

What Not To Wear®

Of all the reality shows that are on TV, one that I like the most is What Not To Wear. The reason I like it so well, is it brings into reality the old adage that "Clothes make the (wo)man."

I think that in our society today, we 'diss' everything and everyone without even thinking

and what has happened since that time is that we disrespect ourselves too. It shows in the clothes we wear like a billboard shouting, I dress down because I am "just a human." Even this last sentence is a 'diss', not only to ourselves, but to the God who made us and said "it is good."

"Now wait a minute" you might interject, "I don't hate myself, I am just being comfortable,"

or "I don't want to appear any better than anyone else." Perhaps that is true, but do you not think that we could elevate both our minds and our attitudes if we dressed for self-respect?

The show makes that very point, night after night. Both women and men who at the beginning of the show are shown wearing slob clothes or slovenly clothing, or 'gangsta' clothes, or clothes that are "too young for their age" usually confess after the makeover that they didn't think so well of themselves before. Now that they know how to 'package' the body and face and hair that God gave them, they "feel better about themselves"

or have "renewed self-confidence."

Mind you, this show does no surgery, no exercise

program, no 'biggest loser' of weight programs. It simply packages the person in the best possible clothing choices for their body type and color schema.

The friends who nominate them can see through the false self image of the sloppy dresser to the broken image of self inside their friend. They also can see the inner beauty of their friend that 'just needs to break out' of the horrid wardrobe that their friends have that makes them cringe.

Now, you may wonder what a Catholic Priest is doing talking to us about a reality show. Shows like What Not To Wear reveal the real-to-life attitudes, feelings and situations

we all face. Or to put it another way, if it were not true we wouldn't watch.

The Scriptures have some comments

about what people should wear to church:

1 Tim 2: 9-10, Don't dress so as to call attentions to yourself,

1 Peter 3: 3-4, Dress the inner person, not merely the outer person

Job 31: 1, Don't look at an unmarried woman with lust

Romans 12: 2 don't be conformed to this world

1: Timothy 4: 12, behave as an exemplary person.

Putting all these into a simple statement, we should dress with dignity but not immodestly.

Our clothing should relate the dignity of every person, and the importance of following

Christ.

So I offer the following guidelines, already established by visitors to the Holy Shrines in Rome: Dress simply and modestly. More concretely:

Men should wear long pants, and at least dress-casual shirts without words, or symbols aside from small and discreet manufacturer's logos—and these should not be symbols contrary to the Faith. Shoes should be the best you have.

Women should dress simply, covering themselves from collarbone to below the knee at minimum, either dresses or skirts, or if pants, not shorts.

Sleeve length should cover at least to slightly above the elbow. Shoes can be either sandal-type or closed. Again, refrain from clothes that have words or symbols, excepting discreet manufacturer's logos. However, they should not be symbols that are contrary to the Faith.

I offer these guidelines because we need to restore reverence to what we do at Sunday Mass, and to restore reverence for Christ who is within us. When we dress well, we respect ourselves and we respect others who see us. It would behoove both men and women to adopt more modesty in their daily dress and even party wear, so as not to be a temptation either to lust or to judgment of one another.

If we dress with self respect, and modesty, we can help others to respect us and maybe put the brakes on a culture of disrespect that is all too much a part of the modern American Landscape.

In Charity,
Fr Don