



Virtue of the Month:
Modesty

Saintly Exemplar:

Saint Dominic Savio
1842-1857



Sacred Scripture:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are...immodesty... But the fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, chastity”
(Galatians 5:19, 22, 23)

HOME/SCHOOL/PARISH CONNECTION

Modesty

Catechism of the Catholic Church

“Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons.

Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships. Modesty is decency. It inspires one’s choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet. There is a modesty of the feelings as well as of the body. Modesty inspires a way of life which makes it possible to resist the allurements of *improper* fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies. Modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person” (CCC 2521-2522, 2523, 2524)

What is the Virtue of Modesty?

Modesty is the virtue that presents goodness in the proper way, making no display of talents or attainments and being humble about one’s importance. Living the virtue of modesty moderates all the internal and external movements and appearance of a person in accordance with the proper time, place and persons present. Modesty protects the beauty and dignity of the body by guarding the privacy and dignity of oneself and others.

God has given each person a natural sense and inclination of modesty and a healthy sensitivity to cover one’s body in order not to be viewed as an object of sexual pleasure.

To live the virtue of modesty requires a conscious effort in the following areas:

- 1) a person’s comportment which includes manner of dress, manner of actions, motions, walking, gesturing, and touching;
- 2) a person’s interior thoughts and imagination requiring custody of the eyes - practicing self-control in what we view - and a guarding of the other senses;
- 3) a person’s manner of speaking.

Temperance and moderation are necessary to live modestly and chastely.

Why do we need the Virtue of Modesty?

The practice of modesty is necessary due to the effects of Original Sin. (See insert “Why Chastity?”) A modest person does not seek to draw attention to oneself.

Modesty is the defense of purity and chastity. Modesty is a life-long virtue.

The way a person dresses, acts, and speaks are powerful communicators of what she believes. Clothing and appearance send out a message as to the way that a person wants to be treated. Modesty protects the beauty and dignity of the body while keeping the focus on the whole person. Dressing, acting and speaking in a modest way helps to avoid the arousal of unhealthy, sinful passion in another.

In order to always protect human dignity, we need to practice self-control in what we view, avoiding all entertainment that is morally objectionable.

When we live the virtue of modesty, we set the tone of our relationships. People in our company are then careful how they dress, act, and speak, being careful of subject matter, avoiding “dirty jokes” or swearing. Our developed virtue of modesty ensures an appropriate and wholesome manner of speaking.

The ongoing practice of modesty will help young people who are dating and couples before marriage “to draw a veil of respect over inappropriate revelations on matters affecting the deepest recesses of the human heart.” (Budnick, p.194) Praying together creates a powerful bond of spiritual intimacy, which can lead to physical intimacy. Unmarried couples need to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Suggestions for teaching the Virtue of Modesty at Home:

Common principles for teaching and practicing the virtue of modesty within the family:

Parents have a right and duty to teach their children the virtue of modesty. Modesty is the virtue that presents goodness in the proper way, being humble about one's importance rather than bragging. Further, modesty is the proper physical covering of the body as well as an attitude of reserve and respect, that first and foremost, recognizes the mystery of personhood – that is the unique dignity of each and every person.

Due to the effects of original sin, our disordered desires and our weakened wills need the protection from heightened arousal that modesty provides. Modest apparel and behavior reduce the possibility of sexual temptation and the inappropriate arousal of sexual desire in others. On the other hand, modesty, because of its shielding of the mystery of the person through the appropriate covering of the external body, heightens attractiveness. In cultivating the virtue of modesty, there is an opportunity for greater, not less enjoyment of God's great gift of sexual union within the rightful boundaries of marriage.

A person's joy and peace depend upon living in a manner that reflects the fact that the person is a son or daughter of God. The virtue of modesty is grounded in the fact that each person is a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Corinthians 6:19-20 conveys the truth that our body is a gift from God. "You are not own; you were bought with a price." Therefore we cannot view and treat our own body and the bodies of others as objects of pleasure, if we desire this joy and peace intended by our Creator. And this is what Paul means when he goes on to say "...so glorify God in your body." (1Cor 6:19-20)

Developing the virtue of modesty includes developing an attitude of maturity that resists "the allurements of improper fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies" (CCC 2523). We must always keep in mind that changing styles in our culture are based upon enticing people to buy more in order to stay in fashion. We cannot let our standards as Christians be determined by designers whose main goal is to make money. True adornments of the Christian are to be "good deeds," "reverent and chaste behavior," and "the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit" (1Tim 2:10; 1Peter 3:2; 1Peter 3:4). Always remember, there are proper ways of dressing in style without compromising one's modesty. "We are ambassadors for Christ" and so we need to dress appropriately well as men and women who witness to our faith in God.

"Modern culture tells women, 'If your body is so great, show yourself!' The woman who understands her worth resists such an invitation and replies, 'Because of my value, I cover myself appropriately. My body was not given to me for the sake of exposing it to you. If I show too much I wouldn't be revealing my true worth to you. I'd be distracting you from what matters most', my personhood. (*Modesty, What's the point?* Pamphlet, Jason Evert, Catholic Answers, Chastity.com)

The vices that develop in the absence of modesty, chastity, and purity are bragging, vanity, immodesty, and immorality. Modesty along with temperance and moderation are God's gifts to us to shelter and nurture chastity and purity. These virtues are especially important in protecting our view of personal dignity.

Modesty Saint Dominic Savio

How Does a Girl Know if an Outfit is Modest or Not?

1. Is my shirt too tight? Press into your shirt in the valley of your chest, if it springs back it is too tight.
 2. Am I showing too much belly? Raise your arms, if your belly shows then put a longer T-shirt under the shorter shirt.
 3. Can you see underpants or bra straps? Then pants are too tight. The only straps showing on a girl of God should be the straps from her cute summer sandals.
 4. How short is too short? Sit in front of a full-length mirror and take notice of what can be seen. Pass on extremely short!
- Secret Keeper, The Delicate Power of Modesty, Dannah Gresch, Moody Publ.*



Think Before Speaking

What am I going to say?
Why am I going to say this?
Is what I am going to say necessary?
Will I be boasting, exaggerating, gossiping, criticizing, or complaining?
Will my conversation offend another?
How am I going to say it?
Is my speech free from profanity, blasphemy, and impurity?
What tone of voice am I going to use?
To whom am I speaking?
Am I showing respect in my words and tone of voice to those in authority?
How can I say this concisely?
Raise Happy Children, Teach Them Joy
Mary Ann Budnick, p. 171-172

Suggestions for teaching the Virtue of Modesty at Home:

Aspects in formation of the virtue of modesty

Parents are the primary educators of their children. There are four areas in which parents need to train their children from the earliest age to live the virtue of modesty. The practice of modesty shows others that you value your interior worth by the way that you dress, speak, and act.

- **Custody of the eyes**

Parents are to protect their children, beginning early on, from watching anything that would destroy their innocence. Check out plays, movies, DVDs, and books before allowing children and young people to view them. Children need to be taught how to “guard their eyes since they are the windows through which sin enters into the soul.” (St. John Bosco) What we see is memorized by the brain and remains with us. Therefore, children and young people are to be guided to practice self-control in what they view, even covering their eyes when necessary. All entertainment that is morally objectionable is to be avoided. The following companies edit nudity, profanity, and violence out of major-market films: ClearPlay, Inc.; CleanFlicks; Trilogy Studios. See the sheet “Monitor the Media” as a helpful tool to guide the use of the Internet in the home. Pornography is commonplace on the Internet, and is extremely dangerous as it is addictive, subverts personal integrity and destroys marriages and family life. Make frequent visits to the sites your children/teens are viewing.

- **Manner of speaking**

Parents are to teach very young children not to interrupt a conversation, to refrain from yelling or screaming, and to listen well as God made us with two ears and only one mouth. Bragging, talkativeness, and complaining are to be avoided. Teens are to be taught how to turn criticism into ideas of helping others, to watch the tone and manner of speaking, to avoid gossip, foul or obscene language, sarcasm, malicious humor at another’s expense and to think before speaking. “To whom we speak also dictates how we speak and what we say. Explain to your teens that they cannot speak to priests, religious, their parents, teachers, and adults with the same familiarity in which they speak to their friends. Rather, they are to speak with respect, in a low voice, never shouting or yelling at their parents or elders.” (This page adapted from *Raise Happy Children, Teach Them Joy*, Mary Ann Budnick, p. 168)

- **Manner of dress**

“Modesty in dress begins with privacy. Privacy begins manifesting itself in young children when they want the bathroom door closed or are uncomfortable taking their clothes off for the doctor. Promote the development of modesty by not permitting children to run around naked after their baths or in the morning when they are getting dressed. If older children bathe the younger ones, girls should help the little girls and boys help the boys. Anyone can change diapers! Teach your children never to barge into a room with a closed door. They are to knock first, then wait to be permitted in.” (Budnick, p.172). Discuss with your tweens and teens that dressing modestly means avoiding micro mini-skirts, tight-fitting tops, see-through blouses, low-rise slacks with midriffs showing, plunging necklines that expose cleavage, spaghetti strap tops, tight pants or slits above the knee. How we dress shows our morals and how we feel about ourselves and others. Parents need to set the example in modest clothing or they have already abdicated their God-given parental responsibility. Mothers will want to be fashionable while dressing as godly women. Mothers and daughters dictate fashion trends by what they purchase; retailers will change their trends to meet the demand of customers seeking modest clothing. Keep in mind that men are visually oriented. Immodest clothing can arouse men to lust—to move away from true love— and could lead a man to sinful thoughts. Fathers should spend much quality time with their daughters and have the final say on questionable clothing.

- **Manner of acting, motions, walking, gesturing, and touching**

All of our actions should be modest, refined, and Christ-like. Dancing motions should not be erotic or provocative. Watch how your daughter walks, working with her if it is suggestive. How one sits is important, with legs together or crossed with the skirt coming to the knee and avoiding short shorts. A couple living together before marriage violates the respect and dignity due to each person. If a person is not growing spiritually through daily prayer, examining one’s conscience each night, as well as asking for and cooperating with God’s grace, while consciously practicing the virtue of modesty, it will be difficult not to be rude, hurtful, suggestive or offensive in speech and actions.

Modesty

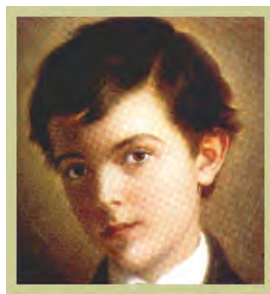
St. Dominic Savio

DOMINIC SAVIO

CONTROL OF THE EYES

Adapted from his chiding words to classmates who were looking at a magazine with objectionable pictures.

....You know well enough that one look at offensive, degrading pictures is enough to stain your souls, yet you go feasting your eyes on such things... It might be momentarily fascinating - though actually enslaving. Your eyes were actually created to behold a much more satisfying feast - the very face of God.



Also Known As:

Patron of choirboys
Patron of the falsely accused
Patron of juvenile delinquents

Feast Day

March 9

His Life

- ☒ Dominic Savio was born in 1842 near Turin, Italy, the 2nd child in a family of 10 children. His father was a blacksmith and his mother was a seamstress
- ☒ His parents were very devoted to their Catholic faith and passed their devotion on to their children.
- ☒ Although most children made their First Holy Communion at 11 years old, Dominic was permitted to receive his First Holy Communion at age 7.
- ☒ When Dominic made his First Holy Communion, he made four written promises to himself. 1. Receive frequent Communion and make frequent confessions. 2. Give Sundays and Holy Days entirely to God. 3. Keep our Lord and His Mother as best friends. 4. Choose death over sin.
- ☒ Dominic decided early on that he wanted to become a saint.
- ☒ During his school years, Dominic was different that most boys who were somewhat mischievous. When Dominic was falsely accused of inappropriate behavior, he kept his silence because he knew that the teacher would have expelled the other boys, and he wanted them to have another chance. Dominic also recalled that Jesus had suffered from being unjustly accused and Our Lord said nothing.
- ☒ Dominic wished to become a priest and was accepted at Don Bosco's Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin, Italy in 1854. During that time, St. John Bosco allowed Dominic to undertake mortifications and called him to greater sanctity by remaining faithfully obedient in difficult circumstances.
- ☒ During Dominic's brief time of three years at the Oratory, he gained the love and respect of all the boys and the priests. He was not pushy and would not interrupt to state his own views, but he was not afraid to oppose wrong and could always give reasons why he knew a certain action was wrong. However, Dominic was often teased and taunted by his classmates.
- ☒ Dominic became a mentor to the younger boys, teaching them about our Blessed Mother and the saints. His stories about Mary were a favorite.
- ☒ Dominic formed a work crew named the Company of the Immaculate Conception to help St. John Bosco care for the lonely students as well as the building. All these men helped Don Bosco found the Salesian Order.
- ☒ Dominic Savio became ill and died of lung problems shortly before his 15th birthday. St. Pius X called him a true model for the youth of our times.

How is St. Dominic Savio a model of modesty?

- ☒ Dominic was modest in all he did. He did not seek to draw attention to himself but was concerned with the relationship of others with God.
- ☒ Dominic Savio was tempted to join his classmates by swimming in the nude during the summer, but he avoided this activity.
- ☒ Dominic reprimanded his classmates who were looking at pornographic pictures: "You say just for fun but you are preparing yourselves to go to hell." He also tried to persuade his classmates to walk away from temptation by refusing to listen to dirty jokes and refusing to leer at the girls.
- ☒ Dominic also reminded others about the importance of avoiding profanity.