuelo" are required. In all kinds of dress, skirts should extend below the knees; flesh-colored or transparent material *alone where full coverage is required* are not allowed. On the contrary free use of laces, nets, etc. for ornamentation and trimmings is permitted. Dresses should provide full coverage even after jacket, cape, stole or bolero are removed. 2. Less than *quarter* sleeves (i.e. one half-way between the shoulder and elbow) is *not modest*, at least in the church. *Sleeveless* dresses are *immodest*, and *forbidden* in the church at least for communicants, sponsors of Baptism and Confirmation, and participants in wedding ceremonies. *Strapless* and *backless* dresses are *notably immodest*, and most often *obscene*, and *forbidden* for all in the church. Too tight dresses unduly revealing the figure of the wearer are *immodest*, to say the least.

3. If anyone say that the customs of today demand a change in the above standards, we will answer with the Apostle: "We have no such custom, nor the church of God." (I Cor. 11, 16).

4. The above standards should be a "requirement" for all good Catholic ladies, especially for those enrolled in Catholic schools, colleges and universities, as well as in Catholic Action organizations and pious Associations. Habitual non-observance of these norms should be a disqualification to belong to the "elite" of our Catholic community.

5. Pastors, spiritual directors, and Catholic leaders ought to agree with a uniform criterion in this matter, if they desire that Christian "modesty" may not become an empty word against the avalanche of modern paganism threatening to invade even our sacred temples. Diversity of criteria in substantial points introduce confusion among the faithful and distrust from the Church. We have all to obey and submit our judgment to the Bishops "placed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God."

J. M. CAVANNA, C.M.

Official Standards of Modest Dress

according to the directives of Rome and of the Catholic Hierarchy in the Philippines

Historical background and authoritative sources of the standards adopted by the Modesty Campaign of the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate

Let us notice from the start that the standards of modest dress do not precisely aim to define when a dress becomes an incitement to sin and when it is not; but rather when a dress is *modest*, that is, in accordance with the *reasonable decorum* befitting our Catholic women, and when it is not; since modesty is defined as "the virtue that moderates *external manner* (dress, comportment, conversation) so as to order all things by *reasonable decorum*, having regard to place, time and persons."

By decision of the National Council of the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate in the Philippines, dated June 24, 1957, proclaimed on August 15 and fully effective since December 8, of the same year, "no girl or lady may henceforth become or remain a member of the Association who would not abide by the approved *Marilyke*[1] Standards of Modest Dress." (*Marilyke* means *"What Mary Approves"*).

1 *The word *Marilyke* is registered as an exclusive property of the *Marylike Crusade* of Rev. Bernard Kunkel, Bartelso, Ill., U.S.A. By adopting that word (in the meaning of *"What Mary Approves"*) with due permission, the Philippine Modesty Campaign acknowledges its indebtedness to Fr. Kunkel's Crusade for dresses *"that Mary approves"*, i.e. *Marilyke* dresses.

The MARILYKE STANDARDS for modesty in dress, applied to bridal gowns, formal, party dresses, street dresses, gym suits, etc. are the following:

1. *Marilyke* is modest without compromise, "like Mary," Christ's Mother.
2. *Marilyke* dresses provide *full coverage* for the bodice, chest, shoulders, back and arms (see n. 5 below) with no cutouts in front or in back lower than two inches below the neckline.

NOTE: In the Filipina dress a return to the original style is advocated, i. e. the neckline may not be too low, the shoulders must be covered by the *camisa* to which the sleeves are attached. This necessitates the wearing of a *corpiño* and a *pañuelo*.

3. *Marilyke* dresses do not admit the use of flesh-colored or of transparent materials alone where *full* coverage is required.
4. *Marilyke* dresses do, however, permit free use of laces, nets, etc. for ornamentation and trimmings.
5. *Marilyke* dresses have *at least* quarter sleeves, i. e. one-half way between the shoulder and the elbow (preferably, according to Roman standards, sleeves *extending to the elbows*).
6. *Marilyke* dresses do not unduly reveal the figure of the wearer.

NOTE: On this account the too tight modern Filipina dress, especially if slits are provided at the sides, is not *Marilyke*.

7. *Marilyke* dresses have skirts extending below the knees.
8. *Marilyke* dresses provide full coverage even after jacket, cape, stole or bolero are removed.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND AUTHORITATIVE BASIS OF THIS DECISION:

Mary's call for the modesty campaign: at Fatima, 1917: "Certain fashions will be introduced which will offend our Divine Lord very much. *Those who serve God ought not to follow these fashions."*

The Pope's Representative, the Apostolic Delegate *in the Philippines*, following instructions issued in Rome and other dioceses of Christendom, ordered in *July 1925:* "The dress should reach, at least, the elbows, and the skirt to below the knees. The material should not be transparent. If some families refuse to allow their children to conform to these regulations (binding in all Catholic Schools and Colleges) it would be better that they withdraw their children, than that a style of dress which is not becoming should be tolerated." (BOL. ECCO., 1925, pp. 453-458).

On *August 23, 1928* the Sacred Congregation of Religious issued for all establishments under Religious Sisters, strict injunctions, confirmed by Pope Pius XI, to all the Ordinaries of Italy, to the effect of refusing admission to and proceeding to the expulsion of girls not observing the "rules" of Christian modesty. The Letter contained a directive to the Ordinaries of Italy "to watch that these injunctions be exactly observed and that there be *perfect uniformity* of conduct among all the institutes of religious women." (BO. ECCO., 1929, pp. 12-13).

On *September 24, 1928* the Cardinal Vicar of Rome (Cardinal Pompili) gave out *"the Pope Pius XI directives"* (Pastoral of Bishop Douville, Province of Quebec, Canada, dated July 22, 1944) in a Letter to the Superiors of all religious institutes conducting girls' schools, saying: "It will be our care that these *venerable orders of the Holy Father* be exactly observed *in his own Rome*... In order that in all the religious institutes of women there may be *uniformity* in judging the cases in which the above cited directives of the Sacred Congregation of Religious apply, we recall that *a dress cannot be called modest which is cut deeper than two fingers' breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows, and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent material are improper, as also flesh-colored stocking, which suggest the legs being bare."* (cf. BOLLETINO DEL CLERO ROMANO, vol. 8 (Oct. 1928) fasc. 10, p. 134)

Even before these Roman injunctions, the Philippine Hierarchy was already taking definite positions in the campaign for modesty. On *September 15, 1927* the Ordinary of the Manila Archdiocese made a call to all the faithful, especially to Catholic women, for a *Modesty Crusade* enjoining all the Rectors of churches to refuse the Sacraments to ladies not modestly dressed, and the Superiors of schools and colleges to demand from all students the use of modest dresses, and ordering all Pious Confraternities ("the members of which should go at the front line of this holy Crusade") to *adopt in their respective Rules some clause or article enjoining under penalty of expulsion* the modesty in dress of all associates and especially of Officers." (BOL. ECCO., 1927, pp. 691-692). *In 1928,* the Ordinary of Cebu made the same call for modesty in dress.

On *January 12, 1930* came forth the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, saying: "Many times, in repeated instances, the Supreme Pontiff condemned with the greatest energy the indecent way of dress that is now a custom even among Catholic ladies and girls. No wonder that Bishops and Ordinaries, each one in his own diocese, had also by all means opposed and raised their voice against this perverse licence and profligacy, suffering with serene and strong mind the mockery and derision leveled against them by the wicked for this cause.

Therefore, this *Sacred Congregation to which is entrusted the discipline of clergy and people*, approving and praising such vigilance and action of the sacred Pastors, earnestly exhorts them to insist in the deliberations and measures adopted and implement them with greater eagerness and with all their strength, until this pestiferous disease be completely eradicated from the honest society of men." Then, after enjoining the Parish Priests and preachers to insist, rebuke, correct and exhort the faithful whenever there be an occasion; after reminding the parents and directors of schools and colleges of their duties concerning the modesty of their children and charges, enjoins these provisions: "Feminine organizations should be instituted and fostered with the aim of checking with their word, example and deed, the abuses committed in dresses that are against Christian modesty and honest customs."—*"No women wearing indecent dresses should be admitted in pious feminine associations; and once admitted, if they fail in this requirement and after due admonition do not amend, let them be dismissed."*—"Girls and ladies wearing indecent dresses should not be admitted to Holy Communion or as sponsors in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and if the case demands it, they should be refused entrance in the church." (ACTA APOST. SED., 27 Jan. 1930, pp. 26-27). This Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Council extended to the whole world the injunctions of the Sacred Congregation of Religious of August 23, 1928 which alluded to the "rules" of modesty, specifically determined for Rome in the Letter of the Cardinal Vicar of September 24, 1928.

On *January 29, 1930* the Bishop of Nueva Segovia (Philippines) issued the Roman norms of modesty (*"sleeves down to the elbows, skirts below the knees"*) as binding under denial of Holy Communion in his diocese, and call for a relentless *campaign* and *crusade* for modesty, enjoining all Confraternities and Religious Associations, such as the Children of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer, Confraternity of the Carmel, Catholic Women's League, etc. to *include in their Statutes an article about Christian Modesty with the Roman standard mentioned above as requirement for membership*. (BOL. ECCO., 1930, pp. 244-245).

On *September 8, 1930* the Bishop of Cebu, promulgated the Roman Instruction of January 12, 1930. (BOL. ECCO., 1930, pp. 586-590). And the very Roman Standards of Modest Dress were endorsed by the VIII International Congress of Women Catholic Leagues held in May 17-25, 1930 in Rome, with delegates from France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Hungary, Canada, Checoslovakia, United States, Poland, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Scotland, England, Luxembourg, Mexico, Holland, China and Italy. (BOL. ECCO., 1930, p. 626).

On *May 19, 1931* the Catholic Philippine Hierarchy issued a JOINT PASTORAL signed by all the Bishops and Ordinaries of the Philippines who "obeying the instructions of the Vicar of Christ and to honor Mary Immaculate Patroness of these Islands, in this year Centenary of the Council of Ephesus and the Dogmatic definition of the Divine Motherhood of Mary, enjoined, under pain of refusing Holy Communion, *the Roman standards of modesty for women's dresses*, reminding the Directresses and Teachers of Catholic Schools of their duties about the matter, and ending with this injunction:

"The Directors of Pious Associations, seconded by the Promoters and Officers, should see to it that all associates fulfill what has been prescribed by the Sacred Congregation of the Council on this matter." (BOL. ECCO., 1931, pp. 547-548).

On *May 22, 1941* Pope Pius XII addressed to the Girls of Italian Catholic Action who had undertaken the PURITY CRUSADE under the patronage of Mary Immaculate. In that address the Pope said: "What God asks from you is to remember always that fashion is not nor can it be the supreme rule of your conduct; over the dictates of fashions and its demands, there are other laws, more imperative

still, superior and incommutable principles that cannot be sacrificed in any case on behalf of pleasure, or caprice, but rather the idol of fashion should bend before them its transient power. These principles have been proclaimed by God, by the Church, by holy men and women, by reason itself, viz, that the good of our soul should precede that of our body, and that the advantages of our own body should be postponed to the good of our neighbors' soul. Don't you see, then, that there is a limit that no custom of fashions may trespass, that in which fashion becomes the beginning of ruin for one's soul or for the souls of others?

"And if, as some girls pretend, a bold fashion does not affect them with any bad impression, who may assure them that others are not tempted on account of that fashion?... Oh, how rightly has been remarked that if some Catholic girls could guess the falls and temptations they cause to others with their dresses they would shudder at the tremendous responsibility they assume! O Christian mothers, if only you knew the future of distress and peril that you prepare for your sons and daughters in imprudently accustoming them to live hardly clothed, and in making them lose the sense of modesty, you would be ashamed of yourselves! And what I say to mothers, I repeat it to not a few Christian ladies, even pious at that, who, adopting this or that bold fashion, draw with their example a multitude of other ladies who had kept away from such fashions that may become a source of spiritual ruin. As long as certain immodest dresses have the sad privilege of being used only by persons of doubtful reputation and as long as such dresses are as a sign that distinguishes worldly people, no good Catholic would dare to use them herself; but the day when such dresses begin to be used by persons of unimpeachable character, then no one will hesitate any more to follow the current, the mounting flood of immodesty that will draw perhaps to worse falls. If it behooves all Catholic women to dare to face such a grave responsibility, you, dear Children (of Catholic Action) should be proud to be the champions of purity in this your holy Crusade. Put to test your courage to oppose the mounting flood of evil around you; closely in serried ranks you will become a formidable legion, powerful enough to impose respect to the rights of Christian modesty. What in fashions, customs, social relations, is *fully acceptable*, what is *merely tolerable*, and what is *totally inadmissible*, your sense of Catholic girls shall make you understand and discern at the light of the Spirit of God and with the help of His grace, obtained through prayer and through the help of the counsels you should ask from those whom Our Lord has given you as Guides and Teachers." (ACTA APOST. SED., 23 Jun. 1941, pp. 188-190).

On *December 8, 1944* Rev. Bernard Kunkel, in Bartelso, of Illinois, U.S.A. started the *Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate*, adopting for standard of modesty in dress those of the *"League of Modesty"* approved for the United States by the late George Cardinal Mundalein, in Chicago, in 1935, and "based in the norms laid down by the Cardinal Vicar of the Holy Father." The *League of Modesty* was in response to the "special instructions" of the Sacred Congregation of the Council issued to the Bishops *"by mandate"* of the Holy Father; and hence, the standards of modesty in dress adopted by the *Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate* (which later on was called the MARYLIKE CRUSADE) are the very norms issued, not by theologians, priests or Catholic writers, who cannot have but, at most, a "delegated authority" as Pope Pius XII explained in his address of May 31, 1954, but by the "Official Teaching *Authority of the Church"*, in conformity with the special instruction of the Holy See, and therefore expressing the "mind of the Church", for the United States at least.

On *December 8, 1951* the Archbishop of *Cebu* declared that the regulations issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Council were "to be regarded in full vigor in the *Archdiocese of Cebu*, and in the *Diocese of Tagbilaran* then entrusted to his administration." (BOL. ECCO., 1952, pp. 17-18).

On *August 29, 1952* the Archbishop of *Jaro* repeated the Roman standards of modest dress issued in 1928 and declared them binding under the same penalties enjoined by the Sacred Congregation of the Council in 1930. (BOL. ECCO., 1952, pp. 648-649).

On *September 8, 1952* the Ecclesiastical Governor of the Archdiocese of *Manila* repeated practically the same Roman standards as binding under the same penalties as above. (CIRCULAR of Most Rev. Vicente Reyes, D.D.; orders effective Oct. 26, 1952).

On *October 7, 1953* the *Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate* with its marilyke Standards which were the very same Roman norms of 1928 although with some slight concession due to the rampant paganism of modern fashions (e. g. since dresses with sleeves have become a rarity, ecclesiastical authority temporarily tolerates "quarter-length sleeves" or one-half way between the shoulder and elbow; until Christian women can be educated to accept *fully* the Roman standards), emerged from seclusion to take the proportions of a "gigantic spiritual and civic Crusade" (Pius XII, Febr. 10, 1952) sought for by the Holy Father for a Christian renewal of a world "almost universally flooded with moral decadence" (Pius XII, March 1950).

Then, the Marian Year 1954 commemorating the Centenary of the Dogmatic Definition of the Immaculate Conception, came having as one of its aims proposed by the Holy Father Pius XII "that our youth may seek their models in Mary and her Divine Son, and grow pure and unblemished (*"Fulgens Corona"*). On *August 15 of that year*, again the Sacred Congregation of the Council issued a LETTER to all the Ordinaries of the Catholic world: again, a call for action against the surging tide of inmodesty. The Sacred Congregation declared emphatically that 'as all can easily see, the current mode of dress among women and especially among girls constitutes a serious offense against decency, and decency is the companion of modesty, in whose company chastity herself is safer.' Therefore it is altogether imperative to admonish and exhort in whatever way seems most apt, people of all stations, but particularly youth, to avoid the dangers of this kind of vice which is so directly opposed and potentially so hazardous to Christian and civic virtue. The August Pontiff desires that Bishops in particular leave no stone unturned which can help to remedy the situation; and that with their counsel and leadership the rest of the clergy work prudently, assiduously, and earnestly, within their own jurisdiction, toward the attainment of this goal. He wishes fathers and mothers of families to remove their children from those dangers, first by their own example, then also, by timely admonitions, which come from a stern firmness of spirit as befits Christians; and they never be satisfied until they see the faces of their children shining with the splendor of modesty.

"And let *those who serve in the ranks of Catholic Action take up the promotion of this wholesome enterprise as a principal duty.* First, let them take care that everyone with whom they come in contact, whether close associates or not, can see in their manner of dress and action, the shining beauty of Christian morals. Let their innocence of soul shine forth from their eyes. Let their words and their deeds savor of virtue. For only then can they easily move others by their persuation and counsel to decent and proper dresing and a good life." All millitant Catholic Actionist should consider *"as one of their most important missions that of intensifying the successful work already started in this field."*

These last words seem to be an allusion to the *Marilyke Crusade* started by Fr. Kunkel, to which movement Pope Pius XII sent just a month before on July 14, 1954 His paternal Apostolic Blessing expressing "His gratification of the success already achieved by this praiseworthy movement, and praying that our Immaculate Mother may guide and prosper it in the future.

And just three days after sending His Blessing "gladly to the Rev. B. Kunkel, Director of the Crusade, to its promotores among the clergy, religious and laity, and to all who help in its work", on July 17, 1954 Pope Pius XII adressing 7,000 Children of Mary Immaculate gathered at Rome from 43 different countries in their Marian Year International Congress, warned: "While you most loyally resolve to do good, the world tries to dissuade you with its pictures, its publicity, its shows; it tries to impose itself upon your spirit with its maxims, upon your taste with its fashions; and alone you cannot escape its snares and its corruption. You live in a world constantly forgetful of God and the life beyond, where the only worry of people seems to be the satisfaction of temporal needs, comforts, pleasures, vanity.

"In your Association you will find not only light but also strength. Your feeling of being associated with numberless others, fully in accordance with your same ideal of Christian life, is it not a powerful support in the daily struggle? For, it is not enough to know; it is necessary to act accordingly, to engage one's self and to overcome human respect. The uncompromising attitude which an isolated girl would not dare to adopt, a group of girls, who have reflected and prayed together, will fearlessly assume without misgvings.

"You are well aware of the points on which Christian morality demands generous effort and unequivocal response of youth. They are, first of all, your exterior bearing or dresses; then, conversations, readings, shows, social relations or friendships. Oh, how many young girls there are who do not see any wrongdoing in following certain shameless styles or fashions, like so many sheeps. They certainly would blush if they could guess the impression they make and the feelings they evoke in those who see them. What sins are committed or provoked by conversations which are too free, by immodest shows, by dangerous reading. How lax have consciences become, how pagan morals!" (ACTA APOST. SED., 16 Sept. 1954, pp. 492-493).

A year after this, on September 21, 1955, the Archbishop of Manila in a CIRCULAR LETTER to the Major Superiors of Religious Congregations in the Archdiocese of Manila, acclaimed the *Purity Crusade of Mary Immaculate* as the "heavenly formula to counteract a most serious evil of our times." "The moral tone of the world is very low. Immodesty and immorality have reached almost epidemic proportions. The Holy Father has stated repeatedly that the greatest sin of our modern generation is that it has lost all sense of sin. On May 23, 1948, Pope Pius XII made the startling announcement: *'Mainly through the sins of impurity do the forces of darkness subjugate souls.'* At Fatima, our Blessed Mother complained: *'The sins that lead most souls to hell are the sins of the flesh.'* Hence, the need of a Purity Crusade is obvious. It has been blessed and started by the American Hierarchy, and our beloved Archdiocese cannot remain indifferent to it. This Crusade is at present engaged in a huge project: the *Marylike Dress Crusade*. It is only a fractional part of the Purity Crusade, which embraces all question of *Purity* and *Modesty* in our social life, family life, and the private life of each individual.

In this Crusade, we earnestly invite all Catholic Schools and Colleges, especially those of women, to participate. We are happy to acknowledge that today, some of our Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Manila, have already taken the initiative in introducing the PCMI to their students. It

is our sincere desire that all Schools follow their example, so that the Crusade may grow in extent and influence in our beloved Philippines." (*Sgd.* Most Rev. Rufino J. Santos, D.D.).

This is indeed the best way to make effective the *eight* decrees of the FIRST PLENARY CONCIL [sic] of the Philippines held on January 7-25, 1953 and approved by Pope Pius XII on February 23, 1956, where modesty in dress is insisted again and again. It is demanded not only for girls and their mothers in the school precincts, places of recreation as well as chapels, and in public exercises as well as in athletic games and contests (decr. 690-691), but also from all the faithful (decr. 273), especially when they enter the church (decr. 541), or request a blessing for a dress or habit (decr. 486), or approach to the Sacraments (decr. 279), especially of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion (decr. 541; 334) and even Confession (decr. 405), under pain of being refused Holy Communion, and the right to act as sponsors in Baptism and Confirmation; and if the case demands, even their admission into the church (decr. 541). And the same Plenary Council orders that every December 8th, feast of the Immaculate Conception, an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Mother of God be made in all the churches of the country wherein our women "obedient to the Vicar of Christ, promise to remove far from them the defiling hand of materialism which has degraded the use of clothing into an incentive of sin."

Lastly, just before the Lourdes Centenary Year, the *Catholic Philippine Hierarchy* gathered in their annual meeting in Baguio, adopted for the whole country the *Crusade of Marylike Dress*, and thus the *Marilyke* standards (which are, with slight adaptations to the Filipina dress, the very same of the American Marylike Crusade, and hence, the very same Roman norms of 1928 adopted already in 1931 by the Philippine Hierarchy, but with some slight concessions to present circumstances) have received a new sanction and confirmation from the "Official Teaching Authority of the Church" in the Philippines. The JOINT RESOLUTION of the Philippine Hierarchy, issued on January 1958, and published in the SENTINEL, February 8, 1958, says:

"The Philippine Hierarchy in their annual meeting have taken note of the immodest trend in the present day fashions of women's dress and the Bishops deplore the tendency of some of our Catholic women, especially the younger generation, who follow these fashions, even though they violate the fundamental norms of Christian modesty.

"Therefore, we most earnestly appeal to all our priests, to the Religious in charge of our Catholic Girls Schools and Catholic parents to intensify THE CRUSADE OF MARYLIKE DRESS, and to frequently remind our Catholic women of the ideals and safeguards of Christian Modesty, especially in dress, enunciated by our Holy Father Pope Pius XII, and incorporated into the Decree of the Plenary Council.

"The faithful are likewise exhorted to shun, from this year on, all places and modes of entertainment which offend Christian modesty. This will undoubtedly be the best way of honoring Our Lady of Lourdes, in this centennial celebration."

Hence, this is the MIND OF THE CHURCH as to what constitutes modesty in dress, here in our country. Until the above directives are revised, modified or rescinded by the Church herself, they are binding regardless of any opinion to the contrary. "The mind of the Church is decisive for the knowledge of truth; not the personal views of individual theologians." (Pius XII, Sept., 1956)

The Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate in adopting the Marylike Standards of Modest Dress as a Requirement for CoM membership is just following the voice of those of whom Our Lord said: *"He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."* (Luc. 10, 16)

J. MA. CAVANNA, C.M.