

**BENEFICIAL ADVICE  
TO  
YOUNG LADIES**

THAT IS

**A SPIRITUAL LETTER**

WRITTEN TO A SISTER

OF THE PRIEST

*D. Anthony Claret.*

**BARCELONA**

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Blessed be your purity  
And eternally be it  
For everything pleasing to God  
In such gracious beauty  
You, Heavenly Princess  
Sacred Virgin Maria  
I offer you from this day  
Soul, life and heart  
Look upon me with compassion  
Do not leave me, my mother

Hail Mary Most Pure  
Without Sin You Were Conceived

## Beneficial Advice

Very beloved sister in Christ Jesus: it seems that our times are those destined to fulfill what was written by St John in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. For barely our good mother holy Church has given us light in the birth of holy baptism when the infernal dragon already wants to devour us. He is very angry against the mother and against her children who observe the precepts of God and have the testimony of Christ Jesus; so that he has declared to them a most cruel and bloody war. The entire world is put in such ends that one could say everything is wicked; and everything there is in it is concupiscence of the flesh and love of carnal delights, love of riches and love of honors; not of the heavenly Father but of the world. Therefore, my sister, you already see how much evil is our days, and how necessary it is to proceed with caution. Do not want to love or please the world, nor the things that are in it; because if one wants to love the world, he cannot love God: for it is written, nobody can serve two masters. Remember the solemn renunciation that you made at holy baptism, in the presence of God and the angels, saying you renounce Satan and all his works and pomps, so, my sister, fulfill the word you have given, flee from the devil and his minions and ploys. Follow the truths to Christ Jesus and to the Most Holy Virgin, practicing Christian virtue and to this end attend to the advice I am going to give you.

1. Each day do the exercises in the morning and at night that you will find at the end of this pamphlet. You see that they are very brief, therefore never ever omit them
2. Receive the holy sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist each eight or fifteen days or at least each month
3. Do not stop making everyday a half hour or a quarter hour of mental prayer; and if work does not permit you to be secluded in church or in your room, make it during your tasks making use of some reading to this end like ‘villacastin, camino del cielo, los misterios del rosario, de los novisimos or of the prayers of the Our Father or Hail Mary, etc.
4. Read or listen everyday or at least on Sundays, some chapter of the Introduction to the Devout Life by St Francis de Sales, and on the festivals of the Most Holy Mary the “anuario de maria”, as well as on the feasts of saints their lives and you will learn from them to practice virtue.

5. Invoke in yourself much patience because in this world there is much to suffer: not only on behalf of persons or characters but also for the tasks and times. When you feel uncomfortable, do not speak: because your words will be spoken through passion and not through reason which afterwards you will regret. Lift up your heart to Christ Jesus to the Most Holy Virgin and to the saints and imitate their virtues especially patience. Think on heaven that awaits you if you suffer and on hell prepared if you sin. Oh if you do this! How you will avoid those curses, swearing, and obscenities and other words unworthy of a Christian tongue! Do not be like those women, who when everything goes to their pleasure are mild showing the same gentleness, but if in something they are contradicted or something doesn't happen how they want it to, they flash their eyes, their mouth casts rays that kill and all their actions are more of a fury than of a person. These are like flint, cool when untouched, but barely the steel strikes it when all parts emit sparks of fire. Such women could be called Christian, but with their works they deny that honorable title, because "Christian" means imitator or disciple of Christ who teaches us with words and with works to be meek and humble of heart. Rather than Christians one would call them wasps that sting, serpents and brood of vipers that bite, destined for that eternal fire in virtue of those words of Christ according to St Matthew, when he said: "Serpents and brood of vipers; how will you escape the condemnation and the wrath of God that threatens you?"

God punishes the women that speak evil not only after death with the flames of Hell but also at times in this world. Here is a case that happened to me in a true city of Catalonia: hearing upon passing by a street a woman that was speaking wickedly, I reprehended her and she restrained herself in my presence but afterwards she went continuing in her blasphemies, when God took to correcting her with severe punishment. Her tongue swelled to the point it wouldn't fit in her mouth. This was accompanied with a convulsion and labored breathing that then threatened her life. They called me to hear her confession but ay! She couldn't articulate any word or give the smallest signal of pain! Another case has happened to me as well: urged and with pleading I have gone to a house to hear the confession of a man that had the vice of swearing, of cursing and of saying dishonest things and I have witnessed the punishment of God, finding him without the use of the tongue, entirely mute and behold he that before in the groups would speak obscenities, laugh and make jokes, afterwards full of confusion and shame being retired in his house doing no more than crying. Oh the just judgments of God!

6. Try mortifying the senses especially sight in imitation of the Most Holy Virgin, whose composure was so great that she converted the most dissolute women. Read about her in the story when she went to visit her cousin holy Elizabeth, a dishonest woman of that country said with lightness and curiosity: "who could this foreigner be who comes so holy and prudent?" And with that spirit of curiosity typical of women, she took some steps to see the face and garment of the recently arrived. But hardly had she succeeded when her heart was left entirely changed and she forsook her ways and vanities and with them her evil life. What modesty Mary has! What chastity! The best sign of chastity is guarding ones eyes says the priest, St Bernard. The woman that enjoys seeing and being seen is not chaste. We have a good example of this truth in Dinah the daughter of the patriarch Jacob, a youth of sixteen years, who having had the curiosity of going to see the daughters of Canaan, left her house a virgin and returned disgraced continuing from there countless tragedies. Every class of people, says St Ambrose, should follow this instruction, but especially virgins, who should be secluded and abstain not only from seeing but also from being seen.

7. Keep yourself from spectacles<sup>1</sup>, comedies, evening parties, dances, and night time gatherings. Tertullian, to expound the snares of only spectacles, devoted an entire book<sup>2</sup>. Oh the things he says of them! I remember that among other things he says that on a certain occasion, having gone to a spectacle, a woman left possessed by the devil: upon exorcising her, the evil spirit said "*In meo eam*

*inveni*”<sup>3</sup>. Why do you exorcise me and punish me? If I have entered the body of this woman, it’s because I have found her on my land and place.

Comedies! Oh what things St John Chrysostom, St Augustine and St Cyprian say about those! School of lechery, they call them, education of stupidity, university of vices, fount of all evils, plague of the republic, disgrace of Christianity, and an apostasy of the profession that a Christian makes in holy baptism. But let us leave the authorities and examine it with natural reason. What is the material object or the subject about which the greater part of comedians of the day treat? Is it not a classical truth that in very many of them, rather in almost all of them, they imagine with greater liveliness, infatuations, lustful solicitations, violence, jealousy, treason, adultery, duels, suicides and another thousand things all equally provocative? And how are they composed, and in what way are they staged these so subtle and provocative subjects? Ah! Everything is limited to lies, flattery, caresses, contempt, delinquency, disguised words, profane songs, dishonest speeches, partying, sharpness, unusual movements and jumping, indecent and unworthy gestures I would not say about honorable people, rather about rude and lazy people especially in the comic sketches and dances. There the fervor of devotion is extinguished. The horror of vice and the holy fear of God is lost. The soul is disposed to fall into the trap of the devil, and the gates of hell are wide opened. Oh if I could tell you the dangers there are and the sins that are committed in them, as many by the spectators as by the representatives! Ah! Mixed up men and women, youths generally, without much discretion among the singers of the music, and with the license that many who attend these gatherings are afforded. How many bad pleasures! How many obscene desires! How many foolish flings! How many cohabitations! How many adulteries! How many... Ay!... For this reason, St Cyprian says theaters are an invention of hell to frustrate the passion of Jesus and the pains and merits of Mary. And the worst there is in this damned invention is that to deceive the careless more surely, the devil is transformed into an angel of light with the pretext that his earnings will go to the hospital, to charitable houses, etc. and what is more still with the pretext of representing comedies of saints profaning their stories with comic sketches and snares. Damned charity that comes from the hands of the devil at the cost of so many souls sacrificed to him.

<sup>1</sup> Spectacles- Translated sometimes theaters, performances, shows

<sup>2</sup> De Spectaculis

<sup>3</sup> For the English reader “On mine [my own ground] I found her”

8. And what will I say to you of the dances and evening parties? I will say to you blessed the woman that has never danced; because dances are in opposition to the spirit of Christ Jesus and the Church. Christ prohibits useless words and commands penance; in baptism the devil is renounced, his pomps and works; and what are dances but works of the devil? And at the dances, are there just a few words and works not only useless but criminal? Oh if you knew it like I know it! What vanity and at times what indecency of dress! I will tell you more, while we will save ourselves as we are content with Jesus and Mary, and in truth I have never read that they went to dances. But how must have Jesus and Mary danced, dances being according to St John Chrysostom an invention of the devil to drag souls to hell? St Ephrem says dances are darkness of men, perdition of women, sadness of angels and joy of demons. St Augustine does not fail to affirm that Christians that go to the dance will not leave it Christians but Gentiles; and that men would do less evil if they worked on feast days and the women spun [thread] than dancing like they do there. St Gregory Nanzianzen says feast days on which one dances are as if they were plague-ridden. Dancing on them is to treat Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Saint that one claims to honor as Jupiter, Venus, Bacchus, etc, like the gentiles honor their deities.

Spain had had a long time without dances and the Moors reestablished them as major enemies of religion: and do you know my sister, there is now so much passion for dances that there is not Sunday nor feast day, however small it may be, in which there is not a dance? Everything comes from the devil who puts in movement his minions who are the heretics and the depraved. I know of a group of heretics that among the plans they adopted to finish off Catholicism and remove as soon as possible the Church's functions, was one of replacing for them comedies and dances and if they could be at night the better; because they are more suitable to demoralize. Oh what monstrosities ensue from here! Aristotle asks, "Why are there are so many monsters in Africa?" and he responds, the lack of water: as there is therefore few places to drink, from there results that gathering together and meeting in those watering holes animals of all classes, burning in estrus and they come together; originating from this so many monsters. Let us make now the application and ask, "Do you know why in Spain there is in the day so many monsters of sin?" A great part of them we will find their origin in these gatherings. And how can it fail? Is it not found in them youths gathered of both sexes, clothed luxuriously and at times with little decency and in some way provocative? Does the freedom and the relief of the dance not authorize the familiarity? Is it not here where one is looked at closely and where bold words are said and where scandalous actions are done and where?... Ay! Most dear sister, and what of bad pleasures, what of desires, what of actions afterwards!... How many fornications, how many adulteries, and how many horrible monsters that infest and devastate the earth!

Believe me sister, flee from dances like from a dangerous thing and know what St Francis de Sales says who compares dances to mushrooms, of those the doctors say, the best aren't worth anything. If on some occasion that you couldn't avoid, you find yourself required to go to the dance, ensure it is with modesty, with dignity and with good intention, a little and few times, because with other luck you run danger. After having eaten mushrooms, they say one must drink a little healthy wine: and the saint says that after dances, one must do some consideration: for example think that our Lord, the Virgin Most Holy, the saints and the angels have seen you in the dance: oh! And what pity they have had of you, seeing your heart absorbed in such a situation and attentive to such great foolishness! What spiritual people in the same hour were before God, singing his praises and contemplating his beauty. Oh! How much better and more blessedly their time was employed than yours! Ay! That while you were there, time passed you, and death drew nearer! Look how it laughs at you and calls you to its dance in which the cries of pain will be the violin and the jump will be from time to eternity. Think that at the same time that you were at the dance many souls burn in the fire of hell for sins maybe committed in those dances or for reason of them.

Tell me, would you want to have happen to you what happened to those ungrateful Hebrews of whom are read in chapter twenty three of Exodus, that after having eaten and drunk, they got up to dance and with that they enraged God so much that he went to destroy all his people? It's true Moses prayed for them and the Lord was appeased; but the prophet upon witnessing the dreadful activity of the Hebrews, full of holy zeal exclaimed, "If anyone is of the Lord, join with me." and all the sons of Levi joined to him and by order of Moses twenty three thousand men had their throats slit in that day.

And would you have wanted to find yourself at that evening party in a certain place in Catalonia, in which being the most lively part of the dance when least expected, the house suddenly collapsed and not only those dancing but also those watching were covered in the rubble, the result being twenty seven dead and seventy two injured? (For certain clarity I had been in the house a short time before the dance and destruction) Tell me, to where would their souls have gone prepared in that way to die? *Væ illis!* Woe to them! I myself have read the list of departures in the book of the dead of that parish, the tragedy happened the night of the 20 of January 1828. After them the parish priest wrote in the same

book the following words: *Væ illis qui nec minis nec verberibus emendantur! Woe to them that not with threats nor with stripes amend themselves!*

9. Our Lord has brought up people for every state and in all of them we see people who fulfilling well their obligations, are sanctified. Therefore you should ask the Lord, he announced to you the way that he wants you to follow him and what state you should take to serve him, that of virginity or that of marriage; start by considering the right move at the point of death and ask yourself what state would you have then wanted to choose? The state of virginity is more loved by Jesus and his holy Mother so that if by being mother of God she had to have left being a virgin, she would not have wanted to accept the sovereign title of mother of God being that being mother of God was and is a dignity in certain way infinite: this Lady held in such great esteem virginity! The Holy Spirit says that there is nothing of such worth that can equal a chaste soul. These pure souls will follow closer the unblemished Lamb, that is Jesus. They will be like the angels of God in heaven and even more than the angels because if the angels do not marry nor commit carnal sins, it is not something to admire, because they are pure spirits, but people of body and soul, surrounded by stimulus and snares, if they preserve themselves upright, what praises and rewards will they not deserve? What praises did a St Paul, a St Cyprian, a St Ephrem, a St Ambrose etc., not make about this angelic virtue and what great fruit did they not harvest from their sermons? Oh! And what crowd of Theclas, Agneses, Lucys, Eulalias, Philomenas, etc. are presented with the lily and palm in hand, esteeming virginity more than the most beautiful husbands and lavish estates and even their own lives!

But you must take note that if you do not find yourself with a spirit to keep chastity, you will not sin if you marry, rather you will be doing what you ought; because as the apostle St Paul says, better to marry than to burn; in this world with the fire of impurity and afterwards in the other with the fire of hell. But before you marry, look at what you are doing, as the saying goes: See if you will have the courage to fulfill your obligations, obligations which I assure you will not be little and very light, not only by way of husband and children, if God gives you them, but also by way of parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law. See that in order to have peace and union with so many characters, most times strangers and conflicting in everything, much virtue and grace from heaven is necessary, for which one should continually ask God and the most holy Virgin.

You should keep yourself very much away from going up to the state of matrimony by the way of courtship and lengthy conversations that are stairs of many sins and tragedies. St Bernard, speaking about this matter says that a young man being with a young woman, seeing each other frequently, looking at each other with passion and not sinning is a greater miracle than raising the dead. St Liguori adds that seeing each other alone and in the dark is a mortal sin because of the danger that they have placed themselves in; and he says that even if they are not alone, if they are in the dark and in lengthy conversation, they also sin mortally by reason of the same danger: I am certain, says the saint, that of everyone who has lengthy conversations, it would be many if out of a hundred, two or three could be found who don't sin, a lot... Ay! Unhappy and wretched they who have lengthy conversations, and more those yet who in their conversations and in their hand games, and, and, and... They do such unworthy things that decency prohibits to name them! It does not excuse them, no, it does not excuse them – the pretext that they have already given their word to get married. No matter how much they miserably deceive themselves with this. Woe to them! I repeat that in their wedding Jesus and Mary will not attend like in the wedding at Cana, but the demon Asmodeus, spirit of carnal desire; following them after a thousand quarrels and disputes, a thousand infidelities and adulteries. The sacrament (of marriage) will not give the grace proper to it, no, and without it neither will they fulfill with perfection their many and great obligations; everything will be going backwards for them: they will be furious, they will grumble, and they will curse each other, hell beginning in this world and afterwards they will

have to suffer for all an eternity in the other. Behold to where infatuation and lengthy conversations are going to end up: flee, then, from them.

10. You must flee likewise from idleness, as you would flee from the presence of a serpent: because it is the teacher and the origin of evil. The idleness of our mother Eve gave occasion to the serpent to seek her and make her fall miserably; oh! How many women will have it happen to them the same way? How many if they had been busy would not have been tempted, nor fall into the temptation that certain astute men have prepared for them like the serpent, but more malicious than demons! St John Chrysostom says that the crime most common that women tend to commit is impurity or dishonesty; and the cause he give of this is the idleness with which many women live. So that, says A Lapide, if idleness is removed, impurity is removed: and in truth it would be so; because according to St Jerome, idleness is the mother of impurity and not having a mother, how could there be a daughter? Just like water as clean and crystal clear it may be, if it is left puddled, later it is filled with insects and spoils and its gasses are so damaging to people that it even causes them fevers and pestilence: the same thing will happen with a woman; while she is busy with her tasks at home, she will keep herself clean and chaste, useful in all her jobs, and even those on the outside will share in her grace; she will be like water from a spring, that the deeper it is in the heart of the earth, the more clean and fresh and useful it is. But, ay!, the woman that is not at home nor occupies herself with household tasks is like dirty water that will be filled with insects and the rubbish of faults and sins: in her, the vile insects of gossip will stir, vain loves, courtships, correspondence with letters, gifts, etc. And the reading of novels (if not already impious and indecent books), dances, evening parties, theaters, social gatherings and outings, these will waste what time she has left after the dressing table, in where will be squandered a long while fixing her styles and vanities. Already she sees herself, as everyday she's left the house to see and be seen, she's had to study how to change her figure or hairstyle, or dress, changing them like the foolish that every day change them like the moon. And what will be the effects that follow from here? What? Worse than those of the puddled water: she won't be useful at home, previously very damaging; she will cause them the most grave harm with her expenses, omissions and scandals, carrying evil along with her example not only to them but even to those on the outside. Do you know why the married woman is called such? Because her essential duty should be to be at home<sup>1</sup> and well-occupied. From here comes that saying, *The solitary woman will be the best married woman.*

<sup>1</sup> This is a Spanish language pun, the word for married woman, "casada" and the word house or home "casa", grammatically "casada" is a noun formed from the past participle of "casar" – to marry. So to a Spanish speaker "casada" would be kind of like if the word for married woman was "housed" in English

Therefore the Holy Spirit, upon making the description and praise of the strong woman, speaks so many times of her constant occupation: looking for wool and linen to work; in spite of her husband being one of the noblest of the city, not disdaining to run the spinning wheel or spindle; caring for servants and workers, and with such great pains not suffering that they lack even the smallest thing; in everything behaving so well that she deserves the praises of her spouse and her children idolize her not just for her beauty, that is a vain and transitory thing, rather because she is God-fearing and fulfills her duties well. This good and strong woman undoubtedly would be imitated by that admirable queen of Spain Isabella, who spun with the wheel all the linen that was needed to weave the fabric that made the shirts of her spouse Fernando V. And if a queen like this does not disdain to be so occupied, will you want to exempt yourself from it?

11. Another caution you must have is to avoid evil company and personal friendships, even with people of your sex and lineage. Ah! If you knew how I do the injury that a bad companion causes, even of this sort, I assure you you would not trust anyone. What I can tell you is many people would not

have known sin if it had not been for what's-her-name or so-and-so her companion, that at the time to go to the lesson or to the factory or being alone, or sleeping in the same bedroom or in the same bed or dressing up to go out in public or whispering during the walk about this and that, and what's more, speaking about indifferent things, taught them what they hadn't known; following them from here after an almost infinite number of sins. I can tell you a case for your learning because I have permission from the person to whom it happened, and it is a terrible case of a girl who at the age of four years and a few months, being in the company of other people witnessed a scandal, and her life was so evil since then for the space of some twenty years that it caused her sorrow to have to sleep on account of not having more time to sin. Learn therefore from somebody else; and about this I would want that those parents would learn even more who aren't careful to watch over their children nor over the friends they take. What you must do when choosing friends is look for a girl who is fearful of God, who with sweet, christian conversations inspires you both with zeal in his holy service. Then you will say that in this part you are a happy young lady because you have found a faithful friend, according to the saying of the Holy Spirit who says: *Blessed is he who finds a true friend*. As a result, sister, before placing your friendship and trust in the hands of some person, you must first test if their spirit conforms with the spirit of God or the spirit of the world: you will know this by the works that are the fruit, as Christ Jesus tells us, which bring to knowledge the goodness of the tree.

12. I have saved for last the most necessary of advice, that is about vanity and indecency in dress; abuse that to our disgrace has reached its peak in these unhappy days. The apostle St Paul wants women to dress with decency without splendor or vanity. There is no doubt that a young lady who intends to marry will be able to adorn herself a little more than usual but this always has to have its limits, that should not nor cannot overstep as much as a part of her worth, just as with honesty. If it oversteps these limits, ay! What harm will follow! She will impoverish her house, because as St Basil says, although riches enter a house like a fast-flowing river, the capricious way of dress of a woman will be enough to dry them up. Who is richer than Solomon? Nevertheless, he had to impose very heavy and unbearable tributes upon his vassals, because of the large expenses that the women of the palace incurred with their ornaments: and note that the harms of vain ornaments are not always limited to home; many times they spread outside; because the shopkeeper is not payed nor the tailor nor the shoemaker nor.... Everyone cries out, everyone murmurs... Credit is lost... Collateral is loaned; and for a damned dress the better things are sold not a few times, that is the collateral of chastity. Ay! The luxury and excessive expense of dressing up have sacrificed how many thousands of victims!

Add to this the disturbances and disorder a woman causes in the family not a few times so that she may buy this or that dress, how when she doesn't have it, it drives her frantic and after she's got it, she pushes it aside or makes it unbearable by her pride. To tame her, it would be necessary to do what Aristotle says one does to tame mares: cutting their manes, that is, their ornaments, their vanities, and so many hoop skirts that cost a fortune. But, who will do it? Ay, oh God! How nobody will be able; because she will give so many snarls nobody will be able to bear it. How she will like to see and be seen, she will give up everything to her whim, making worthless the grave warnings of her father, and the reprimands of her husband: publicly or stealthily she will leave home to show off her dress, doing this to the neglect of her greatest duties. Do not doubt it for you know I tell you the pure and solid truth. She will not stand up for the promises she made in holy baptism, saying she renounced those pomps and vanities, not that there is in this a practical apostasy of the faith. But, how much if she can almost tell herself that she's ashamed to be Christian? I've already told you that a Christian means an imitator of Christ, and certainly she does not imitate Christ who dresses so very profanely. Let us come rather to the test: look at Jesus in the manger wrapped in poor swaddling cloths, what modesty in dress and later in all his life! If at some time dressed in purple and wearing a crown, its in scorn and not in elegance. See now my sister, how the women who dress luxuriously are in direct opposition with the



clothing and ornaments of Jesus. Or rather tell me: what connection is there between the fine footwear of these women with the hard nails in the feet of Jesus? What conformity between the rings of their hands and the nails pierced through his? What between their loops and hairstyles with his crown of thorns? What between their painted faces with the blows he received, between their bracelets and low necklines with the strands of his scourges and bloodied back? Ah! A likeness is seen in them, and it is with the Jews; yes, with the Jews, with those tormentors that scourged him; and it is the rolling up of the sleeves on their arms when by the devils incitement they attacked the Lord. In the hour of death think of hearing Jesus, who asks one of these women upon arriving to his divine tribunal: *Cujus est imago hæc et superscriptio?* In who's image is this woman? And it is answered him: *Dæmonii*. The Devils. Then Jesus will say: *Reddite, ergo, quæ sunt dæmonii dæmonio, et quæ sunt Dei Deo*. May they be delivered to the devil those women who have kept the ways of the devil and to God those who have imitated the modesty of Jesus and of the virgin Mary. Make sure, then, sister, to imitate the most holy Virgin. She was of royal lineage, heir of the goods that her fathers left her, and he was not wrong who said she was enriched also with the gifts of the Magi, and nonetheless she was so frugal and modest of dress that Metaphrastes and Nikephoros say that in all her life, she never had more than two tunics with the natural color of wool that covered her from the neck to the feet and a decent mantle that stretched from the head to the knees. The venerable Lopez, declaring against the outfits of many women, "what understanding is this", he said to them, "to want to go clothed like this, imitating better an actor than the most holy Virgin?" Look how she went and how you go.... And you are not ashamed?

In the 8<sup>th</sup> book, chapter 57 of the revelations of St Bridget, it is read that the most holy Virgin said to the saint: *Abstain, women, from the fancy dresses, that through pride and vanity have been put on, because the devil is he who has suggested it, that disregarding the ancient and praiseworthy customs of the fatherland, make this abuse of indecent ornamentation of their head, of their feet and of the rest of the parts of their body that do not serve but instead rouse to injury and anger God*. The celebrated Gelsominio calls the women so clothed disciples of the devil and flags recruiting souls to hell: and St Cyprian calls them venom of chastity and sword against all virtue. Tertullian says they are like a dagger for wounding souls and for lechery like it were a discipline of their teaching. St John Chrysostom calls them agitators of lust and St Gregory Nanzianzen calls them signs of adultery. I would never finish if I were to tell you everything there is about this matter.

What punishment then will they not deserve? The priest Diego Lainez says that there are countless holy doctors and ancient fathers that reprimand this abuse of dress and judge it worthy of eternal fire. In this way adds St Vincent Ferrer, that some women, even among those the world considers chaste, charitable, and abstinent, condemn themselves only for their profane outfit and scandalous nudity of their body. Read in the book *Scala Cœli*, that a virtuous lady asked our Lord God to reveal to her what the most loathsome thing is in women, and having said this, hell was opened and she saw in it a woman in great torments who with a sorrowful voice said: *Woe is me! How I was chaste in my body but am damned for my outfits and profane ornaments, with which I was worse than the devils of hell whose fire only harms the wicked and condemned; but I with my scandalous ornaments made evil the just and the saints. This is what God abhors most in women*. God our lord is offended with these outfits to such a degree that at times punishes them beforehand in this world. The priest Mario and the learned Ramirez say that while a young lady was composing her profane outfit before her dressing table, there appeared four demons, who grabbing hold of her, strongly squeezed her head and with their hands full of filth, dirtied her face and the rest of her person. Upon experiencing this, the profane young girl fell to the ground as though dead. Corrected after this terror, and being set straight, she renounced the world and all its vanities and ended her days with an exemplary life. At another time without a doubt there would be a woman, of whom Sinascalqui speaks, who the Lord appeared to in the mirror on the path of Ecce-

Homo, entirely wounded and covered with blood who said to her: *Look how you make me with your vain ornaments.* The apostolic priest Manuel Ortigos says to have been shown the experience of those who had been instigators of scandalous outfits very quickly dying, and he adds that a young lady, reprimanded by her parents for her scandalous outfits and indecent low neckline, not having wanted to correct herself, beforehand responded rashly: *If God doesn't want me like this, may he send me where he wants, because I must do my pleasure and I must not look ugly;* she died suddenly and after she was buried, on the following night the earth spew her out of itself. Considering if for what was said she would be unworthy to be with the other dead, they took her to be buried at the sands of the sea as if she were a foul animal and the beach also spew her out: and they saw in that moment how the demons took her to hell, where body and soul will burn for all eternity. What a punishment so horrific!

Be warned that the women who are so dressed aren't the only ones punished but also those who cooperate or help. In the life of St Catherine of Siena, it is recounted that her married sister, named Bonaventura, died in labor, in punishment for having dressed her little sister St Catherine with fashion and luxury, and because she went about somewhat condescending, she remained deprived after of the great and extraordinary benefits that there would be for her in heaven until she acknowledged her offense and she went after a little while. All her life she wept this sin, so that it was a certain subject she brought to all her confessions and she accused herself of it with such sorrow that at times she'd fall down as though dead at the feet of her confessor. More horrifying is what St Jerome relates, that an angel let Prextata know that for the moment, he would wither his hands in order to pay for the crime he had committed by having combed curls with care into the hair of the virgin Eustoquio consecrated to the Lord; and ultimately at the end of five months he would die. Who will not be afraid at the sight of punishments like these?

And not just particular punishments these outfits have deserved but also general punishments. What will I say great enough of what our Spain experienced for the space of seven hundred years when it was oppressed by Moors and Saracens? This originated, says the learned Mariana, by the unhappy king Don Rodrigo having seen from a balcony of the royal palace Florinda daughter of the count Don Julian, who was in a garden with her top unbuttoned. With this motive that hopeless crime was committed that was the cause of the perdition of all this Catholic monarchy, in the same way that by a similar motive king David was lost and that great punishment that the holy Scripture references came about in his kingdom. The learned priest Johannes Tauler seeing the profane clothing that the women in Germany were introducing, preached with prophetic spirit the great punishments that the Lord would send over that land, how indeed he sent it, permitting the heresy of Luther that caused so much havoc in the spiritual and the temporal. Here I cannot pass over the horrendous punishment that the outfits and profane clothing gave rise to in the city of Cyprus. Read in book 7 chapter 16 of the revelations of St. Bridget, that the most holy Virgin said to the saint: *This city is like Gomorrah, for it burns in the fire of lechery: for this, if it does not amend its profane outfits that are foolishly provocative, its buildings will fall and it will remain devastated, and its destruction will be unforgettable in many regions of the world, its ruins serving as a lesson to the nations.* So it happened, for not having amended. The Turks seized it, burned it, and took captive over two thousand young ladies who in view of the city were burned alive in the boats, what punishment!... The prophet Isaiah already threatened the earth with droughts, famines, wars and other tragedies, because of the many scandalous styles. St Bernard calls the women so dressed devotees of the devil, for causing to sin mortally not only themselves but also their parents and husbands that permit such outfits. What does it mean to wear clothes with sleeves rolled up past the elbow? Will it be the place where the devil ties them up like the ministers of justice do to evil doers to take them to hell to burn for scandals?

It ought to be full of confusion to the Christians of our day, as far as indecency of dress is concerned, the knowledge that in spite of the corruption of customs being very great when Christ Jesus came to the world, nevertheless, not the Jews nor the Trojans, nor the Arabians, nor the Romans walked about uncovered, beforehand covering the head and face, as Cornelius A Lapide relates. And many Christians of our unhappy times, not only wear their face and head uncovered but, what is more, the neck, the arms, the back... and if they wear them covered, its with some mantillas or veils of lace so light and transparent that Tertullian calls them encouragements of lust.

What will those women respond in the day of judgment, when God our lord, reprimanding them for their shamelessness for their profane and scandalous outfits, he blames them and says to them: *Look how great your wickedness has been, that not my example nor the example of my most Holy Mother, nor the inspiration I sent you has been able to restrain you; you have disregarded everything and have reached your insolence to so many, that you even mock the preachers and confessors because they reprove you...* If, such is the nature of these people, (it is known by the revelations of St Bridget Book 6, Ch. 5) that they have this old custom to hate and censure the ministers of God, who do their best to correct them and set them straight: obstinate in their insanity, they run hastily through the wide way to hell. Sister, I am a watchtower in the house of Israel, I must shout, although I be not believed, rather unheeded, mocked, and persecuted: if I don't shout, they will tell me that I have been a mute dog, and, woe is me! Oh, how much I feel their perdition! If they don't want to believe me, perhaps they will believe you, my sister: come on, tell each one of them what the Angel said to Hagar: *Hagar, ancilla Sarai, unde venis, aut quo vadis?* Woman, enslaved by the devil, tell me, where do you come from and where are you going? See that you come from nothing; that you are mud, earth, dust, filth, dirt, food for worms... and you adorn yourself like that? But, where are you going? Ah! To death; yes, yes, each step that you make, closer to death you go: and will it be possible that you want to go to torture with elegance and vanity? What madness! Would it not be madness of the prisoner, that going to torture, he makes a show of the tunic that the tormentor covered him with? Then the dress is the tunic of the prisoner... and you are going to torture... you are going to hell...

## The Christian's Exercise: In the Morning

*Upon waking, make the sign of the cross saying:* By the sign † of the holy cross, from our † enemies free us, Lord our † God. In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit. Amen Jesus.

*Afterwards say:* Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul

*Getting up and having dressed, kneel and say:* Lord my God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore and love thee with all my heart. I give thee the most devoted thanks for having created, redeemed, and made me Christian and preserved me last night. I offer to thy greatest honor and glory all my thoughts, words, actions, and work. I ask thee humbly for pardon from my sins and I regret with all my heart having offended thee. I pray thee by the merits of Christ Jesus and of the Most Holy Mary, for grace to not offend thee again. Amen. *Pray at least an Our Father and a Creed and give yourself to the Most Holy Mary saying to her:* Virgin and Mother of God, I deliver myself to thee through thy son, and in honor and glory of your purity, I offer my soul and body, powers and senses, and I pray you reach for me the grace to not commit any sin again. Amen Jesus. *Three Hail Marys*

*Give yourself to your holy guardian Angel saying:* Angel of God, the Lord has already entrusted me to thee with heavenly piety, illuminate me, keep me, rule me and govern me. Amen

*At the start of work say:* Lord my God, I offer thee this work, give it thy holy blessing.

*During the day lift up your heart to God often with these or similar expressions.*

My God: in thee I believe, in thee I hope, I adore and love thee with all my heart.

My Jesus, have mercy on me

Help me, my Savior, with thy grace so that I offend thee no more

*Before eating say:* Lord my God, deign to put thy holy blessing over me and over this food that I am going to take to maintain myself in thy service. *Our Father and Hail Mary*

*After having eaten say:* I give thee thanks, Lord, for the food thou hast given me and grant me that it may serve my soul and body well. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

*Upon each hour pray a Hail Mary and say:* I offer thee, Lord, every moment of this hour and I intend to employ them in the fulfillment of thy holy will.

*Upon being bothered by some temptation, cross yourself or pray a Hail Mary and say:* Give me thy grace oh Lord that I may never offend thee.

*When you know you have or are in doubt that you have committed some sin, make an act of contrition saying very truly:*

My God, have mercy on me: I regret with all my heart having offended thee for being Thou who art, and because I love thee above all things, give me remorse of having sinned, my Jesus: and I firmly intend helped by thy grace, to offend thee no more and confess my sins and fulfill the penance.

*In afflictions say:* Give me patience, my God, and accept in remission of my sins this sorrow that I suffer.

*At the toll of the Ave Marias say:*

*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ, et concepit de Spiritu sancto. Hail Mary.*

*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Hail Mary.*

*Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Hail Mary.*

*At the playing of the prayer of souls, pray the De profundis and if you don't know it say an Our Father and Hail Mary*

### The Christian's Exercise: At Night

*Before going to bed, kneel and make the sign of the cross and say:*

*Lord my God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore and love thee with all my heart; I give thee thanks for having created, redeemed, and made me Christian and preserving me in this day. Give me thy light to know my sins and have of them a true pain.*

*Here examine your sins that you have committed that day and later make the act of contrition, My God...*

*Afterward say: Preserve me, Lord, in this night without sinning and deliver me from all evil.*

*Try to enter the state in which you would want to find yourself at the hour of death and meditate a while: 1<sup>st</sup> of what good in that hour will riches, honors, pleasures, pastimes be; 2<sup>nd</sup> what sorrow sins committed will cause you; 3<sup>rd</sup> What joy the good works you have done will lead to.*

*Immediately say: My God, what will be of me if in this night I must die, and I have to show myself and give account before Thy divine tribunal? Am I in grace or in mortal sin? Have I made good confessions or bad ones? In what state do I find myself? Do I have hatred of anyone and do I keep in my power anything defrauded? Do I have the vice of swearing, of murmuring, of working on feast days, or of doing dishonorable things? Do I fulfill my obligations and use my time well? What do I respond? Woe is me! What account must I give, and how much I must fear my lot if I don't repent and amend myself while I have time!*

*Afterwards pray at least an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Creed and the prayer to your Guardian Angel starting: Angel of God...*

*Go to bed and Say: Most Holy Trinity, give me the grace to die well. Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and soul.*

*When the Most Holy Sacrament is taken to the sick, go with it to gain the indulgences granted. If you cannot, kneel adoring it praying an Our Father and Hail Mary and say: Grant Lord the necessary graces to this sick brother for his health so that he may serve thy greater glory.*

*Sundays and feast days of obligation should be employed in the service of God, attending the divine offices, sermon, doctrine, rosary, particularly in the parish church; occupying oneself in good works and refraining from evil and dangerous works, especially of working, of having affectionate conversations with the opposite sex and attending dances, prohibited games etc.*

To The Greater Glory of God.