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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+++ Jesus, Mary, Joseph +++

*VOL. I = THE BAD CHRISTIAN*

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

## Parties, Balls, Nightly Promiscuous Gatherings of Young People

*“Jesus came and stood in the midst” St. John 20:19.*

Jesus stood in the midst of his Apostles, in the room in which they had shut themselves up for fear of the Jews, and in which they were talking of Christ. Jesus is never to be found in the company of those who, without fear or shame, place themselves in the danger of sin; because he who without necessity runs into such danger, will not long preserve the grace of God. There is a certain kind of company that seems to many not at all dangerous, although it is the most dangerous of all—that is, the company of young people of both sexes, who meet at night to amuse themselves; call it what you please, ball or party, or anything else; I call it, in plain language, a nightly promiscuous gathering of young people for the purpose of amusement. If what I have to say offends any of you, I hope you will forgive me; the danger that threatens your precious souls and the duty of my office force me to speak of this matter in order to satisfy my conscience. I do not envy or grudge you your enjoyments, but rather wish you from my heart all kinds of joy in abundance, provided there is no danger to your souls.

*These nightly gatherings are very dangerous occasions of sin.*

The holy Fathers condemn those parties as sinful abuses. Tertullian and St. Cyprian, who lived near the time of the Apostles, condemn these gatherings as unchristian and heathenish. St. John Chrysostom, having once heard that some of his hearers frequented them, began his sermon by declaring that if he knew who they were he would turn them out of the Church, and would not allow them to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. St. Augustine says that it is a far less grievous sin to work on a Sunday or Holyday until one is tired than to be present at a dance. I dare not quote what St. Ambrose calls the young woman who goes to a dance. Gerson says that “all sins and vices are to be found in dancing.”

But, you say, there are none but respectable people admitted, and decorum is strictly observed. I believe it; nor do I imagine for a moment that those gatherings are composed simply of vulgar boors, who meet together to carouse and indulge in all sorts of improper conduct. But I am not quite certain that your parties are not all the more dangerous precisely because they have an air of external propriety, and that they do even more harm than a mere vulgar carouse.

You say there is no harm in those parties. But what do you mean by that? Do you think there is no harm done unless some sinful act or dissipation is outwardly indulged in? You are right in saying that nothing of the kind occurs during those parties, but what are we to think of what occurs after them? In any case, you cannot say there is no harm in dangerous imaginations, thoughts, desires and pleasures. Does not our Lord himself express-

ly tell us: "But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St. Matthew 5:25). Now, is it possible, humanly speaking, for everyone who frequents such gatherings to avoid all sinful thoughts and desires? The Holy Scripture admonishes us over and over again to turn away our eyes from persons of the opposite sex, that we may not sully our minds. "Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block to thee" (Eccles. 9:5). "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty; for hereby lust is enkindled as a fire" (Eccles. 9:8, 9). Job teaches us the same by his example: "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (Job 31:1). How, then, can you possibly keep your hearts and minds pure and your thoughts unsullied in the midst of the most dangerous familiarities, where young people see each other not merely by chance and for a moment, but for six, seven or eight hours at a time, which they spend in talking, laughing, dancing, and amusing themselves; where not only the eyes, but all the senses, find something to delight and captivate them, and where all the surroundings are such as to foster sensual thoughts and desires?

What are those surroundings? The time chosen is the night, when the artificial light cast on surrounding objects makes them appear more beautiful than they really are and thus excites the imagination. Those who are invited are people, who by their amiable manners contribute to the general amusement, and do all they can to appear beautiful in the eyes of others; half the day is spent in dressing and adorning themselves. Their talk and conversation are full of honied words and winning flatteries; they assume a gay and cheerful expression of countenance; their very gestures and the postures they take express their willingness to be of service to one another. And the reason of all this is that they are bent on amusement. But if, according to the Word of God, even a single look is dangerous, how can it be reasonably supposed that the devil does not make use of such occasions to lay many a snare? If the passions of young people are so easily excited, what can be expected when there are so many things tending to flatter the passions? What vain complacency in their own appearance and in that of others those young hearts must feel! What dangerous joy, hope, desire, and pride must be awakened in those who find that they are most admired and praised? What envy, fear and suspicion in those who think they are neglected or slighted! What thoughts and imaginations, that remain even till the following day! What wishes and longings to see the person whom one is especially anxious to please? These and similar things, which it does not become me to mention here, are the evils that those gatherings give rise to, almost as a matter of necessity.

But, some will say, you are talking to us now of things we never heard of before. We never experienced any of those effects you speak of; we amuse and divert ourselves at those gatherings with the greatest peace of soul and conscience; nor are we troubled by the least bad thought. If that be the case, then God be praised! We must treat you, then, not as mortals imprisoned in a corruptible body, but as pure Angels, who are above all the attacks of sensuality. Hear it, oh, holy hermits! Hear it, all ye Saints! In our days people are far better; they can allow their senses all kinds of liberty, and spend whole nights together dancing, laughing and amusing themselves, without being troubled even with a bad thought! If you had been as wise as they, might you not have had an easier time of it?

Vain children of the world, that learned and holy man, St. Jerome, was afraid of losing his soul through an incautious, glance at a person of the opposite sex; and you, in the fire of youth and in the midst of attractions and seductions, maintain that you have nothing of the kind to fear, that you are free from all temptations, and that you are not troubled even with an impure thought! Is your nature, then, different from that of other men? Is your flesh better tamed and brought under subjection by fasting and other penitential works than that of St. Jerome, or of so many other holy hermits, who were afraid of dangers that were far less to be dreaded than those you expose yourselves to, without, as you say, being in the least afraid?

But, you say, we must live according to the general custom of people in the world. If I were always to refuse to go to those parties, what would people think of me? They would look on me as a hypocrite. What custom are you talking about? You are laboring under a great mistake! There are many large and wealthy cities where such a custom is unknown; and everywhere you will find many people of respectability and common sense who refuse to have anything to do with those parties, and who prevent those under their charge from going to them. Why do you not follow the custom of those people? Why should bad customs have more influence over you than good ones? If you were invited to go to early morning devotions, to go to confession and Communion every week, which are all good and pious Christian customs: Oh, dear me! You would say, I cannot manage it; it is

too early; I should not have time to dress. But you can spend whole nights together at those parties dancing and amusing yourselves, without ever complaining that it is too early or too late; and the day before you always manage to find time enough to do your work. This is an evident sign of a vain mind, that is not influenced or directed by the spirit of God.

It is the custom, you insist. So much the worse! There are many customs in the world that are not good, and if you wish to go to heaven, you must not live according to them. Our Lord warns us by his Apostles not to live according to the customs of the world. "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2), says St. Paul. "Know you not," asks St. James, "that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (James 4:4). If, you then, you think that because such parties are in vogue nearly everywhere, you must have your share in them, too, why do you not also think that you must go to hell, since it is the fashion in every town in the world for many people to go there?

One conclusion is just as good as the other. God tells us that "We must not be conformed to this world," and you maintain that we must live according to the customs of the world. Who is right, God or you? You yourselves have renounced the world in Baptism; why should you live according to it now? Who introduced those abuses among Christians? The devil.

You have but one soul, and if you lose that it will not hurt or benefit me. You have but one soul, and if you lose it, you have lost everything for all eternity. What good will the pleasure of half a day or a night be to you, nay, what good would the whole world be to you, with all its pleasures, if your soul suffers the least harm? If you wish to enjoy yourselves, do so in God's name, but do not risk your soul for the sake of enjoyment. Heaven is the place for enjoyment; there the Lord invites you to a feast which will last forever amid unspeakable joys, which you will share with the holy Angels. Ah, do not so act as to be excluded from that gathering, or so that you will go unprepared into eternity, that you may not meet with the fate of the foolish virgins, to whom the Bridegroom said: "I know you not." Prepare your souls now for this heavenly Bridegroom, and endeavor to please him alone, so that you may merit to be invited to the nuptials of the spotless Lamb. That joy I wish you, and to myself, with all my heart. Amen.

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