

MODESTY: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE PRO-LIFE POSITION

Fallen human nature leads numberless souls to commit sins of the flesh. Oftentimes, the life-giving consequences of such falls occasion powerful temptations to monstrous remedies. Who can calculate the number of times this pattern has been repeated in the history of mankind? One can easily see how temptation and sin strengthen mankind's perceived need for abortion. But, from which sources do most temptations spring? Can they be prevented or minimized? Could we ourselves be culpable? To identify and eliminate such elements from our lives should be the highest priority of any good Christian espousing the pro-life position.

Through concupiscence, countless enticements draw souls to sins against purity. Men, unlike the angels, live their lives through the senses; eyes, ears, and tactile sensation generate a stream of sensate cues. The sense which most quickly channels ideas to our minds and souls is sight. With our eyes, we see what others do and what they wear, and those images are stamped into our memories. Looking upon another, one may sin immediately in thought or desire, yet afterwards be tempted further to sinful deeds. Therefore, how we present ourselves before others is a grave obligation for all, equally so for those who take a pro-life position. Hence, immodest dress and behavior must be eliminated from our lives.

Moreover, not all information is processed by the mind perceptibly. The effective movie theater trick of splicing images of tempting snack-bar treats into a film illustrates the power that our sense of sight has over our appetites. Similarly, sensual stirrings may make deep inroads into the heart and the will without our detection. Temptations are more difficult to resist once our hearts and wills have seized upon them; witness a child at a baker's window or a candy counter. Even upright souls may be taken unawares by sudden temptation. Consequently, such sins and all that leads to them must be guarded against and eliminated.

Adam and Eve's sin made necessary a modest covering for the body to fortify self-control. If this holds true for husband and wife, how much more is it necessary for those living daily among friends, co-workers, even strangers? Behavior is a function of dress. What we wear leads us to act accordingly, as emphasized by the traditional employment of uniforms and other codes of dress in society. Immodest dress subconsciously engenders a coquettish manner--even enticing body language. Immodest looks and postures convey an invitation to sin. How, then, can one who dresses immodestly, although espousing a pro-life position, not unwittingly foster in others the very temptations which so frequently lead to abortion? Can those espousing a pro-choice stance take seriously the position of pro-lifers who give scandal through immodest dress?

The way we are dressed sends a clear message to those who see us and influences how we conduct ourselves. Consequently, our appearance and bearing influence how we are perceived in our pro-life efforts. For these reasons, only the highest standards of modesty can serve to firmly anchor a pro-life position.